



## HAWAII STATE LEGISLATURE

STATE OF HAWAII  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**The Honorable Jared Huffman**  
Chairman  
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1323 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**The Honorable Tom McClintock**  
Ranking Member  
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 8, 2020

### **Re: H. R. 1834, the “Defending Our National Marine Sanctuaries from Damaging Chemicals Act of 2019”**

Aloha Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock,

We, the undersigned legislators and Hawaii Coral Reef Stakeholders, **strongly support H.R. 1834**, the Defending Our National Marine Sanctuaries from Damaging Chemicals Act of 2019.

Encompassing 1,370 square miles of federal and state waters, the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary includes waters from the shoreline around our islands to depths of 600 feet. The sanctuary encompasses a variety of marine ecosystems, including seagrass beds and coral reefs. Much of the sanctuary has fringing coral reefs close to shore and deeper coral reefs offshore hosting numerous species of wildlife protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Approximately one-fourth of the plants, fish, and invertebrates found in Hawaiian coral reefs are endemic to Hawaii. Coral reefs are intrinsic to Hawaiian culture, and provide critical natural protection against coastal erosion and sea level rise. Further, our coral reefs underpin our vibrant tourism industry, Hawaii’s primary and vital economic engine.

Where people use marine environments as recreational resources, there is sunscreen pollution. Swimmers put on sunscreen products before they get into the water, and over a period of an hour, much of the sunscreen on the skin will slough off, polluting the surrounding water.

This environmental contamination is a grave concern because it has been extensively established in the scientific literature that oxybenzone and/or octinoxate in the marine environment can have irreversibly detrimental effects on all marine life, including changes in fish behavior, pathological changes to fish sexual identity, damage to genomic and DNA integrity, and the developmental success of almost all of Hawaii’s marine biodiversity. The chemicals’ greatest danger is as bioaccumulating endocrine disruptors that can kill or maim juveniles of corals, sea urchins, shrimp, fish, and algae, which would threaten the restoration of Hawaii’s already degraded



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coral reefs by preventing juvenile marine life from recruiting into an area that is polluted by oxybenzone/octinoxate and by biomagnifying through the food chain.

Further, ESA protected species that inhabit Hawaii's waters, including green sea turtle and other turtle species; Hawaiian Monk Seals and other marine mammals; and migratory birds, are exposed to this critically high consistently recurring oxybenzone and octinoxate contamination in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary waters, including Hanauma, Napili, and Waialea Bays.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has already recognized this existential threat to our coral reefs. (See: <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/news/sunscreen-corals.html>)

**SUNSCREEN CHEMICALS AND MARINE LIFE**

**How sunscreen chemicals enter our environment:**

- The sunscreen you apply doesn't stay on your skin.
- It washes off and enters our waterways when we swim or shower.

**How sunscreen chemicals can affect marine life:**

**Chemicals in sunscreens that can harm marine life:**  
Oxybenzone, Octinoxate, Octocrylene, Benzophenone-1, Benzophenone-8, OD-PABA, 4-Methylbenzylidene camphor, 3-Benzylidene camphor, nano-Titanium dioxide, nano Zinc dioxide.

- GREEN ALGAE:** Can impair growth and photosynthesis.
- CORAL:** Accumulates in tissues. Can induce bleaching, damage DNA, larval defects and even kill.
- MUSSELS:** Can induce larval deformities.
- SEA URCHINS:** Can damage immune and reproductive systems, and deform larvae.
- FISH:** Can decrease fertility and reproduction, and cause female characteristics in male fish.
- DOLPHINS:** Can accumulate in tissues and be transferred to young.

**What can we do?**  
Seek shade between 10 am & 2 pm, use Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) sunwear, and choose sunscreens with chemicals that don't harm marine life.

Seek shade: 10am to 2pm | Umbrella | Sun hat | UV Sun glasses | Sun shirt | Leggings

oceanservice.noaa.gov/news/sunscreen-corals

Banning the use of damaging chemicals like oxybenzone and octinoxate in our precious National Marine Sanctuaries is a common sense solution to eliminating this anthropogenic stressor to our irreplaceable coral reefs, especially since there are thousands of reef-friendly alternative UV filters, including protective clothing, readily available on the market.

Please support this bipartisan bill that will measurably improve the water quality of our fragile National Marine Sanctuaries.



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The signatory Hawaii Coral Reef Stakeholders included are in full support of our position.  
Thank you again for allowing us to testify in support of H.R. 1834.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mike Gabbard in black ink.

**Senator Mike Gabbard**  
Hawaii State Senate District 20

Handwritten signature of Gil Riviere in black ink.

**Senator Gil Riviere**  
Hawaii State Senate District 23

Handwritten signature of Gene Ward in black ink.

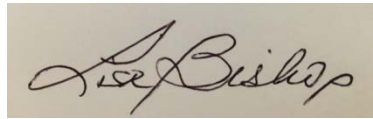
**Representative Gene Ward, Minority Leader**  
Hawaii State House District 17

Handwritten signature of David A. Tarnas in black ink.

**Representative David A. Tarnas**  
Hawaii State House District 7

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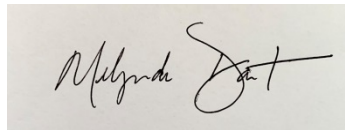
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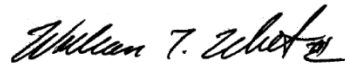
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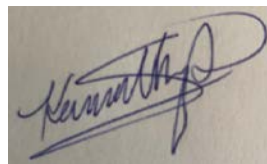


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