UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Agriculture
and
Senate Committee on Economic Development, Environment, and Technology
February 12, 2016 at 2:00pm
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and
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SB2245 – RELATING TO BEACHES

Chairs Gabbard and Wakai, Vice Chairs Nishihara and Slom, and members of the committees:

The University of Hawaiʻi Sea Grant College Program (Hawaiʻi Sea Grant) supports the intent of Senate Bill 2245 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents approved executive biennium budget. This legislation amends the definition of "water pollutant" as used in chapter 342D, HRS, to exclude locally sourced beach sand.

Hawaiʻi's beaches have become increasingly threatened by coastal erosion. According to the United States Geological Service (USGS) National Assessment of Shoreline Change for the Hawaiian Islands, 70% of Hawaiʻi's beaches are eroding and 13 miles of beach have been lost over the last century. Beach erosion effects shoreline access, recreation and cultural activities, coastal ecosystems and environments, and our economy. Beaches are the backbone of Hawaiʻi's $15 Billion tourism industry and are central to Hawaiʻi's unique culture and lifestyle. With sea-level rise and chronic coastal erosion, the state is challenged to find effective and efficient ways to preserve and maintain our naturally occurring sand beaches. We believe the proposed legislation will support small-scale beach maintenance projects that attempt to address this issue.

SB 2245 proposes to amend the definition of "water pollutant" as used in Chapter 342D HRS, to exclude locally sourced, natural beach sand. Senate Bill 2245 provides that naturally occurring beach sand shall not be considered a "water pollutant" if used for beach erosion mitigation and certain related purposes. The bill proposes to amend Section 342D-1, HRS, to exclude beach sand from the Definition of "water pollutant," provided that it is 1) Naturally occurring beach sand sourced from a beach stream mouth, or channel that is located in the State and 2) Is utilized on the adjacent beach for the purposes of beach erosion mitigation sediment management, beach restoration,

erosion control or dune restoration. Excluding clean beach sand from the Definition of "water pollutant," as described above, will support proactive government and stakeholder efforts to effectively preserve and restore degraded beaches as an alternative to shoreline armoring.

This bill will not lessen the intentions or effectiveness of the Federal Clean Water Act. Beach nourishment projects using sand from an outside source would still be subject to a 401 Water Quality Certification, thus ensuring adequate environmental safeguards and balances. The amendments in this bill are intended to address smaller restoration and sediment management projects such a stream mouth clearing using clean, naturally occurring and locally-sourced sand from the active beach that often have no substantial impact on marine water quality since they already exist in the near shore system. We understand these type of beach maintenance projects already adhere to standardized sand compatibility and quality guidelines and best management practices provided by the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Hawai‘i Sea Grant supports SB 2245. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.