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Mayor



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County of Hawai'i

KONA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE

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March 23, 2026

Chair David A. Tarnas
Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

RE: Strong Support for S.B. 2372, SD2, HD1 Relating to Trees

DATE: Wednesday, March 25, 2026
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: State Capitol, Conference Room 325
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

The Kona Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee respectfully submits this written testimony in **strong support of S.B. 2372, SD2, HD1 Relating to Trees.**

This measure strengthens Hawai'i's ability to identify, preserve, and steward exceptional and significant trees by establishing baseline selection criteria and supporting a more coordinated implementation framework. The Committee supports this bill's efforts to improve consistency in the Exceptional Trees Program and to reinforce collaboration among the State, counties, and qualified advisory bodies.

Article XI of the Constitution of the State of Hawai'i calls for the conservation and protection of Hawai'i's natural beauty and resources for present and future generations. In the same spirit, the first Guiding Principle of the Kona CDP is to protect Kona's natural resources. Trees are among the most visible, valuable, and irreplaceable of those resources.

The Legislature's passage of the Exceptional Tree Act in 1974 recognized that exceptional trees on both public and private lands deserve protection from improper trimming, damage, and unnecessary removal. S.B. 2372, SD2, HD1 builds upon that legacy by providing clearer standards and stronger support for the ongoing care and preservation of these important community assets.

This bill is consistent with the Environmental Resources goals, policies, and actions of the Kona CDP. As Chapter 4.3.2 explains, Kona's growing ecological awareness must be matched by informed policies that protect and manage our diverse natural resources.

Exceptional and significant trees advance that vision. They enhance open spaces, serve as cultural and visual landmarks, strengthen community character, and provide important environmental benefits such as shade, urban canopy protection, groundwater filtration, and support for healthy rainfall patterns. Their preservation also aligns with Kona CDP Policy LU-2.5 (Village Design Guidelines), which calls for incorporating natural and cultural features into the community.

Recognizing and protecting exceptional trees reflects our community's commitment to safeguarding one of Kona's most valuable natural resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Pelletier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Pelletier" clearly distinguishable.

John Pelletier, Chair
Kona Community Development Plan Action Committee

JH

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