HB 1084
RELATING TO NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF

House Committee on Economic Development and Business Concerns

Public Hearing, February 1, 1999
8:30 a.m., Room 325, State Capitol

by
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HB 1084 would add a new chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes creating the emergency natural disaster relief fund in the office of the governor and the natural disaster loss mitigation fund in the department of commerce and consumer affairs and would amend Chapters 431P and 431P-16, HRS, to transfer assets from the Hawaii hurricane relief fund into the newly created funds.

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.

This administration proposal generalizes the applicability of existing provisions for emergency funding relief of damages resulting from hurricanes to a broader category of natural disaster relief. In view of the unavoidable certainty of occurrence of these events, we strongly concur with the intent of this measure to provide for immediate state response in the event of a natural disaster.

However, we note recent experiences in other regions following natural disasters in which total damages far exceeded the levels of funding that have heretofore accumulated in the hurricane relief fund. Also, although federal assistance is likely in the event of such a disaster, life and property will depend on the most rapid response possible at the local level. In this regard, we suggest that this measure be amended to include provision for anticipatory planning and development of response optimization mechanisms. For instance, some portion of the newly created funds might be allocated to enhancement of a secure, hardened communication networking capability between critical information resources including the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, The Pacific Disaster Center on Maui, The National Weather Service, The Hawaii Volcano Observatory, and State Civil Defense.