

Written Testimony of Representative Ed Case (HI-01)

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

Thursday, 27 February

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with the Committee on water resources activities and programs that are important to both our nation and my home state of Hawai‘i.

With its unique reliance on ocean shipping as an island state and the growing challenges climate change is causing through coastal erosion and flooding, Hawai‘i needs our assistance now more than ever. The State of Hawai‘i needs the vision and technical assistance only the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can provide. We must start new studies and implement new construction projects to protect vulnerable communities and my state’s economic lifeline to the world.

The Island of O‘ahu has two critical ports that need your support. As the main port of Hawai‘i, Honolulu Harbor receives and distribute all overseas cargo shipments for the state, supports fishing operations and cruise ships and handles government activity, such as the work done by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. With roughly 80% of our goods imported via shipping, the harbor is our lifeline to the outside world, which is why Honolulu Harbor needs critical improvements. These modifications will improve transportation efficiency and lessen the impact of cross channel currents. Kalaeloa Barbers Point Harbor is equally important to Hawai‘i as it specializes in dry-bulk and liquid-bulk cargos and provides space for ship maintenance and repair services that cannot fit in Honolulu Harbor. With increase congestion causing berthing conflicts between dry- and liquid-bulk shipments, the harbor facilities must be expanded.

My state is also dealing with increased flooding from severe rains, especially from hurricanes, as part of climate change. It places lives and property at extreme risk. For example, in April 2018, the Island of Kaua‘i received nearly 50 inches of rain, causing flooding and setting a new national record for the most rainfall within the span of 24 hours. This massive flooding and related landslides left flood victims stranded, damaged or destroyed hundreds of houses and caused millions of dollars in damage. My state expects this problem to continue in the years to come, with an increasing number of hurricanes in our region of the Pacific. This is why I am seeking your support for the Wailupe Flood Risk Management Study, a “new start” important to my constituents living in ‘ina Haina. If a 100-year flood of Wailupe Stream were to occur, it would wash out the Kalaniana‘ole Highway, strand thousands of motorists, flood more than 819 homes in the valley and affect twenty-eight commercial buildings. With your support we have the power to directly mitigate these risks and potentially save lives.

Finally, accelerating coastal erosions is leaving the economy and infrastructure of Hawai‘i and other coastal states at risk. In addition to houses and businesses that may be overtaken by the ocean, Hawaii’s economy relies heavily on beaches, so shoreline erosion is a direct threat to our economic future. For example, researchers with the University of Hawai‘i found that within the

next 25-30 years Hawaii's shores could lose 100 feet of beachfront. The critical need for new studies and projects to mitigate these risks cannot be overstated.

If Hawai'i does not see these new start projects and studies in the three areas I have discussed today, my state will face growing physical, economic, environmental and social challenges. We need to act now to ensure sufficient, reliable funding for critical water infrastructure programs.

Thank you for your time, and I appreciate your consideration of these concerns from Hawai'i as the committee reauthorizes the Water Resources Development Act.