

Member Day Testimony to the Science, Space and Technology Committee

Chairwoman Johnson, Ranking Member Lucas and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with the Committee on climate change, especially as it relates to our oceans, which is a critical issue impacting my home state of Hawai‘i.

We are of course severely impacting our climate through our actions. Throughout our nation this year, we’ve seen record temperatures, expansive droughts, massive wildfires, increased hurricanes and more. This has tragically led to the deaths of many Americans and affected the lives and livelihoods of many more. These weather events will only increase in frequency and severity on our present course.

In my home state of Hawai‘i, we are on the front line of the fight against climate change because of its severe effect on our fragile ecosystems, especially our oceans. Ocean acidification is killing off our native reefs and shellfish; ocean rise is washing away our beaches and threatening roads and communities; and increasing temperatures are pushing mosquitos and other invasive pests further into native forest, killing more and more endemic endangered species.

I want to thank this Committee for your leadership on climate-related issues to help protect Hawai‘i from these threats. Your work and the investments in climate science research and observation technology have focused squarely the challenges we’re facing. For example, continued Congressional support for NOAA’s Mauna Loa Observatory on the Island of Hawai‘i has confirmed the existence, extent and pace of climate change. Earlier this year, the observatory recorded atmospheric CO2 levels exceeding 417 parts per million.

This is 50% higher than when humanity began the Industrial Revolution, and it will only rise if we do nothing to stem emissions.

I sit before you today to request that this Committee make sure to include our oceans in your future climate work. While not top of mind for many who do not live near the coasts, oceans cover 71 percent of the Earth's surface. Government scientists agree that oceans are critical in climate change since they absorb solar radiation and release heat needed to drive the atmospheric circulation. They absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it for years to millions of years, and our ocean greatly impact weather events from hurricanes to droughts.

To help do my part, I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 3764, the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act; H.R. 3906, the Blue Carbon Protection Act; and H.R. 3748, the BLUE GLOBE Act. These measures would help restore marine and coastal ecosystems, make coastal communities more resilient and conserve marine mammal and fish populations.

While these bills have all been referred to my Natural Resources Committee, they have also been referred to this Committee. Your markup and input on these measures are critical to their success given your expertise in research and development and scientific issues more broadly. Their advancement is important to assisting coastal constituencies, like mine, adapt to new realities of higher sea levels, increased flooding and depleted fish stocks.

Furthermore, your continued investment in monitoring and forecasting can help us mitigate climate change's effects until we develop long-term solutions. I remember the 1960 tsunami that killed 61 people in my hometown of Hilo, Hawai'i. Because of the excellent work of the National Weather Service and other federal agencies, we have not had a tsunami tragedy in America of that scale since. We can follow this

model to help develop ways to save lives as we confront climate change head-on in this Congress and beyond.

In closing, thank you for your leadership in addressing the science of climate change and work toward advancing American innovation to address climate-related issues. I look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical issue that is affecting all of our constituents and our oceans.

Mahalo.