



# SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

Testimony to  
**Board of Education**

February 17, 2022

1:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

## **COMMENTS: AGENDA ITEM IV.A**

Board Action on Board Resolution on Red Hill water contamination

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Aloha Chair Payne, Vice Chair Uemura, and members of the Board of Education,

The Sierra Club of Hawai'i offers the following **COMMENTS** regarding the agenda item IV.A., and respectfully urges the Board to consider using this opportunity to take a clear and stronger stand for our students and their future.

As unacceptable as the current crisis may be for the students, staff, and families for the currently impacted schools, the Sierra Club emphasizes that the ongoing storage of well over 100 million gallons of fuel 100 feet over the principle drinking water source for O'ahu places an imminent and grave threat to the lives and futures of all Department of Education students throughout the island, and potentially throughout all of Hawai'i. While the Sierra Club appreciates the agenda item's proposed deference to agencies with expertise regarding the protection of our water resources, **the Department of Health has already determined that this threat is both real and imminent, finding that:**

“The weight of the evidence establishes that the Red Hill Facility, as currently situated, is a metaphorical ticking timebomb located 100 feet above the most important aquifer on Hawai'i's most populous island. The Red Hill Facility has already damaged human health and the environment and, as currently situated, inevitably threatens to do so into the future. The Navy lacks the ability to control the substantial risks associated with the Red Hill Facility, as currently situated.”

Should just a fraction of the fuel contained in just one of the Red Hill fuel tanks be released into the environment and into our EPA Region IX Sole Source Aquifer – whether from an earthquake, human error, loss of structural integrity due to age, or a combination of these or other factors – our current crisis will seem minuscule in comparison. **Not only would the majority of the island's schools be directly at risk of experiencing the challenges now affecting the schools on the Navy's water system, but the economic, public health, and overall societal consequences of such a catastrophic event would foreclose the future**

**opportunities and quality of life that our public education system is preparing our students for.**

Accordingly, the Sierra Club respectfully but strongly urges the Board of Education to consider, in addition to expressing its support for currently affected schools and communities, taking a stronger stance on behalf of the lives and well-being of students both now and in the future, by calling for the defueling and permanent shutdown of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility before this “ticking time bomb” catastrophically impacts life as we know it on this island. Should the Board be open to taking such a position, the Sierra Club respectfully offers the following WHEREAS and BE IT RESOLVED clauses for your consideration:

Additional WHEREAS clauses:

**“WHEREAS**, the Hawai‘i State Department of Health has described the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility as ‘inherently dangerous,’ and as a ‘ticking time bomb’ that continues to imperil the principle drinking water source for the island of O‘ahu, and has ordered the Facility to be defueled;

**WHEREAS**, the Honolulu Board of Water Supply has likewise called for the defueling of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility;

**WHEREAS**, due to the current crisis, the Honolulu Board of Water Supply has warned of water conservation mandates and shutdowns that may impact O‘ahu’s economy and way of life for the foreseeable future;

**WHEREAS**, another release of fuel from this inherently dangerous facility may result in additional educational, environmental, socioeconomic, and public health impacts that may persist for decades if not generations;

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Education’s 2030 Promise Plan calls for schools to be grounded in outcomes that strengthen students’ sense of belonging, responsibility, excellence, experience, aloha, total well-being, and Hawai‘i, with a foundation in Native Hawaiian values, language, culture, and history; prepare all students to overcome disempowering differences and thrive academically, socially, and civically; be designed around a community’s ability to contribute to a thriving, sustainable Hawai‘i; prepare students to contribute to equity, excellence, and innovation through input on what, how, and where they learn; and engage students in rigorous, technology-rich, problem-solving learning that enables them to engage community challenges and develop pathways to goals;

**WHEREAS**, allowing our EPA Region IX Groundwater Aquifer to remain at risk of catastrophic contamination by the inherently dangerous, ‘ticking time bomb’ Red Hill Facility means risking students’ ability to maintain a sense of belonging and total well-being; is inapposite to Native Hawaiian values and reverence for wai as

a source of and foundation for life; and may result in the irreparable destruction of a sacred resource that connects students and the community to our culture and history;

**WHEREAS**, the contamination of the aquifer and the subsequent increased cost of living, reduction of economic activity, reduction or loss of support for public and social services, and contamination of subsistence resources will have disproportionate impacts on socioeconomically disempowered students, their families, and communities that will drastically exacerbate the inequities they face, limiting or precluding their ability to thrive academically, socially, or civically;

**WHEREAS**, the contamination of the aquifer in the face of climate change and disruptions of our water cycle will reduce our all of our communities' capacity to contribute to a thriving and sustainable Hawai'i;

**WHEREAS**, as illustrated by the current crisis, the contamination of the aquifer and the challenges schools subsequently face will limit or foreclose their ability to accommodate students' input on what, how, and where they learn;

**WHEREAS**, as illustrated by the current crisis, the additional costs to schools of having to address the potential loss of access to water, and the overall loss in government revenues due to the enormous economic impacts of a catastrophic contamination event, will limit or foreclose schools' use of new technology and other resources necessary to foster rigorous and problem-solving learning necessary to address community challenges;

**WHEREAS**, the Red Hill Facility therefore threatens to completely disrupt if not foreclose the realization of the Department of Education's 2030 Promise Plan;

**WHEREAS**, the Red Hill Facility threatens to frustrate the overall goal of our public education system to prepare students to participate in and contribute to a thriving and socially enriched society."

Additional BE IT RESOLVED CLAUSES:

**"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board believes that a facility deemed "inherently dangerous" and a "ticking time bomb" by the state agency with expertise in fuel storage and water contamination should not be allowed to threaten the Department of Education's strategic plan, mission, and the education and future of its students;"

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board calls upon the President and Commander in Chief of the United States to direct the expeditious and safe defueling and permanent decommissioning of this World War II-era facility;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board urges the United States Secretary of Education to call for the President's attention to this urgent matter;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board directs the Department of Education to submit a letter to the United States Secretary of Education and President informing them of the Board's position, along with a copy of this resolution."

Mahalo nui for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Tanaka". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne Tanaka, Director

Sierra Club of Hawai'i



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## testimony for general business meeting, 2/17/22

1 message

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pete doktor <dok@riseup.net>  
To: testimony.boe@boe.hawaii.gov

Thu, Feb 17, 2022 at 12:27 PM

ref: General Business Meeting, 2/17/22, 1:30

Agenda Item:

### A. [Board Action on Board Resolution on Red Hill water contamination](#)

Position: Comment

Testimony:

Aloha BOE Members,

It is disappointing that the BOE has taken such a passive position on the deteriorating leaky underground fuel tanks at Kapūkaki known as Red Hill Naval UST. By hiding behind arbitrary bureaucratic notions of jurisdiction, the proposed BOE resolution abandons our collective kuleana to defend the public safety and health, and instead hides behind other agencies to take a principled stand and remediating actions. While the BOE indeed has limited jurisdiction, it still is important such a State institution should join the chorus of calls within the State and show both leadership and compassion/aloha to take a stand of protection for our keiki as well as future generations that cannot speak for themselves.

As a parent, this weak resolution gives the impression that the BOE is more worried about liability or military fragility, than it is the welfare of our children.

As a former passionate tenured teacher who resigned the DOE after years of disgust and impacted health from the No Child Left Behind/Race to the Top years and the reduction of education into test-taking, I am feeling the same abandonment of our youth by the BOE through its complicity to Federal directives that have not always been healthy or productive for our schools and students. While other regions of the US pushed-back against privatization and the dehumanization of students into test scores (e.g., NYC, Chicago, the Northwest) during this time, Hawai'i education bureaucrats fell into subservient plantation workers to Federal top-down impositions; this weak stance for our keiki smells of this problematic past practice.

As a military veteran, I am utterly frustrated by citizens that do not uphold the primacy of civilian-control of armed forces as outlined in the US Constitution. There seems to be a culture within the BOE/DOE that maintains a deference to military exceptionalism and militarism in general; a stronger resolution could dispel this perception, whereas the current resolution seems to maintain this uncritical subservience, perhaps symbolized by the inclusion of the Department of Defense within the BOE, unlike most education systems worldwide.

In the interest of expediency, I will summarize by urging to the BOE to consider the friendly amendments recommended by the Hawai'i Sierra Club to this resolution, and maintain advocacy set by the example of our BWS -- these two mentioned agencies have been consistent on principled leadership and protecting our public health and safety, that I hope the BOE will join.

Māhalo for your commitment not just to education, but the well-being of our youth that cannot thrive here without clean water.

Pete Doktor

Moanalua

Member of organizations: Wai Ola Alliance, Hawai'i Peace & Justice, O`ahu Water Protectors, Veterans for Peace.