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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Monday, February 24, 2025 — 2:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative strongly supports HB 306 HD 2, Relating to State Water Code Penalties.

Dear Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mariah Yoshizu, and I am the Government Affairs Associate at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono strongly supports HB 306 HD 2, which adds a minimum penalty and amends the maximum penalty per violation of the State Water Code, expands the types of potential violations of the State Water Code, and makes each day that a violation exists or continues to exist a separate offense. This bill also establishes factors the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) must consider when determining the amount of the penalty and increases maximum fines in five-year increments from 2030 to 2045.

What value do we place on an irreplaceable resource? Currently, CWRM can only impose a maximum fine of \$5,000 per violation of the State Water Code. This stands in stark contrast to other jurisdictions like Arizona, California, and Texas that have the authority to issue fines of \$10,000 per day to water users who exceed their permitted allocations. Even within our own state, the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) can charge a maximum penalty of \$60,000 per water pollution violation.

We cannot issue a water pollution fine if there is no water left to pollute. The State Water Code was established to protect Hawai'i's water resources, but its effectiveness depends on compliance and meaningful enforcement. This bill sends a message that we value the health and wellbeing of water, and mistreatment of such a vital resource can have serious financial consequences.

We applaud the Legislature for underscoring the immeasurable value of *wai* by considering this measure for passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Mariah Yoshizu
Government Affairs Associate

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i