



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection
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By

Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor

And

Dr. Darren K. Okimoto

Extension Leader/University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

HCR 97/HR 89 – REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM TO REVIEW THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HAWAII'S COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES

Chair Coffman and Members of the Committee:

Good morning. My name is Darren Okimoto and I serve as the Extension Leader for the University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program (UH Sea Grant). I am offering testimony through the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in support of the adoption of the HCR 97/HR 89 resolution.

UH Sea Grant supports an innovative program of research, extension, education, and communication services directed to the improved understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources. Realizing the necessity of collaboration to address coastal resource issues, UH Sea Grant also provides links between academia, federal, state and local government agencies, industries, and local community members.

With the knowledge that adaptation to the impacts of climate change is critically important to vulnerable island communities such as the State of Hawai‘i, UH Sea Grant partnered with several schools and departments at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa to establish the Center for Island Climate Adaptation and Policy (ICAP) in January 2009 to facilitate a climate-conscious future and improve island resiliency. ICAP is led by law professor, Maxine Burkett, and housed at the UH Sea Grant as a Sea Grant center of excellence. The ICAP staff consists of a group of planners, attorneys, and coastal geologists from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, the William S. Richardson School of Law, the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, and UH Sea Grant who have a shared sense that, although climate change had already begun to affect the Hawai‘i climate, most actions to address climate change in the state had appropriately focused on mitigating greenhouse gases, but not yet on adapting to the impacts. UH Sea Grant and ICAP recognize that an effective response to the new challenges facing many sectors requires a multidisciplinary approach.

UH Sea Grant is also partnering with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Storms Program to conduct a NOAA Sea Grant Coastal Storms Program for the Pacific Region, which includes the State of Hawai'i. This three-year program was initiated in September 2010 and is led by Mr. Dolan Eversole who serves as its coordinator. The Coastal Storms Program is a nationwide effort led by the NOAA to reduce loss of life and negative impacts on coastal property and the environment caused by coastal storms and other coastal hazards that include climate change. The coordinator will work to engage and educate local stakeholders on the impacts of storms and these other hazards and support training on how to use tools and applications created to improve hazard resilience. Support to local stakeholders will be available through technical assistance by local and NOAA staff and through small grant awards.

The state can help to ensure the viability of its coastal communities by supporting the HCR 97/HR 89 resolution. While many questions remain unanswered with regard to the impacts of climate change, it is still possible – and imperative – to utilize the best information currently available to make sound policy decisions. A comprehensive assessment of the effects of climate change on its ocean and coastal resources is a vital first step to ensure adequate preparation and increased adaptive capacity for the state. This assessment will focus on necessary research and strengthen our planning to make our coastal communities more resilient and prepared to deal with the impacts of climate change. Passage of this resolution is an important first step in the process of building community resilience well in advance of dangerous changes to climate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this resolution.