HB 424 would amend Sections 195F-4, 195F-6 and 183-16, HRS, to allocate income from the forest stewardship fund on a priority basis to reforestation and maintenance of harvested plantation areas.

Our statement on this measure is compiled from voluntarily submitted opinions of the listed reviewers and does not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Our reviewers expressed concerns that the proposed amendments would result in directing all of the income from the forest stewardship fund to maintenance of timber operations at the expense of the educational, training and forest management intent of the original legislation. Only a portion of designated forest reserves are set aside for forest product harvesting, yet these areas will be the focus of all forest stewardship expenditures under the proposed measure. Other crucial functions of forest reserves such as watershed management, soil conservation and habitat preservation are likely to suffer without a more balanced management approach.

We further note that excessive emphasis on monoculture forestry is likely to lead to plantation practices that replace native forests with alien species and promote forestry practices that are geared towards export products, rather than those that would enhance local industry. Eucalyptus and other monoculture species may offer profitable biofiber exports, but such practices result in long-term soil depletion and watershed deterioration.

While we support the intent of stimulating economic recovery for Hawaii, we view the proposed measure as unbalanced and ultimately threatening to both our long-term economic health and the health of our forest ecosystems.