UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committees on Economic Development, Environment, and Technology
and
Water, Land, and Agriculture
and
Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
Friday, February 12, 2016 at 1:15 p.m.
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and
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SB 2352 – RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

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

The University of Hawaiʻi Sea Grant College Program (UH Hawaiʻi Sea Grant) supports the intent of Senate Bill 2352 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 requires any environmental assessments and environmental impact statements for any major infrastructure improvement project or major construction project in any coastal lands to include an analysis of the environmental impact of projected sea level rise or fall over the anticipated lifespan of the project.

There is an increasingly strong scientific consensus that sea-level rise will accelerate in the coming decades. The impacts of this are just beginning to be felt here in Hawaiʻi with accelerated rates of coastal erosion and increasing frequency of coastal inundation. Hawaiʻi Sea Grant has been involved with providing scientific and technical support for climate change impacts including sea-level rise to a wide range of stakeholders including state and local agencies statewide. Establishing a specific requirement to recognize and analysis the impacts of sea-level rise in high risk areas will provide accommodation and mitigation opportunities for major new development in low elevation coastal areas and beach environments and offer more policy and regulatory options for future coastal managers dealing with coastal conservation and protection.

This type of environmental policy is consistent with President Obama's 2015 Executive Order 11988 regarding the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. In recognition of

the threat of sea level rise, the U.S. Congress in their FY2016 omnibus package made it a law that federal agencies plan for rising seas in all projects. Executive Order 11988 requires that all projects using federal funding must meet a federal flood risk standard that either:

1) Use data and methods “informed by best-available, actionable climate science”;
2) Build 2 ft. above the 100-year flood elevation for standard projects, and 3 ft. above for critical buildings (hospitals and evacuation centers); or
3) Build to the 500-year flood elevation.

We suggest you consider clarifying “major development” projects in Section 1 rather than “state construction” projects in order to apply this requirement equally to all major projects. By adding the term “development” to Section 1 this may appropriately trigger the sea-level rise assessment requirement for non-construction projects such as subdivision and consolidation.

UH Hawai‘i Sea Grant supports SB2352 in the effort to establish proactive policies related to the coastal zone and to establish coastal policies that take into account the dynamic nature of the shoreline and the impending impacts of sea-level rise. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.