

Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
May 15, 2019
10:00 a.m.

Oversight Hearing on
“U.S. Department of the Interior Budget and Policy Priorities for FY 2020.”

Questions from Rep. Case for David Bernhardt and Secretary of the Interior

1. As isolated islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Hawai'i has one of the highest numbers and rates of endemic species in the world. The introduction of exotic species over the last few centuries, diseases, overdevelopment and now the real effects of climate change have taken a devastating toll on native flora and fauna. More than 70% of bird species have gone extinct and more than 30 various species are endangered or threatened.

Successful protection and recovery of our remaining species depends greatly on full implementation of the Endangered Species Act by the Department of Interior and state, local and private partners, using the best available science and maximizing and aligning resources to the greatest needs.

A primary source of federal assistance under the ESA is the Traditional Conservation Grant Funds Program. However, in reviewing the distribution of such funds nationally, it is clear that Hawai'i receives an allocation which is disproportionately small compared to the great number of endangered species in Hawai'i as against other states.

Can you please address this disconnect, to include:

- a. Please explain the laws, regulations and other factors the Department takes into account when allocating the Traditional Conservation Grant Funds Program.
- b. Please explain why Hawai'i receives a disproportionately smaller allocation than other states.
- c. Is the Department considering a more proportional distribution of funding that recognizes the number of endangered and endemic species in Hawai'i?