January 20, 2015

Dear Board of Regents and UH Foundation,

I join many of my constituents and fellow legislators who feel urgency to act on climate change and call on the University of Hawaii to divest its endowment from fossil fuels. Divesting stigmatizes fossil fuel companies, eventually weakening their stranglehold on our economy and politics, and leading to carbon-restrictive legislation. Carbon emissions from burning coal, oil and gas must be cut sharply and as soon as possible.

Global warming has already begun to compromise Hawaii's unique beauty and appeal. It will severely damage our indispensable tourism industry and infrastructure; raise temperatures dramatically; bring periods of drought and heavy rain with flooding; endanger fisheries; diminish crop production; destroy treasured cultural sites; and increase the spread of invasive species. Sixteen universities and colleges have already committed to divestment, while many more consider following their example.

Since the university should serve the public interest, it has a responsibility to show bold leadership in tackling the climate crisis. That leadership includes divesting from an industry that is destroying our future, and reinvesting in solutions to climate change. Divesting is very unlikely to cost anything; the costs of climate change are certain to be enormous.

As a leading research institution, in the state most vulnerable to global warming, UH should not be left behind in the growing divestment movement. It should add its support to the 181 institutions and local governments that have divested, including colleges and universities, cities, counties, religious institutions and charitable foundations, as well as thousands of individuals.

We believe the University of Hawaii must align its interests with the needs of our community and do what it can to address the greatest challenge of our time. We urge you to take strong action on climate change and divest from fossil fuels immediately.

Mahalo Nui

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