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HB 377
RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Statement for
Senate Committee on Planning and Environment
Public Hearing - March 23, 1987

By

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Peter Rappa, Sea Grant

HB 377 would clarify the membership criteria and composition of the Environmental Council. The statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

As noted in the Standing Committee Report (517) the Environmental Council serves as the major liaison between the State and the general public in matters concerning ecology and environmental quality. One of the primary responsibilities of the Council is to prescribe rules and procedures for implementing HRS Chapter 343, the Environmental Impact Statement Law.

To intelligently and responsibly carry out their duties, the Council must include members with a broad base of expertise in environmental matters. Wise decisions relevant to environmental rule making or occasional appeal considerations can best be rendered by assuring that council members represent not only those with environmental interests but also those with professional expertise in environmental issues. At present, HRS 341-3 lists 20 or more professions or institutions as potential areas of expertise from which council members should be chosen. HB 377 would add to the list environmental consultants and persons actively involved in the preparation of environmental assessments and environmental impact statements. The size of the council, 15 members, insures that no single discipline or profession will be inequitably represented. We are in full concurrence with the intent of this bill.