



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Water & Land
House Committee of Higher Education & Technology
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By

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And

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HB 1924 – RELATING TO A WILDFIRE FORECAST SYSTEM FOR HAWAII

Chairs Ichiyama and Perruso, Vice Chairs Poepoe and Kapela, and members of the Water & Land and Higher Education & Technology Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1924, provided its adoption does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents Approved Budget. This measure establishes and appropriates funds for the University of Hawai'i to develop a wildfire forecast system for the State of Hawai'i. The system will assist in forecasting potential wildfire incidents across the State of Hawai'i in order to enhance public safety, preparedness, and risk mitigation.

This early detection system will allow authorities to issue timely warnings to enhance the preparedness of first responders and enable the broader community to take proactive measures, such as evacuation planning and home risk mitigation. By providing timely information, these forecasts can help reduce the total area burned and mitigate the overall impacts of wildfire through rapid response and suppression efforts. By better anticipating potential wildfire locations and intensities, the forecast system assists emergency responders to allocate resources more efficiently. This includes positioning of firefighting teams, equipment, and helicopters in strategic locations based on the forecasted fire behavior. The rapid response leads to better control of the fire, reducing its spread and resultant damage. Finally, in collaboration with the National Weather Service, Department of Land and Natural Resources-Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Hawai'i-Emergency Management Agency, and county fire departments, wildfire risk forecasts from this project will be integrated into the Red Flag Warning to improve the overall preparedness and response capabilities of these agencies.

The UH Mānoa (UHM) College of Engineering's research capabilities in artificial intelligence and the Hawai'i Climate Data Portal development by the UHM Water Resources Research Center, combined with the extensive outreach activities and technical solutions from the UHM College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, will provide the full range of skillsets and research, as well as the climate data necessary to develop this important tool for Hawai'i's decision-makers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.