



# University of Hawaii at Manoa

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## HB 507 RELATING TO THE IMPORTATION OF CERTAIN PROHIBITED ARTICLES

Statement for  
House Committees on  
Agriculture  
Water, Land Use Development & Hawaiian Homes  
Public Hearing - 14 February 1979

By  
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HB 507 would amend HRS 150A-6, a section that prohibits the importation of certain materials and organisms to delete from it a specific prohibition applying to "eels of the order Anguilliformes." This statement on the bill does not reflect an institutional position of the University.

Preparation of an Environmental Center statement on this bill presents an unusual but not unprecedented problem. In reviewing not only proposed legislation but other documents the Center attempts to represent the informed opinions of concerned and knowledgeable members of the University community. In relation to the risks of importing eels to Hawaii, there is a substantial divergence of opinion among such persons. In cases like this, we must reflect the divergence, and it is our practice to identify the conflicting opinions with those who hold them.

From reviews of bills proposed in the past that would accomplish the same purposes as HB 507 we are aware that, in the opinion of many members of the University community, there is great risk that eels of imported species will escape, will become established in Hawaiian waters, and will result in considerable change in the composition of the aquatic biota. There is no need for us to detail the grounds for the opinion here because they are to be presented in an individual statement by Sheila Conant, an assistant professor in the Department of General Science and a biologist. Among those whose opinions we sought in relation to HB 507, Alison Kay, Acting Dean of the Graduate Division and Director of Research and a marine biologist, and Philip Helfrich, Associate Director of Research and also a marine biologist, are of the same opinion.

However in the opinion of Spencer Malecha, a Professor of Genetics who is associated with the State's Anuenue Fisheries aquaculture project, the importation of the eels will not be detrimental.

Given time, some reconciliation of the divergent opinions might be achieved. However, because the eels in question do not exist in Hawaii now, the impacts of their importation and possible escape cannot be proved or disproved.

We note that the language of HRS 150A-6 prohibits the importation of "...any other animal...that is detrimental or potentially harmful to...natural resources including native biota...." Even if the specific prohibition against importing the eels is deleted from the law, it would seem that there exists some potential for harm to native biota in their importation. The only questions are how serious the harm might be and how great the risk is.