



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Public Safety, Veterans, & Military Affairs
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By

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HB 1914 – RELATING TO DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Gates and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports HB 1914 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Budget.

This Bill is urgently needed because there is more hazard risk than people realize, particularly with regard to hurricanes. Note the following:

- 1) A Pacific Disaster Study conducted after the near hit of Hurricane Lane in 2018, estimated a Category 2 strike on O'ahu would result in 52,000 displaced households and 27 billion dollars in damage.
- 2) A 2019 Hurricane Behavioral Study by FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency found the average citizen was ill-prepared and had not properly gathered their supplies or readied their homes. The number one recommendation was increased education and outreach. The second was help in hardening homes.
- 3) A 2019 Communication Outreach and Education Study conducted by Hawai'i Sea Grant, at the request of the 2017 HI State Legislature, concluded that education and outreach should be significantly increased with traditional and non-traditional methods on a continuous long-term basis to inform and prepare citizens in the State. Thus, the hiring of six education/outreach/volunteerism specialists working in partnership as specified in the report and now supported by HB 1914. The 2019 Communication Study is based on: (a) the Pacific Disaster Study, (b) the Hurricane Behavioral Study, (c) concepts of social science, (d) interviews with all Emergency Management and Civil Defense Agencies at the

State and county level, and (e) lessons learned in conducting hazard preparation outreach and education since 2007.

Hawai'i Sea Grant is well positioned to participate in this partnership and has demonstrated success through its Homeowner's Handbook publication (see website link below). In 2007, Hawai'i Sea Grant produced the *Homeowner's Handbook to Prepare for Natural Hazards* which provides useful tips regarding readiness for natural hazards such as tsunami, earthquakes, floods and hurricanes. The handbook lists local civil defense and emergency management agency information, provides guidance on evacuation planning, and explains various measures to reduce property damage through home retrofit. This publication has gone through ten print runs with over 100,000 copies and has been modified for eleven other U.S. states and countries based off the Hawai'i book. The 4th Edition, released in late 2019, was a major update with more options on home retrofit, as well as evacuation planning guidance. and sections on volcanoes and climate change. It is estimated about 3,000 homes have been retrofitted since 2007, through the education and outreach of many organizations, including Hawai'i Sea Grant.

Hawai'i Sea Grant is committed to continued partnership with all emergency management and civil defense agencies at the State and county level in order to make our communities more resilient and foster a greater culture of preparedness in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

<http://seagrantsoest.hawaii.edu/homeowners-handbook-to-prepare-for-natural-hazards/>