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April 13, 2021

The Honorable Ed Case  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2210 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Letter of Support/Collaboration for the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology's FY 2022 Community Project Funding Request

Aloha Congressman Case,

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) strongly supports the University of Hawai'i's proposal for a project to test seawall materials and designs at the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB), and we look forward to collaborating with HIMB and the State Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) on this project.

Life in Hawai'i is concentrated along our spectacular coasts, where islanders and visitors take full advantage of tropical waters and vibrant coral reefs teeming with life. The reefs that line our coasts are environmental, economic, recreational, and cultural treasures that support our island lifestyle and livelihoods. Each year, they also provide flood protection to people, property, and jobs valued at more than \$836 million, support nearshore fisheries worth \$13.4 million, and contribute more than \$1.2 billion through reef-related tourism to the state's economy. And yet, our reefs are threatened by overuse, land-based pollutants, and impacts from climate change, including rising sea levels and sea surface temperatures.

Reef restoration is now a necessary tool in our toolbox to ensure reefs continue to protect our islands' ecology and economy. One new aspect of restoration is the development of hybrid reef structures that can protect our coastlines while also providing habitat for fish, corals, and other aquatic organisms.

The seawalls at Moku o Lo'e (Coconut Island) are failing and need to be replaced. New technologies are now being developed to improve the materials used for seawalls, enhancing our ability to develop hybrid structures that can protect our coastlines and enhance habitat for marine species. HIMB's proposed project will test some of these new ecologically-designed materials and could serve as a proof of concept to help address seawall issues across our state.

For more than a decade, TNC has been working with HIMB, DAR, community partners from Kāko'o 'Ōiwi, and, more recently, staff from the National Estuarine Research Reserve to remove invasive species, reduce sediment, measure changes, and improve coastal and fisheries habitat in Kāne'ohē Bay. We stand ready to assist in any way we can to help move this important project forward.

Mahalo for your leadership and decades of support for protecting and restoring Hawai'i's marine environment.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Ching".

Anthony Ching  
Director of External Affairs

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