



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
House Committees on Water, Land and Ocean Resources,
Energy and Environmental Protection, and Agriculture
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by
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H.B. 2671 Relating to Sustainability

Chairs Chang, Coffman, Tsuji and honorable members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2671, relating to sustainability. I am the director of the Social Sciences Public Policy Center ("Center") at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and, along with Dr. Sharon Moriwaki, have been working on the Hawaii 2050 Sustainability Plan ("H2050 Plan") and its updates; and, more specifically, the report as directed by Act 181 (2011). As a result of your support last session, Act 181 codified sustainability goals, definitions and guidelines into state law (the Hawai'i State Planning Act) and also directed the Center, in consultation with the Office of Planning ("OP"), to identify the states progress in implementing the sustainability guidelines and to submit a report ("Act 181 Report") with recommendations for facilitating their full implementation.

We strongly support H.B. 2671, which seeks to implement the recommendations from the Act 181 Report. More specifically, it directs the OP to: (1) convene a working group of government, nonprofit, education, business and other interested organizations to establish guidelines for a public-private "Hawai'i Statewide Sustainability Partnership"; (2) determine key indicators for measuring sustainability and establishing benchmarks for measuring progress; (3) translating the sustainability principles into clear objectives, specific actions and accountability measures; and (4) coordinating progress among the state and counties. It further requests an appropriation to enable the Office of Planning to obtain services to accomplish effectively these major responsibilities to design and establish an ongoing, coordinated program and network, including a set of accountability measures of progress.

The Center and the OP, together with the sustainability/environmental coordinators from the counties of Maui, Hawai'i, and Kaua'i and community organizations, such as Kanu and Hawai'i Green Growth Initiative/Global Island Partnership, identified the programs and efforts throughout the state; they also obtained further input from a community survey of organizations and individuals interested in and conducting work in sustainability. We found that major progress has been made by each of the counties. Hawai'i and Kaua'i counties have adopted sustainability plans. The City and County of Honolulu and Hawai'i and Kaua'i counties have established a sustainability coordinator or manager position and Maui County has an environmental coordinator. The State is committed to implementing Act 181 across its agencies, with OPs support and coordination through its administration of the Hawai'i State Plan. In addition, the State has a number of initiatives that are

advancing the sustainability goals, such as: (1) the State Energy Office *Hawai'i Clean Energy Initiative* to achieve energy independence; (2) the Department of Land and Natural Resources *The Rain Follows the Forest Plan*, which seeks to ensure mauka watersheds are fully functioning to ensure fresh water resources for Hawaii's people; (3) the Office of Planning collaboration with public, private, and community stakeholders worked to update the *Hawai'i Ocean Resources Management Plan* to facilitate comprehensive ocean resources management throughout the State. The University of Hawai'i has also provided leadership among its campuses in engaging faculty, staff and students in classes, programs, research and projects to reduce fossil fuel use, promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

Community organizations have also continued efforts to advance sustainable principles and practices. Eighty-eight organizations and/or individuals responded to the community survey and an overwhelming majority are involved in activities advancing the seven sustainability guidelines and principles, ranging from the highest involvement in planning that respects and promotes living within the natural resources and limits of the State (88%), followed by encouraging balanced economic, social, community and environmental priorities and encouraging respect for the host culture (84%); promoting decisions based on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations and emphasizing that everyone has the responsibility for achieving a sustainable Hawai'i (83%); promoting a diversified and dynamic economy (70%) with 60% working on increasing the competitiveness of Hawaii's workforce; and considering the principles of the ahupua'a system in decision making (67%). Organizations involved in implementing the sustainability principles were primarily represented by the non-profit (37%), government (20%), education (17%), and business (16%) sectors.

The Center found that while there are a number of diverse efforts across the state, there was overwhelming agreement by county, state and community representatives that there is need for establishing a statewide network of state, county, private, and community organizations if we truly are to fully implement sustainability goals and guidelines – there is need for continuing collaboration, action, and accountability. It is therefore critical that a working group, as proposed in HB 2671, be convened to establish the Hawai'i Statewide Sustainability Partnership to fully implement the sustainability goals and principles envisioned in the H2050 Plan and Act 181. It is further recommended that the state and counties provide leadership support, which should include funding of the Partnership (for staff, travel for neighbor island members, and communication, including website development and maintenance) and participation by its various agencies and, in particular, the development of statewide measures of accountability and benchmarks to measure progress in the near and long term. As importantly, the OP and representatives from the several counties have agreed to work together on long-range planning, including updating the inventory of sustainability activities and developing sustainability indicators and translating the Act 181 sustainability principles into clear objectives, specific actions, and accountability measures.

Based on the foregoing, the University of Hawai'i strongly supports HB 2671, including the needed funding for the Office of Planning to enable it to fulfill the recommendations as set forth in HB 2671.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions.