HB 2474
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE
INCORPORATION OF A NINE-WEEK ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES PROGRAM
INTO THE SEVENTH GRADE SCIENCE CURRICULUM

House Committee on Education
Public Hearing - January 28, 1992
2:00 pm, Room 1206 SOT

By
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HB 2474 states that the public's limited awareness and understanding of the State's and the nation's environmental problems can be generally attributed to the lack of environmental programs in the academic curriculum. It further states that academic exposure to the principles of environmental protection will foster the development of increased awareness and the improvement of the State's environment.

Our statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

In the past various bills and resolutions have been introduced in an attempt to address the need for increased environmental education, yet there is a continued lack of effective legislation. While we generally concur with the intent of HB 2474, to promote environmental education and awareness, we do have some suggestions for modification of the legislation.

The legislature should recognize the many excellent programs that are currently addressing environmental education. The OHIA project of the Moanalua Gardens Foundation and the Bishop Museum has developed and completed teaching and resource materials for environmental education ranging from kindergarten to high school. In addition to the multimedia teaching materials developed by the project, 2,000 Hawaii teachers have been trained in environmental education. As a result, 95% of all schools have at least one teacher trained in environmental education. Furthermore, the Hawaii Nature Center also has excellent programs geared toward the environmental education of Hawaii's youth.
While HB 2474 calls for the requirement of a nine-week environmental studies program in the seventh grade, we suggest that this legislation would be limiting and misplaced. While environmental education should be required or at least stressed, it should commence at an earlier stage and continue through the academic curriculum. We strongly suggest that the legislature should make appropriations for the enhancement of existing educational programs like the OHIA project and the Hawaii Nature Center. Monies should be directed toward the Department of Education for the acquisition and development of materials and the continued training of teachers in ongoing environmental education programs.

It would certainly not be in the best interests of the State duplicate and possibly conflict with existing programs of such high caliber as the OHIA project and the Hawaii Nature Center. These and other successful programs should be utilized to their fullest extent in the continued environmental education of Hawaii's youth.