



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Tourism and International Affairs
And Senate Committee on Water and Land

February 11, 2015 at 2:45pm

By

Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor

And

Darren Lerner, Director

Dolan Eversole, Extension Agent

Sea Grant College Program

University of Hawai'i at Manoa

SB617– RELATING TO BEACH PROTECTION

Chairs Kahele and Thielen, Vice Chairs English and Galuteria, and members of the committees:

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of SB617. This legislation expands the Department of Land and Natural Resources' (DLNR) beach restoration efforts to include beach conservation plans and allows the DLNR to include studies about the effect of sea level rise and other coastal engineering studies. Along with the allocated funds, proceeds from the lease of public lands for an existing shoreline structure will provide critical and stable funding source to carry out coastal research including the development of beach restoration and conservation plans statewide.

Hawaii'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 Hawaii'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 environments, and our tourism-based economy. Beaches are the backbone of Hawaii's \$15 Billion tourism industry and are central to Hawaii's unique culture and lifestyle.

The Sea Grant College Program supports the development of special discretionary funds through the DLNR to facilitate improved understanding and management of Hawaii's coastal resources. Beaches are universally accepted as critical and highly valued natural resources that provide essential social, cultural, ecological and economic value to Hawaii's communities and economy. The fund will be critical to the development and the implementation of local and regional beach conservation and management plans and projects. The DLNR has a proven history in successfully developing beach conservation plans and managing coastal assets as exemplified by the 2012 Waikī Beach Maintenance project.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.