SB 2859
RELATING TO PUBLIC LANDS, MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSITION OF

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Housing, Hawaiian Programs and Natural Resources
Public Hearing - February 23, 1988

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SB 2859 would amend Section 26-15 of the Hawaii Revised Statues by expanding the present membership on the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) from six to seven members. Additionally, this bill would require that at least one member of the board have a background in natural resource management. This statement does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Under present statutes, HRS 171-5, action taken by the Board of Land and Natural Resources is by simple majority of the members of the board, and four members constitutes a quorum. Given the breadth of powers and duties of the Board as defined in HRS 171-3 and 171-6, the increasing population and development pressures on public lands, and the expansion of conflicting demands on natural resources, the need for a broader base of expertise is clearly warranted. Furthermore, given the focus of the responsibilities of the Board, it is only logical that some member, or members, should have specific expertise in natural resource management. We therefore support the intent of HB 2859 but we do call your attention to other issues that should be considered along with the proposed amendments.

Page 3, lines 14-15 of HB 2859 state:

There shall be not more than three members on the board from the same political party.
The proposed board membership increase to seven members would result in an uneven number of board members and thereby eliminate the present safeguard from potential political bias presently provided by HRS 174-4. It may be more appropriate to expand the board to eight members. The restriction on political party affiliation can then be rephrased to:

There shall be not more than four members on the board from the same political party.

If the board is expanded to eight members, we would urge that two members be required to have a natural resource management background.

One additional amendment should be considered. HRS 171-5 presently states that four members constitutes a quorum for doing business. We suggest that if the membership is increased to seven, or preferably eight, then the quorum number should be increased respectively to five or six.