

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 18, 2018

MEDIA CONTACT:

Will Dempster, (202) 224-9813

Hirono Introduces Bill to Prioritize Native Plants

Legislation Promotes Botanical Research and Directs Federal Departments to Provide Preference to Native Plant Materials

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) introduced the Botanical Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration, and Promotion Act. The bill encourages federal land management agencies to hire botanists, conduct research on native plant materials, and incorporate native plants in projects on federal land when feasible.

“Native plants play a crucial role in conserving and protecting our land, and are an important part of our culture. They recharge our watersheds and are less prone to fire than nonnative species,” **Senator Hirono said**. “This bill provides resources to ensure that our land managers have the necessary tools and expertise to protect our native plants, many of which are endangered and are found nowhere else in the world.”

“After contributing to the creation of this bill since 2015, seeing a version introduced in the House of Representatives, and visiting my legislators' offices over the past few years, I am so grateful that Senator Hirono took up this cause and showed leadership in introducing this Senate bill, which will be of great benefit to Hawaii and the entire nation,” **Dr. Marian Chau, Seed Conservation and Laboratory Manager, Lyon Aoretum, Hawaiian Rare Plant Program said**.

“With less than 1% of the land mass of the United States, Hawaii contains over half of the endangered plant species listed under the U. S. Endangered Species Act,” **said Dustin Wolkis, Seed Bank & Laboratory Manager, Department of Science and Conservation, National Tropical Botanical Garden**. “Thus with the introduction of this bill, Hawaii stands to benefit greatly in both our economy and the preservation of our unique and imperiled flora.”

“By promoting the hiring of botanists and creating a preference for native plants, the bill will advance scientific expertise and help conserve water, save money, reduce the need for pesticides, and foster healthy, vibrant ecosystems,” **Anne Neal Petri, President of The Garden Club of America, said**.

The bill was cosponsored by Senators Van Hollen (D-MD), Whitehouse (D-R.I.), and Duckworth (D-IL).

The legislation would promote native plant research and use by:

- Creating a botanical research grant program within the Department of the Interior;
- Promoting the hiring of botanists within the Department of the Interior and creating a student loan repayment program to attract and retain botanists;
- Directing the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, and Defense to provide preference to native plant materials in land management projects and justify the use of non-native plant materials;
- Requiring the use of native plant materials in surface transportation projects and federal building design;
- Promoting interagency cooperation for various activities relating to native plants;
- Directing the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to incorporate into existing activities native plant conservation; and

Creating a grant program within the Department of the Interior to keep rare plants off of the Endangered Species list by increasing their populations and helping those currently on the list recover.