



**SB1339**  
**RELATING TO RURAL AREAS**  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

February 22, 2013

9:00 a.m.

Room 211

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB1339, which will ensure the continued availability of federal funds to support programs in rural areas on O‘ahu, where many of OHA’s beneficiaries reside.

Hawai‘i’s rural areas are host to many cultural kīpuka, where rural community lifestyles keep alive the values and practices that form the foundation of Hawaiian culture. However, it appears that rural communities on the island of O‘ahu are now threatened with losing their recognition as “rural” under many federal laws due to the high population density of O‘ahu’s urban areas. This may put O‘ahu island’s culturally significant rural communities at a substantial disadvantage in acquiring and maintaining important, federally-funded social services, including medical services, that may not otherwise be available in such isolated regions.

By providing for a state definition of “rural area,” which recognizes the true rural nature of large portions of O‘ahu island, this bill will assist with efforts that ensure O‘ahu’s rural communities can continue to receive federal funds for services critical to their continued existence and prosperity.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB1339. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.