



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committees on Energy and Environmental Protection, and
Water, Land, and Ocean Resources
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by

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and

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HB 2330 Relating to Climate Change

Chairs Coffman and Chang, Vice Chairs Kawakami and Har, and members of the committees:

As a focal point for University of Hawai'i climate expertise, the Center for Island Climate Adaptation and Policy ("ICAP") serves as a two-way conduit between the University and island communities to catalyze climate change adaptation and resiliency. ICAP supports House Bill 2330, which would require the state office of planning and the planning authority of each county to establish a benchmark taking into account a predicted sea-level rise of one foot above current levels by 2050 when planning for development, but recommends: (1) adding an additional benchmark of three feet of sea-level rise by 2100 and (2) appropriating adequate funds to fulfill the bill's purposes.

First, House Bill 2330 should include a sea-level rise benchmark of three feet by 2100, in addition to one foot by 2050, because sea levels are expected to rise one to three feet or more during this century. Adding this benchmark would ensure that shoreline development intended for long-term use adequately considers potential impacts to life and property.

Second, House Bill 2330 requires funding to fulfill its purposes. Although the state faces budget limitations, adequate funding ultimately would enhance adaptation efforts and maximize benefits to Hawai'i citizens.

Related Information

ICAP would like to provide additional background information regarding sea-level rise adaptation strategies. The one-foot-by-2050 and three-feet-by-2100 sea-level rise benchmark is just one of three major recommendations and 24 policy tools presented in ICAP's recently published law and policy tool kit, *Sea-Level Rise and Coastal Land Use in Hawai'i: A Policy Tool Kit for State and Local Governments* (2011) (<http://icap.seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/sea-level-rise-and-coastal-land-use-hawaii-policy->

tool-kit-state-and-local-governments). For example, ICAP identifies six near-term and three longer-term measures that could be enacted at the state level.

A. Near-Term Measures

- i. Designate a lead agency or establish a task force charged with initiating statewide climate change and sea-level rise adaptation planning. We are pleased that Senate Bill 2021 encompasses this recommendation.
- ii. Require consideration of sea-level rise before authorizing capital improvement projects in vulnerable areas. This would encourage prudent use of state funds and resources.
- iii. Require hazards-based setback lines throughout the state and its political subdivisions. This would keep construction at a safe and scientifically based distance from the shoreline.
- iv. Require the state building code to account for sea-level rise. This would promote more resilient construction in hazardous areas.
- v. Require disclosure of coastal erosion and sea-level rise information in real property sales. This market-based approach would allow prospective buyers to better weigh the costs and benefits of obtaining property in hazardous areas.
- vi. Allow state land acquisition programs to prioritize coastal areas vulnerable to sea-level rise. This would encourage managed retreat, preserve natural flood buffers such as beaches and wetlands, and enhance access and recreation.

B. Longer-Term Measures

- i. Review and amend the Hawai'i Coastal Zone Management Act ("HCZMA") to account for climate change and sea-level rise impacts. Because of HCZMA's broad authority over state and county coastal activities and regulations, the Hawai'i Legislature could consider amending HCZMA objectives and policies to more explicitly address climate change and sea-level rise impacts.
- ii. Include climate change and sea-level rise impacts as significance criteria under the Hawai'i Environmental Policy Act. This amendment could advance sea-level rise adaptation efforts statewide.
- iii. Develop tax incentive program to encourage sea-level rise adaptation. Although tax incentives may lack support in times of budget shortfalls, they are a proven policy tool for achieving key social, economic, and environmental objectives. Creating financial incentive programs for sea-level rise and other climate change impacts will require decision-makers to establish clear priorities regarding the type of development to be encouraged or discouraged in particular areas.

To conclude, ICAP supports House Bill 2330, amended to include a three-feet-by-2100 sea-level rise benchmark and the appropriation of adequate funding.