

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Testimony of  
DAWN N.S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on  
FINANCE

Monday, February 24, 2025  
2:00 PM

Via Video Conference, State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 506, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO CONSERVATION ENFORCEMENT

House Bill 506, House Draft 1, proposes to appropriate funds for equipment for the Oahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE). **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

As mentioned in this measure, there has been an increase in fishing intensity around the island of Oahu, particularly at night. The proposed funding this bill provides would be used to increase DOCARE's Oahu Branch capabilities to address violations by purchasing much needed equipment including watercraft, detection equipment such as night vision goggles and unmanned aircraft systems, vehicles and communication equipment. This will provide DOCARE's Oahu Branch with resources that enhances its abilities to detect, deter and respond to violations in state waters and fisheries, and can also be used in other areas under the department's management such as State Parks, Forest and Natural Area Reserves and unencumbered state lands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



**Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea**  
**Post Office Box 188**  
**Hale'iwa, HI 96712**

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*Jenny Yagodich, Director of*  
*Educational Programs &*  
*Makai Watch Coordinator*

**Federal Nonprofit Organization**  
**501(c)(3) FEIN 27-0855937**  
**[www.pupukeawaimea.org](http://www.pupukeawaimea.org)**  
**[info@pupukeawaimea.org](mailto:info@pupukeawaimea.org)**

February 21, 2025

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the House Committee on Finance

Re: **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HB506** HD1: Relating to Conservation Enforcement

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the House Committee on Finance,

Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea (MPW) is the grassroots, community non-profit that actively works to care for, educate about, and protect our fragile, near-shore marine ecosystems. Our mission is "working to replenish and sustain the natural and cultural resources of the Pūpūkea and Waimea ahupua'a for present and future generations through active community stewardship, education, and partnerships.

We write in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HB506 HD1** which would appropriate funds for equipment for the O'ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

We are proud to have been the first State of Hawai'i Makai Watch program on O'ahu, a collaborative statewide program where citizens and NGOs become directly involved with DLNR in the management of marine resources through promoting compliance to rules, education, and monitoring.

We collaborate closely with DOCARE and rely on their ability to effectively respond to violations and enforce the rules and regulations protecting our marine resources. HB506 appropriates moneys to DOCARE for purchasing much needed equipment that will directly benefit the health and abundance of our nearshore marine resources.

For these reasons, we **STRONGLY SUPPORT HB506 HD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony,

Jenny Yagodich

Director of Educational Programs &  
Makai Watch Coordinator

# Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



February 24, 2025

House Committee on Finance  
Hawai'i State Legislature

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 506, Relating to Conservation Enforcement

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

We strongly support HB506 HD1, Relating to Conservation Enforcement. This bill appropriates funds for equipment for the O'ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement of the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that promote funding for natural resource protection and restoration, ocean resources, our coral reefs, subsistence fishing, and coastal resilience, among other priorities.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force is a group of over 100 individuals from diverse environmental organizations, working together to safeguard marine ecosystems. Our collective expertise allows us to craft impactful strategies to protect Hawai'i's waters.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

*The Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that promote funding for natural resource protection and restoration, ocean resources, coral reefs, subsistence fishing, and coastal resilience, and other priorities.*



Testimony Before The  
House Committee on Finance (FIN)  
**IN SUPPORT OF HB506 HD1**

February 24, 2025, 2:00 p.m., Room 308 & Via Videoconference

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Kevin Chang, Kua'āina Advocate and Executive Director, respectively, testifying on behalf of [Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo \(or KUA\)](#). "Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo" stands for "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and our acronym "KUA" means "backbone." **Our mission is to connect and empower communities to improve their quality of life through the collective care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage, serving as a "backbone organization" that supports creative and community-driven solutions to problems stemming from environmental degradation.** Hawai'i's biocultural resources continue to be negatively impacted by political, economic, and social changes, and the increasing dangers of climate change make fostering and empowering resilient communities acutely critical.

Currently KUA supports three major networks of: (1) over 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." **Our shared vision is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'ĀINA MOMONA – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.**

**KUA strongly supports HB506 HD1 as an incremental step towards 'āina momona.**

This bill would appropriate funds to the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, to supply needed equipment for the O'ahu Branch to effectively carry out its mission to uphold the laws necessary to protect, conserve, and manage our unique and limited biocultural and historic resources held in public trust for current and future generations.

**A large number of our network members partner with DOCARE officers through growing community-based co-management initiatives from mauka to makai. These DOCARE officers are often the first representation community members face from DLNR.** Some wahi pana (significant places) have become well-known for their absence of almost any DOCARE presence – largely due to inadequate training resources and capacity. A bill like this, which we urge you to support, and the growing DOCARE Academy we hope you continue to support, are beginning to fill that gap. With the recent graduating classes, so far we have heard only praise and gratitude from our community members with DOCARE's increased presence and effectiveness throughout our state. **As DOCARE's officer pool continues to grow, likewise they need more equipment to carry out their enforcement duties.**

The communities we work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural resources that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe our environment, the foundation of our very existence, is about long-term investment and a vision of ‘āina momona.** To get there it requires taking the steps necessary for greater self-sufficiency, development of a pipeline of new and more innovative career pathways, mindsets, relationships, and resources for mālama ‘āina efforts. Passing this bill out of your committee supports reaching our goal to once again realize the abundant and thriving ecological balance in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support. Please **PASS** HB506 HD1.

**Aloha ‘Āina Momona no Nā Kau ā Kau.**

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 8:07:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**SUPPORT!**

More funding for DOCARE is critical for protecting the reefs, ocean and aquatic life!

Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 8:51:41 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Asner	Hawaii Marine Education and Research Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators,

I strongly support HB506 HD1 to appropriate funds for equipment for the O‘ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). HB506 HD1 will fund equipment that is essential for DOCARE officers to enforce night-time fishing regulations. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores. Our fishing regulations must be enforced more effectively so populations of these important reef saviors can recover. I urge you to support HB506 HD1 and help stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes.

Mahalo,

Greg Asner, Director



Mālama  
Learning  
Center

P.O. Box 1662  
Honolulu, HI 96806

*Mālama Learning Center is a non-profit organization based in West Oahu. Our mission is to inspire communities to care for Hawai'i by perpetuating conservation, culture, and sustainability through education.*

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 506 HD1

### House Committee on Finance

Hearing Date: February 24, 2025 at 2:00 pm  
Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Aloha Kākou. My name is Pauline Sato and I serve as the Executive Director of the Mālama Learning Center, a private, non-profit environmental education organization serving schools and communities in West O'ahu. I am submitting written testimony in strong support of HB 506 HD1, which would appropriate funds for equipment for the O'ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resource (DLNR).

I recognize the value of DOCARE's work in protecting Hawaii's natural and cultural resources. However, their ability to enforce regulations is hampered by a lack of adequate equipment and funding. HB506 HD1 will fund equipment that is essential for DOCARE officers to enforce night-time fishing regulations. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores.

I am born and raised in Hawai'i and have dedicated my career to conservation because I love our lands and waters to no end. Sadly, I see how our government has been consistently underinvesting in our 'āina. Particularly in this time of severe federal government funding reductions, we must do what we can locally to protect the resources that our communities need to live sustainably.

I urge your committee to pass HB 506 HD1 and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Aloha,



**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 11:26:20 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kosaki, Randall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators,

**I am writing to ask for your support of HB506**, which will equip DLNR DOCARE enforcement officers with equipment that is essential for night-time enforcement of fishing regulations. Illegal night spearfishing and gill-netting of reef fishes, especially in marine protected areas and in the newly created Maunalua Bay Fisheries Management Area, will exacerbate depletion of populations of herbivorous fishes (especially uhu or parrotfish, family Scaridae). **These herbivores, the “lawnmowers of the reef”, are essential to keeping algal growth from smothering our corals**, especially in the wake of coral mortality driven by climate change driven events such as coral bleaching (and subsequent death), and damage from major storms and hurricanes.

I have worked as a professional marine biologist here in Hawaii for nearly 40 years. I am also an avid recreational spearfisher. Whether on the job as a biologist, or in the water as a fisher, I have witnessed a serious decline in the abundance of these ecologically important fishes during my lifetime. O’ahu’s abundance of herbivores has been reduced through human activities to less than 5% of their abundance on the pristine reefs of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands where I work. These observations come from peer-reviewed scientific studies of the highest caliber.

Thank you for your support of HB506, and for helping to stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes. The continued existence of coral reefs as we know them is at stake.

Sincerely yours,

Randall Kosaki, Ph.D.

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 12:28:48 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Friedlander	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators,

I am writing in strong support of HB506, which would improve DOCARE's ability to enforce existing fishing regulations and improve the health of fish populations around O'ahu's. Studies authored by myself and others have shown a severe decline in herbivorous fish populations across Hawai'i, some dangerously low, imperiling our coral reefs statewide. Maintenance and recovery of coral reefs require herbivores, which graze on limu and help reefs recover from climate-driven bleaching, as well as local threats from poor water quality, overfishing, and habitat loss. O'ahu's herbivore populations are in crisis with populations at less than 5% of their potential capacity. A major contributor to herbivore depletion is illegal spearing and lay gillnetting, especially at night and in marine protected areas. This bill would help to address this issue and aid in the recovery of these keystone species. I have worked on nearshore fisheries and coral reefs in Hawai'i and across the global for over 4 decades and have documented significant declines in fish stocks, particularly in populated islands such as O'ahu. Many locations have passed the tipping point but there is still hope for Hawai'i. One of the main complaints from fishers is the lack of enforcement of existing regulations. This legislation is a critical step in helping to ensure we can restore severely depleted herbivore populations and build coral reef resilience in the face of climate impacts. Restoring herbivore populations is essential for reef recovery and for the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo, Alan Friedlander, Ph.D

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 12:32:57 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 1:17:34 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

2/22/25

Aloha Legislators,

I strongly support HB506 HD1 which would appropriate funds for equipment for the O‘ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

HB506 HD1 will fund equipment that is essential for DOCARE officers to enforce night-time fishing regulations. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores.

These herbivores like parrotfishes are especially important for keeping dead reef surfaces clean so new corals can settle and grow. Our fishing regulations must be enforced more effectively so populations of these important reef saviors can recover.

I urge you to support HB506 HD1 and help stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes.

Mahalo,

Stephen Thompson

Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 2:09:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarita Rich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

2/22/25

Aloha Legislators,

I strongly support HB506 HD1 which will provide funding for the O‘ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to enforce night-time fishing regulations.

Without specialized equipment like night-vision goggles and drones, DOCARE officers aren't able to apprehend enough of the lawbreakers who are depleting our herbivore fish populations, especially parrotfishes. These fishes play a vital role in keeping Hawai'i's reefs healthy by eating seaweeds that grow on the surfaces of corals. These seaweeds can suffocate corals if left to grow unchecked. In keeping the reef surfaces clear, these herbivore fishes also allow new corals to settle and grow, ensuring reef longevity.

Our fishing regulations must be enforced more effectively so populations of these important reef fishes can recover.

I urge you to support HB506 HD1. Please help our herbivorous fish populations recover by passing HB506 HD1 to secure the necessary funding for DOCARE to effectively enforce fishing regulations.

Mahalo,

Sarita Rich

Honolulu, Hawai‘i

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 2:11:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dennis Mahaffay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

2-22-25

Aloha Legislators,

I strongly support HB506 HD1 which would appropriate funds for equipment for the O‘ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

HB506 HD1 will fund equipment that is essential for DOCARE officers to enforce night-time fishing regulations. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores.

These fishes, the “lawnmowers of the reef,” are especially important for keeping dead reef surfaces clean so new corals can settle and grow. Our fishing regulations must be enforced more effectively so populations of these important reef saviors can recover.

I urge you to support HB506 HD1 and help stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes.

Mahalo,

Dennis Mahaffay

Honolulu, Hawai‘i

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 3:51:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Phil Rarick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Honorable Chairman and members of the committee, I wish to testify in STRONG SUPPORT of HB506 HD1 being heard before the House Finance Committee.

I support this equipment funding bill to allow DLNR DOCARE Oahu branch to enforce the last years enacted DLNR DAR Herbivore Administrative rules with necessary equipment.

I have witnessed first hand the fish population decline in the ocean waters surrounding the island of Oahu. The Uhu / Parrot fish, and Kala fish have been targeted. The method of take is night diving and spearing of fish @ night when the Uhu sleep. Not pono, not traditional gathering practice as underwater lights were non-existent in ancient times.

DOCARE Oahu branch has had a staff increase with two recruit classes. The equipment for these officers was not funded for the items articulated in this funding bill. In addition the items for an effective Marine Enforcement unit are lacking, or existing equipment is in serious need of upgrade / repair for Officer Safety and effective patrol use. A marine SCUBA Enforcement unit for underwater use does not currently have equipment.

The Oahu shoreline waters to three miles off shore "blue water" are the focus area for night patrols to catch violators poaching our resources. Thus the equipment needed. Shoreline patrols at night are critical for having enough working patrol trucks. Use of night vision equipment, and drone deployment for observation are needed. The Oahu branch does NOT currently have enough patrol trucks with law enforcement equipment in service for all officers.

The use of surveillance trailers and automated license plate readers @ small boat harbors on Oahu can free up patrol officers for patrol, while gathering data on suspected violators. This also provides a deterrent for violent crime in the area deployed.

Communications ie two way radios, and base station dispatch upgrade is a primary safety item for each patrol officer. This is an ongoing need for the Oahu branch of DOCARE.

This bill is for Oahu only. I strongly urge you to support HB506HD1 to HELP EQUIP THE OAHU BRANCH of DOCARE, and stem the poaching of our herbivore fish around Oahu.

Mahalo,



Phil Rarick - East Oahu resident

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2025 4:47:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edward Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Honorable Chairman and members of the Committee, I wish to write in SUPPORT of this bill.

The DLNR Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) O'ahu Branch has struggled for many years with an adequate amount of equipment to effectively perform their official duties of enforcing and protecting State land and ocean waters. Their area of responsibility (AOR) is island-wide, from mauka to makai, and there has been an ever increasing amount of complaints and violations occurring.

Specifically focused on the marine life that surrounds the island, the amount of fishing has risen exponentially and there has been an influx of fishing violations that DOCARE O'ahu Branch has difficulty responding to in a timely manner.

Although O'ahu Branch had a recent staff increase with the past two (2) academy's, this brings the issue of having the right amount of patrol vehicles required for each Officer to effectively patrol the island for these fishing violations. They are in desperate need of newer vehicles and proper police equipment to ensure they can catch the violators.

Our marine life is very finite and without DOCARE's enforcement, there would be no proper control of the violators who continuously deplete our fisheries. Without enforcement, it will get to the point that there will be no fish for the future. We must seriously think about the future of our marine life.

We all need to do our part to protect our natural resources and I hope you will see the need to support DOCARE in their mission to enforce and protect our 'Aina, our Kai, our Honua.

Thank you for your time.

Aloha Chair Kyle T. Yamashita and the Members of the Finance Committee,

I support HB506 HD1. This bill would fund equipment that is truly needed for DOCARE officers on Oahu to better enforce existing fishing regulations, especially at night. Without night-vision goggles, and other specialized equipment and training, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores.

### **The Critical Importance of Uhu (Parrotfish)**

According to scientists at the University of Hawaii, approximately 70% of the white sand in Hawaii comes from uhu (parrotfish). Parrotfish feed on the algae that grow on the surface of many reefs. In this process of eating, the parrotfish teeth also chew off a small bit of the coral, which is ground up further by special grinding teeth, and eventually expelled (pooped out) as white sand. A single large parrotfish can produce 2,000 pounds of white sand, or more, per year!

In addition to parrotfish helping us preserve our beaches by producing about 70% of all the white sand in Hawaii, scientists also tell us that parrotfish are good for the health of our coral reefs. In addition to removing the algae that sometimes smother and kill our coral reefs, the small bite marks on the coral actually stimulate new coral growth, which helps corals be more resilient against warming ocean water and pollution.

### **The Remaining Uhu (Parrotfish) Stocks are Being Rapidly Depleted**

Uhu (parrotfish) are already listed as a “depleted” species by the National Marine Fisheries Service. They have been overfished in Hawaii, and especially Oahu, in a way that is not sustainable on a long-term basis.

The scientific evidence is also consistent with my personal observations, and the observations of my friends who spearfish and surf. On both the North Shore and the South Shore of Oahu, we used to see many parrotfish, now we see very few.

### **Spearfishing at Night Makes it Way Too Easy to Find and Kill Uhu (Parrotfish)**

Parrot fish tend to be wary of humans in the daytime. At night, however, parrotfish are typically in a “sleep-like” state, and frequently sleeping under rock overhangs or in crevices, and particularly vulnerable to spearfishing at night. When an underwater hunter finds a sleeping parrotfish and shines a light on it at night, it typically does not swim away, which makes it an easy target, just swim up to it and spear it.

Many South Pacific islands have similar species and sub-species of parrotfish, to those found in Hawaii. And on many of those South Pacific islands, parrotfish have been absolutely decimated by excessive spearfishing at night. On Guam, at least one sub-species of parrotfish is now extinct.

Here in Hawaii, all too often, especially on Oahu, people will spearfish for uhu (parrotfish) at night, with lights, and kill literally dozens of parrotfish, even though the legal “bag limit” per day is 2 parrot fish.

I urge you to support HB506 HD1 and help stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes, including the critically important uhu (parrot fish).

Mahalo for considering the ideas in this testimony,

Ken Martyn, Waialua, Hawaii

References supporting the scientific statements made in this testimony, are listed below:

<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/exploringourfluidearth/physical/coastal-interactions/beaches-and-sand/weird-science-parrotfish-and-sand>

<https://ocean.si.edu/ocean-life/fish/tough-teeth-and-parrotfish-poop>

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/animals-we-protect/parrotfish/#:~:text=Parrotfish%20live%20in%20reefs%20all,in%20the%20coral%E2%80%94at%20night.>

<https://fishpono.org/>

## **Testimony in Support of HB506 HD1**

February 23, 2025

Aloha Legislators,

I strongly support HB506 HD1 which would appropriate funds for equipment for the O'ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

HB506 HD1 will fund equipment that is essential for DOCARE officers to enforce night-time fishing regulations. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores.

These fishes, the "lawnmowers of the reef," are especially important for keeping dead reef surfaces clean so new corals can settle and grow. Our fishing regulations must be enforced more effectively so populations of these important reef saviors can recover.

I urge you to support HB506 HD1 and help stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes.

Mahalo,

Sherri Rigg  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 12:35:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mackenzie manning	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators,

I strongly support HB506 HD1 which would appropriate funds for equipment for the O‘ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

HB506 HD1 will fund equipment that is essential for DOCARE officers to enforce night-time fishing regulations. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores.

These fishes, the “lawnmowers of the reef,” are especially important for keeping dead reef surfaces clean so new corals can settle and grow. Our fishing regulations must be enforced more effectively so populations of these important reef saviors can recover.

I urge you to support HB506 HD1 and help stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes.

Thank you,

Mackenzie Manning

**HB-506-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 12:39:30 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stuart Coleman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair & Committee Members.

I'm writing in support HB506 HD1 which would appropriate funds for equipment for the O'ahu Branch of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). I have seen the illegal activities that are devastating our herbivore reef fish, and we need to equip our DOCARE officers with the equipment they need.

This bill will fund equipment that is essential for DOCARE officers to enforce night-time fishing regulations. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the parrotfishes and other herbivores. It's just not pono to hunt them at night while they're sleeping, and it needs to stop.

These fish are the "lawnmowers of the reef," and they are especially important for keeping dead reef surfaces clean so new corals can settle and grow. Our fishing regulations must be enforced more effectively so populations of these important reef saviors can recover. That will mean bigger and healthier fish populations down the line, and that benefits all of us!

I urge you to support HB506 HD1 and help stem the illegal take of herbivorous fishes. Mahalo for your leadership on this issue.

Aloha, Stuart Coleman, [REDACTED]

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance,

In strongly supporting HB506, I wish to briefly review the origin of this bill, which is not well documented. HB506 resulted from 2024 House Resolution 69 and Senate Resolution 104, which instructed the Division of Aquatic Resources to convene a working group of relevant experts from state and federal agencies, universities, and other organizations to document the state of coral-reef herbivorous fish populations around the island of O‘ahu and recommend corrective action. As the Hsiao Endowed Professor of Marine Biology at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, I was a member of that working group, which was convened in the State Capitol last December.

Why the focus on herbivorous fishes? These living lawnmowers of the sea, including parrotfishes (uhu), surgeonfishes (kala, kole, and others), and chubs (nenu), eat various kinds of seaweeds, preventing them from overgrowing and smothering corals. Living corals are the “trees” of the reef, providing habitat for all coastal sea life. And living coral reefs in Hawai‘i are worth \$100s millions, being extremely valuable as natural breakwaters protecting our shores from sea level rise, and as sources of the sand that replenishes our beaches, fisheries that feed us, and new medicines, among other ecosystem goods and services. And the cultural and spiritual value of coral reefs is incalculable.

Unfortunately for Hawai‘i, many of our coral reefs are degraded and covered with seaweeds, and herbivorous fish populations are severely depleted, especially around O‘ahu. Working group members reviewed previously published information and new data from NOAA showing that O‘ahu is by far in the worst shape of all Hawaiian Islands in terms of herbivore depletion (see graphs below).

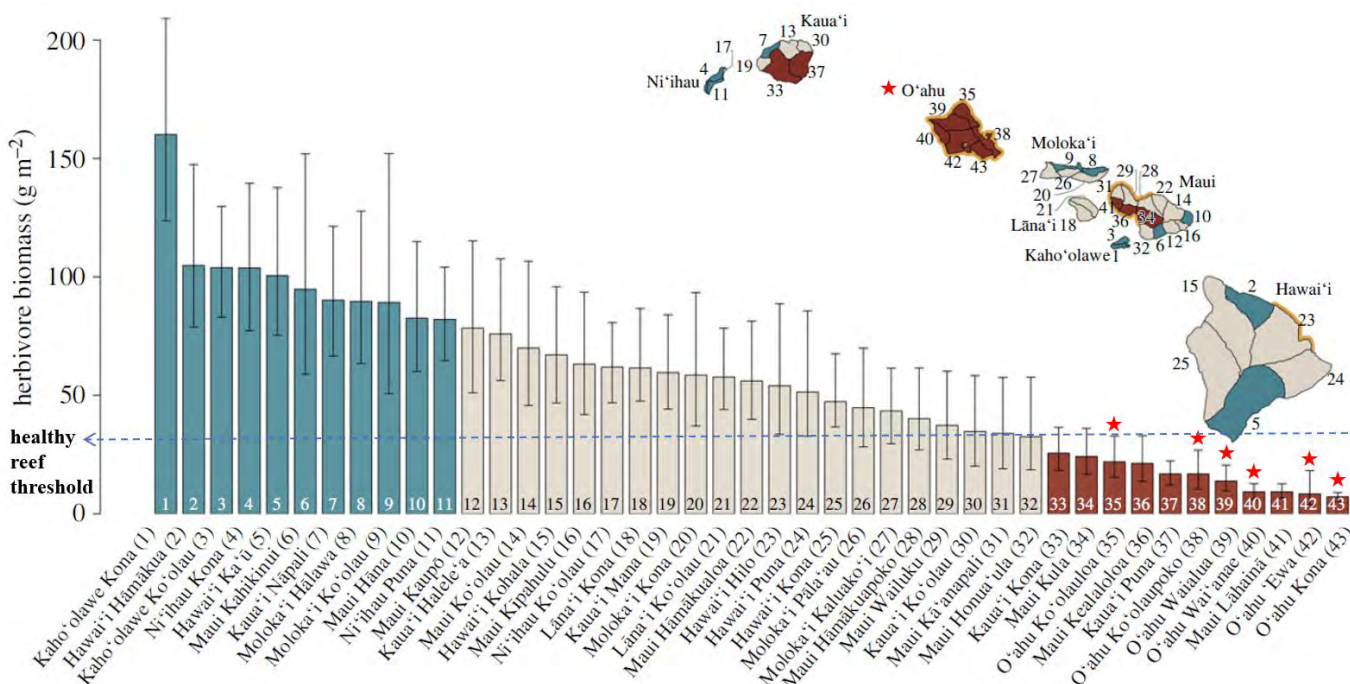
The working group’s primary consensus was that DOCARE requires much needed equipment to help their woefully understaffed marine patrol stop the rampant overfishing of herbivores that occurs at night on O‘ahu reefs. HB506 will provide this equipment. It is common knowledge that groups of spearfishers pillage entire reefs as herbivores like uhu sleep helplessly under ledges at night. My neighbor witnessed a dozen trucks unload about 30 divers for night diving on our local reef. They cleaned-out our reef. Such accounts are common around our island. These lawbreakers are not only depleting our fisheries, they are also greatly endangering the very survival of our coral reefs.

I understand that there are currently only 3 DOCARE officers dedicated to night marine patrols around O‘ahu, an island of 1 million people. Without night-vision goggles, drones, and other specialized equipment, the number of apprehensions of lawbreakers is far too low to save the herbivores that are critical for the survival of our reefs. As a professional marine biologist who has studied these fishes on O‘ahu since the 1970s, I have personally witnessed their extreme decline over the decades. Those who argue that there are plenty of uhu around O‘ahu are simply wrong.

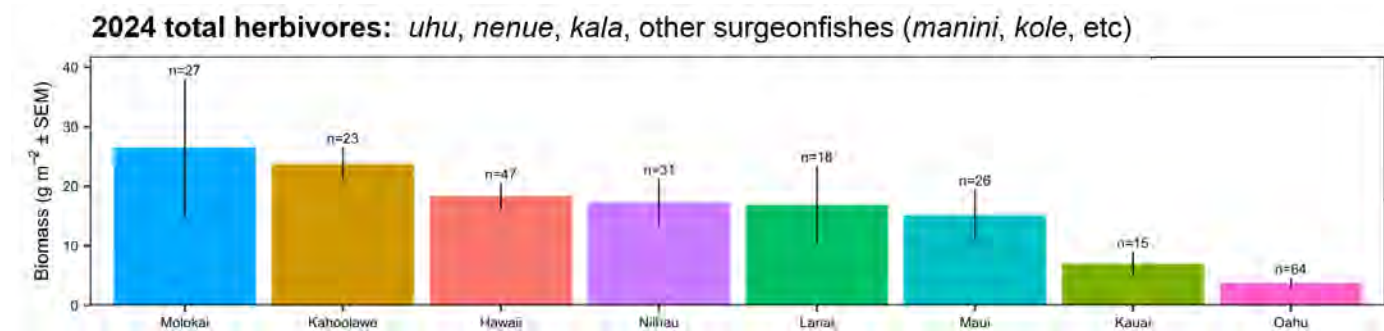


Our existing fishing regulations – from the new herbivore fishing rules enacted last year to the new night spearfishing ban in Maunalua Bay – must be enforced effectively so populations of our herbivorous reef saviors can recover. Otherwise, those who plunder our reefs with zero regard for the law will continue their nighttime pillaging. I urge you – no, I beg you – to support HB506. If we continue to kick the can of coral reef conservation down the road, I guarantee you that we will lose our reefs.

Mahalo,  
Mark Hixon



Abundance of herbivorous fishes (grams of fish per square meter of reef) in each moku of the main Hawaiian Islands. Red stars indicate the extreme depletion of herbivores around O'ahu (Donovan et al. 2023 *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*). The “healthy reef threshold” is the abundance of herbivores necessary for reefs to remain healthy (Brock 1979 UH PhD thesis).



Abundance of herbivorous fishes (grams of fish per square meter of reef) around each of the main Hawaiian Islands from NOAA's 2024 diver surveys (n is the number of survey sites per island). Note the extremely low abundance of herbivores around O'ahu (far right).