

SAMPLE LETTER: From www.fishpono.org

We recommend that you change the wording to fit your own style:

Aloha Legislators,

I strongly **support HB 1689 Relating to Parrotfish** to save our coral reefs saviors from severe overexploitation. Parrotfishes or *uhu* are key species that keep our reef surfaces clean so new coral can flourish. Unfortunately, *uhu* are severely depleted and the new herbivore fishing rules approved by the Board of Land and Natural Resources are insufficient to replenish these reef saviors. It is common knowledge that pillaging of our reefs occurs at night, when divers spear *uhu* as they sleep helplessly under ledges. These pillaged fish are often sold to markets by lawbreakers without commercial licenses. This practice is not *pono*. HB 1689 would not only prohibit night spearing of *uhu*, but also prevent the commercial sale of illegally speared *uhu*. The bill does not affect subsistence and recreational fishers who fish *pono* during the day, nor commercial fishers who use nets or traps.

Uhu and other herbivores are the natural lawnmowers of the sea that can save our reefs from poor water quality, pollution, and coral bleaching, yet they must be abundant to do so. The science is clear that herbivores are depleted near human population centers in Hawai'i, especially the *uhu*.

Importantly, *uhu* are about far more than fishing and feeding people. They are the natural resilience mechanism needed for our reefs to recover and thrive. As saviors of our reefs, they are far more valuable to all the people of Hawai'i alive than as food. Healthy coral reefs protect our coasts from erosion, provide fisheries for many species (not just herbivores), and are valuable sources of recreation, tourism, and spiritual connection. Our reefs are seriously threatened by poor water quality and increasingly severe coral bleaching. Without abundant and diverse herbivores, especially *uhu*, many of our reefs are now covered in seaweeds, which quickly smother corals unless they are removed by these natural lawnmowers.

Uhu replenishment is not about environmentalists vs. fishers; it is about the long-term perspective of those who care about the future of our valuable coral reefs vs. the short-term perspective of those who would continue to allow the depletion of our reef saviors. Ultimately, by helping to replenish *uhu* populations now, HB 1689 will help sustain our fisheries and other benefits provided by our coral reefs far into the future.

Mahalo,

[full name]

[town], Hawai'i