



STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

March 11, 2025

TO: The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director
Campaign Spending Commission

SUBJECT: **Testimony on S.B. No. 51, S.D. 1, Relating to Public Financing for Candidates to Elected Office.**

Wednesday, March 12, 2025
2:00 p.m., Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. The Campaign Spending Commission (“Commission”) supports the intent of this bill but is concerned about the funding for the public financing program and the Commission’s need for additional personnel to implement the bill’s mandates.

This bill establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices to beginning with the 2028 general election year, appropriates funds to the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund, and appropriates funds to the Commission. This public financing program is modeled after the pilot Hawaii County Council Comprehensive Public Funding Project¹ that ran in 2010 and 2012.

The bill establishes the maximum amount of comprehensive public funds (“CPF Max”) for each office as well as the minimum qualifying \$5 contributions (“\$5 MQC”) that must be raised for each office. The following table shows the \$5 MQC and CPF Max for each office:

Office	\$5 MQC	CPF Max
Governor	6,250	\$2,500,000
Lieutenant Governor	3,000	\$1,200,000
Senator	250	\$100,000

¹ Act 244, 2008 Haw. Sess. Laws.

Representative	125	\$50,000
OHA	100	\$40,000
Honolulu Mayor	5,750	\$2,300,000
Hawaii Mayor	900	\$360,000
Maui Mayor	1,500	\$600,000
Kauai Mayor ²	875	\$350,000
Hon. Pros. Atty	563	\$225,000
Hawaii Pros. Atty	100	\$40,000
Kauai Pros. Atty	63	\$25,000
Hon. County Council	338	\$135,000
Hawaii County Council	50	\$20,000
Maui County Council	138	\$55,000
Kauai County Council	75	\$30,000

If one candidate for each office qualified and received the CPF Max in the 2028 election period, this program will pay out **\$15,110,000** in public financing to the qualified candidates. In contrast, if one candidate for each office qualified to receive partial public funding in the 2026 elections, the state will pay a maximum of **\$2,948,612** in public financing. Under §11-O of the proposed new subpart to Part XIII of Chapter 11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, there must be a minimum of \$30,000,000 in the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund on September 1, 2027, in order for the Commission to run the comprehensive public financing program established by the bill.

The Commission asks that this committee restore the general fund appropriation to the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund in the amount of \$30,200,00 that was in Section 6 of the original bill for the Commission to implement the new comprehensive public financing program and restore the appropriation of \$200,000 in this and the next fiscal years from the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund in Section 7 of the bill for the Commission to hire two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) permanent positions to prepare for comprehensive public financing in the 2028 elections. The Commission has not had an increase in personnel for the past 29 years despite the number of candidate committees and noncandidate committees having almost doubled in size. Currently, there are only 5 staff members who oversee 700+ committees that have anywhere from 1-3 officers who require assistance on how to comply with the various requirements of campaign finance law thereby generating hundreds of staff hours assisting committees over the phone, in-person, and by email as well as a number of enforcement actions for violations. Under HRS §11-314(7), one of the Commission’s 14 duties is to investigate and hold hearings for receiving evidence of any campaign finance violations. The Commission has no investigator on staff and has had to rely on contracts for investigative services with outside

² On page 19, line 4 of the bill, “mayor of” should be inserted after “(9) For the office of.”

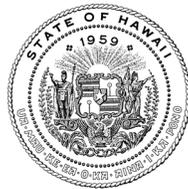
agencies.³ In comparison to other State and county good government agencies with compliance and enforcement duties, the Commission has had a modest budget and nominal staff despite a tremendous growth in committees, an expansion in its duties and responsibilities, and enforcement mandates. The Commission respectfully seeks your support so that the Commission may ensure that the integrity and transparency of the campaign finance process is upheld. The Commission requests that these two positions be permanent rather than temporary.⁴

In summary, the balance in the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund is \$2,199,230.60 as of December 31, 2024. Obviously, this amount is insufficient to pay for the comprehensive public funding program, including the additional personnel the Commission will need, and thus, the total appropriation of \$30,200,000 in Section 6 of the bill is necessary.

Respectfully, the Commission requests that this committee address these concerns because there is insufficient funds and personnel to implement a program of this magnitude if it is going to pass this measure.

³Act 10, Special Session 1995, was the single year that a sum of \$70,000 was appropriated for one investigator for the Commission for FY 1995-1996 and was then sunset.

⁴ The Commission requested 2 full-time permanent exempt excluded positions in its FY 2025-2027 budget to which the Governor has approved – specifically, the request was for \$200,000 for FY 2026 and \$180,000 for FY 2027-2029. Notably, the Commission is an administratively attached agency with the Department of Accounting and General Services.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 51, S.D. 1

**March 12, 2025
2:00 p.m.
Room 325 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 51, S.D. 1, amends Chapter 11, HRS, by adding a new subpart to Part XIII titled "Comprehensive Public Funding for Candidates to State and County Offices," which establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to State and county public offices in the State of Hawai'i, to begin with the 2026 general election year. Included with the establishment of the Comprehensive Public Funding Program (CPFP) is the creation of a CPFP subaccount within the Hawai'i Election Campaign Fund (HECF) to carry out the purposes of this measure. Deposits to the CPFP subaccount include appropriations made by the Legislature, excess seed money contributions, qualifying contributions, unspent public funds distributed to any certified candidate, fines levied by the commission for violation of the CPFP, and voluntary donations.

This measure also appropriates an unspecified amount in general revenues for FY 26 for deposit into the HECF for expenditure by the Campaign Spending

Commission for the CPFPP; and appropriates an unspecified amount out of the HECF for FY 26 and FY 27 to fund an unspecified number of permanent full-time equivalent position and to prepare for the comprehensive public funding of candidates in elections taking place in 2026.

As a matter of general policy, B&F does not support the creation of any special account that requires regular general fund appropriations to support its activities and does not demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining. Regarding S.B. No. 51, S.D. 1, it is difficult to determine whether the proposed CPFPP subaccount would be self-sustaining.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



COMMENTS ON SENATE BILL 51_SD1
RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i State Capitol

March 12, 2025

2:00 p.m.

Conference Room 325

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on
Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) offers the following **comments on SB51_SD1**, which establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for candidates running for office in state and county elections.

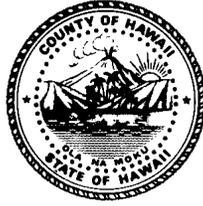
OHA generally supports public financing as a good government measure.

Increased access to publicly financed campaigns makes elections more accessible, open, and fair. However, OHA is concerned about the disparate funding provisions included in this measure. Under the bill, OHA candidates participating in the program would receive up to \$40,000 in public funds. In contrast, candidates for the office of lieutenant governor receives up to \$1,200,000. OHA trustees are required to run statewide election campaigns on par with candidates like the lieutenant governor, and thus, we request that the candidates for OHA receive public funding on par as well.

Specifically, for the program to meet its potential and appropriately fund OHA candidates, **we respectfully request that Section 2 be amended on page 18, at lines 13-15, by increasing the funds available to OHA candidates to \$1,200,000, on par with the lieutenant governor.** An amendment to this section is necessary for candidates for OHA trustee to effectively reach voters statewide and run well-informed and fair elections.

We humbly request that if your committee chooses to pass SB51, that you include our proposed amendment and help us better serve our obligations to the Native Hawaiian community and promote equitable governance. Without these amendments, candidates for OHA do not have equal access to public financing provisions.

Jennifer Kagiwada
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI‘I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai‘i 96720

DATE: March 10, 2025
TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2
SUBJECT: SB 51 SD1

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members,

I am testifying in strong support of SB 51 SD1 which establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State of Hawaii, to begin with the 2026 general election year, requiring the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 SD1 will break the link between private money and electoral success and put efforts to reduce the influence of money in our elections. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors.

A comprehensive system of public financing is more cost-effective. Even if Hawai‘i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That’s under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

Passing SB 51 SD1 will ensure that everyday people, not just a wealthy few, have a voice. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenn Kagiwada".

Jenn Kagiwada



530 S KING ST RM 100
HONOLULU HI 96813
(808) 768-3800
WWW.HONOLULUELECTIONS.US

TESTIMONY
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
ON SENATE BILL NO. 51 SD1
RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE

March 12, 2025

Chair Tarnas and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 51 SD1.

The Office of the City Clerk takes no position on the merits of financing campaigns with public funds. However, we recommend that the Committee consider the donor qualification model used in a previous version of the bill, in which the Campaign Spending Commission serves as the sole entity responsible for administering the program.

Under that model, no information is transferred between offices, and the Commission is granted limited access to the State's voter registration system to verify qualifying donor contributions. County election offices play only a consultative role, assisting with clarifications related to voter registration records when necessary.

This approach aligns with how other states administer public campaign financing for legislative seats, where verification processes—if required—are handled by a state campaign spending agency or the secretary of state. A similar model exists in Arizona, where a dedicated commission oversees the implementation of public financing (see: <https://www.azcleaselections.gov/>).

As currently drafted, the measure places responsibility on both county election offices and the Campaign Spending Office to verify contributors. Based on our understanding, counties would first verify that contributors are registered voters, followed by final validation by the Campaign Spending Office.

Given the manual effort involved and the potential number of contributors requiring verification, this process cannot be completed with existing staffing levels and timelines. The challenge is further exacerbated by the overlap between peak candidate filing periods and the counties' preparations for the primary election.



Testimony on Senate Bill No. 51 SD1

March 12, 2025

Page 2

Of particular concern to election administrators is that, as currently written, the bill blurs the lines between election administration and campaign-related activities, with the potential effect of disrupting election operations. If the measure moves forward, we urge the Committee to either consider an alternative approach to donor verification or include an appropriation to County Clerks to fund additional staff needed for these verifications.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB51 SD1.

JON HENRICKS
County Clerk



AARON BROWN
Deputy County Clerk

County of Hawai'i
Office of the County Clerk

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 1402 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
(808) 961-8255 • Fax (808) 961-8912

TESTIMONY

TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

ON SENATE BILL NO. 51, SD 1

RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 51, SD 1, which in part establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices, beginning with the 2028 general election.

In 2010 and 2012, the County of Hawai'i Elections Division was tasked with administering the Hawai'i County Council Comprehensive Public Funding Pilot Project.

This pilot project's duties and responsibilities included verifying contributors were lawfully registered voters, verifying that qualifying contributions were duly collected, and transferring qualified documents and contributions to the Campaign Spending Commission.

The Hawai'i County Elections Division currently maintains staff who performed these duties to the best of their abilities. Their collective recollection is that this campaign financing pilot project presented myriad challenges from a logistical and programmatic perspective. Not the least being to ensure that the requirements of this pilot project were carefully followed while also performing day-to-day operational tasks associated with the upcoming primary and general elections.

Additionally, Hawai'i County is uncertain as to how qualifying contributions from counties other than Hawai'i County would be verified, presuming that candidates for state and county public offices would solicit and receive contributions from voters statewide. Coordinating with other counties to ensure proper administration of this program does not currently appear to be contemplated by SB 51, SD1.

If SB 51, SD1 passes in its current form, we would ask the appropriate committee to allocate sufficient appropriations to allow Hawai'i County to acquire additional staff and equipment. Providing an estimate of funds needed requires analysis Hawai'i County has yet to conduct. That analysis will be difficult, given the sheer uncertainty as to how many candidates will opt into this program and the offices those candidates will be seeking.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB51, SD1.



SENATE BILL 51, SD1, RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE

MARCH 12, 2025 · JHA HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SB 51, SD1, relating to public financing for candidates for elected office, which establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State of Hawai'i, to begin with the 2028 general election year, and requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature.

Government should work for the public interest, not special interests.

In the 2010 and 2012 election cycles, the Hawai'i Island County Council ran a pilot program for comprehensive public funding. Similarly, Connecticut and Maine have instituted statewide clean elections programs, which have proven successful at increasing electoral participation and reducing candidates' reliance on private donations. Over 70 percent of Democratic legislators use public financing to fund their campaigns in Maine.

Hawai'i continues to be embroiled in public corruption scandals, following the bribery allegations that were levied against former Senate Majority Leader Kalani English and former State Representative Ty Cullen. Other public officials, such as employees at local permitting offices,

have also recently been ensnared in bribery scandals, in some cases with connections to Milton Choy, the lobbyist who was responsible for coordinating the bribery scheme that Sen. English and Rep. Cullen became a part of. These cases show that we have a moral crisis in our public institutions and must do all we can to restore integrity to government.

When candidates for public office are forced to rely on private donations to build relationships, those transactions can cause corruption or create the perception of it. Put simply, legislators are responsive to donors because donors fund their campaigns. Money is crucial to winning. Roughly 91 percent of candidates who outspend their opponents win their elections.

Relatedly, many people choose not to run for public office because they can't afford the cost of a campaign, leaving many incumbents routinely uncontested in their reelection bids. The average winner of a State House seat in Hawai'i spends approximately \$40,000 on their campaign, compared to only \$16,000 for the losing candidate. Over half of all campaign donations in 2022 came from just 980 donors, each of whom contributed at least \$6,000 in candidate donations during the last election cycle.

This bill will eventually create an election system that is fair for our island home. Once a clean elections program is fully effectuated in 2028—more than enough time to fund the system for the next non-gubernatorial election season—candidates will no longer need to rely on contributions from wealthy donors. Instead, they can seek support from their constituents in the form of small donations that verify their credibility and subsequently obtain public funding in an amount sufficient to run effective campaigns. Legislators will, in turn, be empowered to focus on engaging with their communities, rather than wheedling the donor class. Ultimately, this will help our government reflect the will of the people, not the wallets of the privileged.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com • 808-679-7454



To: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs (JHA)
From: Sherry Pollack, Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 2pm

In strong support of SB51 SD1

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and JHA Committee members;

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org is in **strong support of SB51 SD1** that establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State of Hawai'i, to begin with the 2028 general election year.

SB51 SD1 will help restore the people's trust in government. Considering the convictions of Senator J. Kalani English and Representative Ty Cullen for cash bribes, it is clear that the legislature must do everything in its power to remove the influence that money has on our politics, including reforms like public financing. Public financing of elections is one of the most important ways to free our state political system from undue influence from corporations, businesses, and special interest groups. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program.

Public financing will make campaigning easier. No one likes asking individuals for large sums of money. Public financing will free candidates from fundraisers and countless phone calls. Reducing or even eliminating candidates' reliance on wealthy donors and the need to perpetually fundraise frees candidates and officials to spend more time with their constituents and to focus on the most pressing issues of their community, such as the impacts from the growing climate crisis. It also promotes public trust in officials and in government.

SB51 SD1 would provide participating candidates with competitive amounts of funding they need to run an effective campaign. This system worked very well for Hawaii County Council races in 2010 and 2012, and currently works very well statewide in places like Connecticut and Maine.

Please take this opportunity to get money out of politics. Pass SB51 SD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of this important legislation.

Sherry Pollack
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB51 SD1, RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

March 12, 2025

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** SB51 SD1, RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE. Pursuant to the platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i and Resolution 2024-21, the Party supports full public-financing of elections.

The party supports the creation of a comprehensive public financing program for state and local offices. This would lower the barrier of entry for citizens from different backgrounds who might not be able to raise the significant sums of money needed to run a successful campaign, but would otherwise be interested in serving their community in elected office.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in Support of SB51 SD1, RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:42:37 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of Committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, and I am Co-chair of the Grenn Party of Hawai'i. A level playing field is very important to the Green Party of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i started a partial public funding program after adding it to the State Constitution in 1978. That early effort showed a commitment to ethical elections. This new proposal expands on that foundation. Between 2010 and 2012, the Hawai'i County Council pilot program gave about \$363,000 in public funds to 16 candidates. Many praised the pilot project for reducing reliance on wealthy contributors and for showing that publicly funded elections can work in Hawai'i.

This investment can help protect the integrity of elections for all residents. Reducing dependence on large private donations can cut the costs linked to corruption or investigations later on.

The Green Party of Hawai'i offers VERY STRONG Support for SB51 SD1. The time has come for full transparency in elections.

Sincerley,

Susan RoberstEmery
Green Party of Hawai'i
Paauilo

HAWAII PATRIOT REPUBLICANS

Written Testimony in Opposition to S.B. No. 51 (S.D. 1)
Submitted to the Senate Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
March 11, 2025

Honorable Members of the Committee,

As a concerned citizen aligned with principles of limited government, individual liberty, and fiscal responsibility—values I believe resonate across party lines—I urge you to vote "No" on S.B. No. 51 (S.D. 1). This bill, which establishes a comprehensive public financing system for candidates to state and county offices starting in 2028, is a well-intentioned but deeply flawed proposal. It threatens taxpayer wallets, undermines electoral fairness, and risks eroding public trust in government—all outcomes we've seen in other states and municipalities that have tried similar experiments. Below, I outline my objections with evidence and appeal to your shared commitment to Hawaii's future.

1. Burden on Taxpayers in an Already Strained Economy

This bill forces Hawaii's hardworking taxpayers to foot the bill for political campaigns, a cost estimated to require at least \$30 million annually in the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund just to certify candidates (Section 11-O). For context, the bill allocates up to \$2.5 million for a gubernatorial candidate alone (Section 11-H). In a state where families already face a high cost of living—among the highest in the nation—this is an unjustifiable burden. Democrats and Republicans alike should agree that public funds should prioritize schools, healthcare, and infrastructure over politicians' megaphones.

Look at Connecticut, which implemented a similar "Citizens' Election Program" in 2008. A [2017 report by the Yankee Institute](#) found that it cost taxpayers over \$50 million in its first decade, yet failed to reduce corruption or increase voter turnout as promised. Instead, it diverted funds from critical services during budget crises. Hawaii cannot afford to repeat this mistake.

2. Unfair Advantage to Incumbents and Established Politicians

Public financing sounds egalitarian, but in practice, it often entrenches the powerful. S.B. No. 51 requires candidates to collect a minimum number of \$5 "qualifying contributions" (e.g., 6,250 for governor, Section 11-F)—a hurdle that favors incumbents and well-connected candidates with existing networks. Grassroots challengers, especially from underserved communities Democrats champion, will struggle to meet these thresholds, leaving them sidelined.

Arizona's Clean Elections system, enacted in 1998, illustrates this flaw. A study by the [Goldwater Institute](#) showed that incumbents benefited disproportionately, winning 85% of publicly funded races between 2000 and 2010. Newcomers, particularly minorities and independents, were squeezed out. This bill risks creating a similar elite club in Hawaii, contradicting its stated goal of "increasing meaningful citizen participation" (Section 11-A).

3. Inevitable Waste and Abuse of Public Funds

The bill's structure invites waste and fraud. Certified candidates receive lump sums (e.g., \$100,000 for a state senator, Section 11-H) with little oversight beyond post-election audits (Section 11-J). History shows these systems are ripe for exploitation. In Maine, under its Clean Election Act, candidates have been caught using public funds for personal expenses—like car repairs and family vacations. A [2019](#)

[investigation by the Maine Ethics Commission](#) fined multiple candidates for such abuses, yet the system's loopholes persist.

Hawaii's bill imposes penalties (Section 11-M), but they're reactive, not preventive. Taxpayers—Republican, Democrat, or Independent—shouldn't be stuck cleaning up after candidates who treat public funds like a personal slush fund. We need accountability, not another bureaucracy.

4. No Evidence It Reduces Corruption or Boosts Trust

Proponents claim public financing will "restore public confidence" (Section 11-A) and curb special interest influence. But where's the proof? In New York City, which has a robust public funding program since 1988, scandals persist. The [New York Post reported in 2021](#) that candidates still collude with donors to skirt rules, costing taxpayers \$126 million in one election cycle alone. Corruption didn't vanish—it adapted.

Studies, like one from the [Campaign Finance Institute](#), show no consistent link between public funding and higher voter trust or turnout. Hawaii's partial public funding system, in place since 1978, already offers a compromise. Why gamble on a costly overhaul with no guaranteed payoff?

5. Stifles Free Speech and Voter Choice

This bill restricts candidates who opt in from accepting private donations during their campaign and term in office (Section 11-I), effectively silencing their ability to amplify their message beyond government handouts. For Democrats who value free expression and Republicans who cherish individual liberty, this should raise red flags. Voters lose too—publicly funded candidates might dominate airwaves, drowning out privately funded voices, including third-party candidates who often bring fresh ideas.

North Carolina's judicial public financing program, repealed in 2013, showed this chilling effect. A [report by the Institute for Justice](#) noted that it reduced competition, with fewer candidates running overall. Hawaii's diverse electorate deserves more choices, not fewer.

6. A Solution in Search of a Problem

Hawaii's current campaign finance laws aren't perfect, but they've kept our elections competitive without breaking the bank. The bill cites Watergate-era reforms (Page 2) and a vague "common belief" about wealthy donors (Section 1), yet offers no data showing a crisis here. Other states adopted public funding after specific scandals—Hawaii hasn't. Why fix what isn't broken, especially when the fix costs millions and risks backfiring?

Conclusion: Vote "No" for Hawaii's Future

Honorable members, S.B. No. 51 promises a utopian electoral system but delivers a taxpayer-funded boondoggle that favors insiders, invites abuse, and stifles debate. Democrats, consider the strain on working families and the barriers to new voices. Republicans, recognize the assault on liberty and fiscal sanity. Evidence from Connecticut, Arizona, Maine, New York City, and North Carolina screams caution. Let's protect Hawaii's resources and trust in our people—not politicians—to shape our democracy. I respectfully urge you to vote "No."

Sincerely,
Andrew Crossland
Hawaii Patriot Republicans



**House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: SB51
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 2:00pm; Conference Room 325**

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

HAPA is submitting testimony in STRONG Support of SB51, which establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State.

It's crucially important that the legislature does everything in its power to remove the influence money has on politics. Candidates work for donations that create relationships that can cause corruption or the perception of it. Money is crucial to winning, for example, 91% of candidates who outspend their opponent go on to win. Many elections are uncontested because potential candidates can't afford the high price tag. Furthermore, the average house winner spends \$40,000 compared to only \$16,000 for the loser.

Publicly financed elections will allow candidates to get support from their constituents rather than wealthy donors. As a result, elections will become more competitive with a more diverse set of candidates. Legislators will be free to act on behalf of voters without being concerned about what their donors think. Candidates will also be able to spend more time with constituents rather than fundraising. Furthermore, a system of fully publicly financed elections is overwhelmingly supported by Hawai'i voters.

Publicly funded elections are already being successfully implemented locally and in other jurisdictions. Hawai'i Island County Council races had this program in 2010 and 2012. Connecticut and Maine have clean elections statewide which are both very popular and successful. Over 70% of Democratic legislators use this program in Maine. Connecticut's program was established to get money out of politics following large corruption scandals.

SB 51 would provide participating candidates with competitive amounts of funding they need to run an effective campaign, and would ban them from receiving any private donations at all. This system worked very well for Hawai'i County Council races in 2010 and 2012, and currently works very well statewide in places like Connecticut and Maine.

Winning publicly financed elections is the single biggest thing we could do to end pay-to-play corruption in our politics and start building a Hawai'i that puts Hawai'i's land and people first — not big money interests.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director



Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Chair David A. Tarnas, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe]

March 12, 2025 2 pm Room 325
SB345 — RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING

TESTIMONY

Beppie Shapiro, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports SB345 SD1. The League of Women Voters of the US believes that methods of financing political campaigns should enable candidates to compete equitably for public office and ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public. Hawaii's Partial Public Funding Program (PPFP) is intended to support those goals.

The amount available through the PPFP to publicly funded candidates has not changed in over two decades. Inflation in media prices, postage, and labor costs make the current amounts far less than competitive. The current amounts available to qualified candidates for public funding are far below the amounts spent by privately funded candidates who won election to the same office. Not surprisingly, the number of candidates using the PPFP has decreased every year since at least 2016. The increases proposed in SB345 SD1 unquestionably offer an improvement on the status quo.

In addition, SB345 SD1 cuts the amount of qualifying contributions required to access public funding for several offices, making the program easier to access.

To enable the Campaign Spending Commission (CSC) to fulfill the requirements of this bill as well as its existing duties, SB345 SD1 adds 2 positions to CSC staff and increases the CSC budget by an unspecified amount.

Please pass SB345 SD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



150 Hamakua Drive #341
Kailua, HI 96734

our-hawaii.org

Testimony in Support of SB51

Submitted to the House Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee
by Evan Weber, Managing Director, Our Hawai'i, 3/12/2025

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and all Committee members,

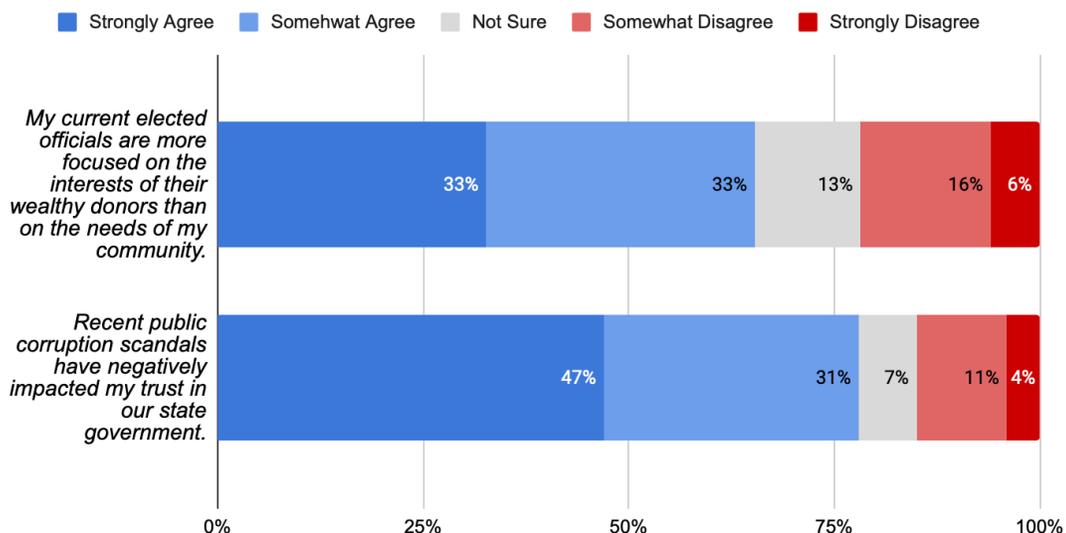
Mahalo for the opportunity to testify before you today. On behalf of Our Hawai'i's over 38,000 members and supporters across the pae 'āina, we write in strong support for Senate Bill SB51, relating to public financing of candidates to elected office.

The crisis of public trust in government has reached a tipping point. After years of the FBI putting our officials in handcuffs, resignations, and scandals, [Hawai'i voters as a whole in the 2022 election ranked government corruption as their number 3 top issue, only behind inflation and affordable housing](#), in a [survey](#) conducted on behalf of Our Hawai'i by the most accurate polling firm in US elections in 2020.

The reforms adopted by the legislature in 2023, while important, did not go far enough on a policy matter or in terms of shifting public perception. Polling conducted in 2024 by the Clean Elections Hawai'i Coalition showed **that two out of three voters (66%) believe that "elected officials care more about wealthy donors than the needs of my community."** 9 out of 10 voters also believe that influence or obligate legislators to some degree, with over half of voters believing that degree is "greatly."

This poll was conducted in March 2024, right before an April 17th [bombshell exposé dropped on the front page of the New York Times](#), exposing to the world the deep culture of

Two Out of Three Voters Say Elected Officials Care More About Wealthy Donors Than Needs of Communities





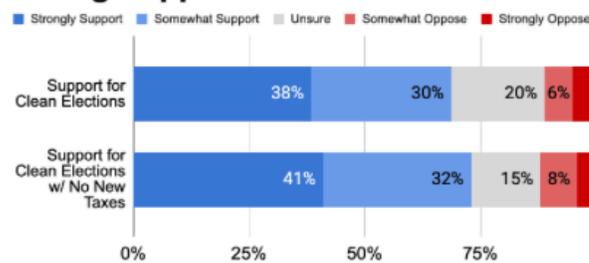
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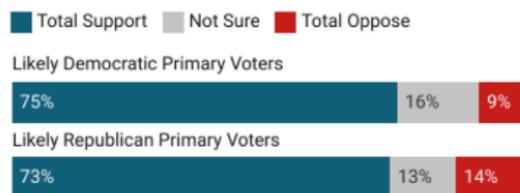
pay-to-play corruption that has existed at high levels of Hawai'i political leadership. With the article being released towards the end of last legislative session, reform-minded lawmakers did not have time to act, but now you do.

Luckily, a solution is on the table for you to solve this problem. The same voters, across race, ethnicity, income level, and political party, overwhelming support a Clean Elections program when it is described to them in plain terms, with **68% of voters saying they would support passing a law to create a Clean Elections program in Hawai'i.** And they are 4 times more likely to support than oppose a candidate for office who backs and champions such a program as well.

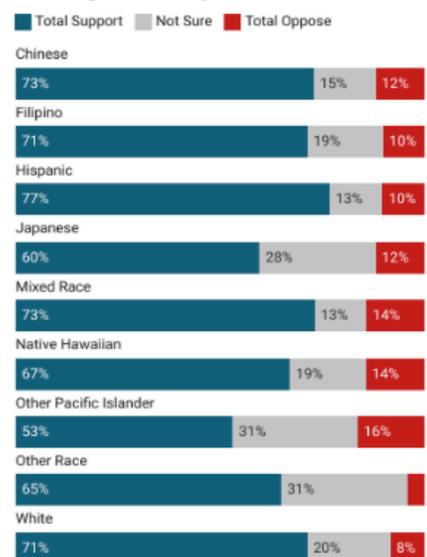
Strong Support for Clean Elections



3 in 4 Likely Primary Voters Support Clean Elections



Broad Support for Clean Elections Among all Groups



With public trust at an all time low, now is the time for systemic and transformative solutions. While progress has been made, it is not enough. We need to address the overriding issue of money in our politics where it begins, in our elections.

SB51 would go as far as is legally possible under the United States constitution by providing a viable alternative to the status quo private money campaign system. It would level the playing field for candidates who are not wealthy or well-connected, and take a historic step towards getting big money out of our elections.

No longer would legislators have to look over their shoulders, worried about how their donors who will fund their next campaign might react to each and every vote. **Legislators can be fully focused on delivering for their constituents, not campaign donors.**

Programs like this work, and are cost-effective: we've seen it in places like Connecticut, Maine, Hawai'i County and cities all around the US. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other State, **estimates show the cost would be less than \$5-10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget.** That's just over \$3-6 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government, and an [amount that a majority of those polled said they'd be willing to pay.](#)



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Responding to House Feedback: We support this bill as written, however, last session the legislation was deferred in this committee, with a number of concerns and feedback raised by members of the House of Representatives. An overview of those concerns are outlined below, with proposed fixes, estimates of impacts of these fixes, and amendment language to make those changes, should you wish to act.

Addressing Costs:

- 1. Why Should the State Pay for The Counties?** Paying for this program at a County level would represent a much larger percentage of County than State budget funds, however, many House legislators have expressed they believe the State should not be responsible for funding county elections. Moreover, the formula for the partial public funding system already provides sufficient competitive funds for Kauai and Maui County Council races due to their at-large nature, making comprehensive funding less necessary. **Eliminating County Elections from the program would reduce the average annual cost by 36%.**
- 2. Further Addressing Cost:** While we maintain that the price tag of this legislation is well worth it, and is likely to result in cost-savings to the state over time as a result of more efficient lawmaking, the cost of the legislation has been a consistent complaint from House Representatives. The major cost-driving races are Governor and Lieutenant Governor. **By removing Governor & LG races from the program, the average annual cost could be reduced another 19%.**

These two changes would reduce the program cost by 56% over baseline on an annual basis, bringing the annual cost to ~\$2.1 million.

Increasing Revenue:

- 3. Make the Hawai'i Election Campaign Fund Opt-Out:** By switching the Hawai'i Election Campaign Fund that funds the Campaign Spending Commission from a \$3 opt-in tax refund to to a \$3 *opt-out* tax refund, we could create a durable permanent revenue source for the program without raising any additional taxes. At the current estimate of ~1 million individual tax filers (725,000 annual tax filers, with ~40% filing jointly), and assuming a 85% participation rate, **this shift would generate around \$2.59 million annually for the Campaign Fund.** This is up from the current annual revenue to the Fund of ~\$100,000

Equity across qualifying contributions:

- 4. Proportional calculation for qualifying contributions:** Many legislators have have fairly pointed out that the number of qualifying contributions for different races is arbitrary and non-proportional. You can correct for this by basing the number of qualifying contributions off of the number of registered voters in the district for the previous elections, just as the existing partial public financing system does. Designating the number of qualifying contributions as 1% of that



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number would roughly match up with the current qualifying contribution requirements across offices.

Potential Draft Amendments

Potential Amendment 1: Eliminating County Elections

SECTION 2. §11-F(2) (b) — Strike bullets (6) through (16)

SECTION 2. §11-H — Strike bullets (6) through (16)

Potential Amendment 2: Removing Governor & Lieutenant Governor Races

SECTION 2. §11-F(2) (b) — Strike bullets (1) and (2)

SECTION 2. §11-H — Strike bullets (1) and (2)

Potential Amendment 3: Election Fund Opt-In to Opt-Out

SECTION X. Amendment to Section 235-102.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes

Section 235-102.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“§235-102.5 Hawaii Election Campaign Fund Check-off Option.

(a) Every individual whose state income tax liability for any taxable year is \$3 or more may designate \$3 to be paid to the Hawaii election campaign fund.

(b) The director of taxation shall revise the individual income tax return form to provide an option whereby the taxpayer may decline to allocate \$3 to the Hawaii election campaign fund. Unless the taxpayer explicitly declines this allocation by marking the appropriate box, \$3 shall automatically be designated from their state income tax liability to the Hawaii election campaign fund.

(c) If a joint return is filed, each spouse may make a separate designation under subsection (a). If one spouse chooses not to make a designation, that decision shall not affect the other spouse’s opportunity to make a designation.

(d) The \$3 amount designated under this section shall not constitute a reduction in the tax liability of the taxpayer or the amount of refund due to the taxpayer.”

Potential Amendment 4: Proportional Qualifying Contributions

Replace SECTION 2. §11-F(2)(b) with:

(b) The minimum number of qualifying contributions shall be 1% of the number of voters in the last preceding general election registered to vote in each respective state senate and state representative voting district.

SB 51 Cost Calculations, Different Scenarios

<i>Totals for Different Scenarios</i>	Annual Cost	Average 2 year cost	Average 4 year cost	Annual Cost per resident	% Change from Baseline
Baseline - 1 candidate, all races	\$4,761,250.00	\$9,522,500.00	\$19,045,000.00	\$3.29	N/A
No Gov/Lt Gov (most Expensive Races)	\$3,836,250.00	\$7,672,500.00	\$15,345,000.00	\$2.65	-19.43%
Legislature, Councils, & OHA Only (No "Top of Ticket")	\$2,861,250.00	\$5,722,500.00	\$11,445,000.00	\$1.98	-39.91%
State Elections Only (No County Elections)	\$3,040,000.00	\$6,080,000.00	\$12,160,000.00	\$2.10	-36.15%
House, Senate, and OHA Only	\$2,115,000.00	\$4,230,000.00	\$8,460,000.00	\$1.46	-55.58%
House and Senate Only	\$2,025,000.00	\$4,050,000.00	\$8,100,000.00	\$1.40	-57.47%
2 candidates, all races	\$9,522,500.00	\$19,045,000.00	\$38,090,000.00	\$6.58	100.00%

Underlying Cost Calculations — SB51

Office	Seats	Estimated Participants per seat	Maximum Funds Available	Cost for all seats	Frequency (Elections per 10 years)	Annual Cost	Average 2 year cost	Average 4 year cost	Annual Cost per resident
Gov	1	1	\$2,500,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	2.5	\$625,000.00	\$1,250,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$0.43
LG	1	1	\$1,200,000.00	\$1,200,000.00	2.5	\$300,000.00	\$600,000.00	\$1,200,000.00	\$0.21
State Senator	25	25	\$100,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	3	\$750,000.00	\$1,500,000.00	\$3,000,000.00	\$0.52
State Rep	51	51	\$50,000.00	\$2,550,000.00	5	\$1,275,000.00	\$2,550,000.00	\$5,100,000.00	\$0.88
HI Mayor	1	1	\$360,000.00	\$360,000.00	2.5	\$90,000.00	\$180,000.00	\$360,000.00	\$0.06
HI Attorney	1	1	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00	2.5	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$0.01
HI Council	9	9	\$20,000.00	\$180,000.00	5	\$90,000.00	\$180,000.00	\$360,000.00	\$0.06
HNL Mayor	1	1	\$2,300,000.00	\$2,300,000.00	2.5	\$575,000.00	\$1,150,000.00	\$2,300,000.00	\$0.40
HNL Attorney	1	1	\$225,000.00	\$225,000.00	2.5	\$56,250.00	\$112,500.00	\$225,000.00	\$0.04
HNL Council	9	9	\$135,000.00	\$1,215,000.00	2.5	\$303,750.00	\$607,500.00	\$1,215,000.00	\$0.21
Maui Mayor	1	1	\$600,000.00	\$600,000.00	2.5	\$150,000.00	\$300,000.00	\$600,000.00	\$0.10
Maui Council	9	9	\$55,000.00	\$495,000.00	5	\$247,500.00	\$495,000.00	\$990,000.00	\$0.17
Kauai Mayor	1	1	\$350,000.00	\$350,000.00	2.5	\$87,500.00	\$175,000.00	\$350,000.00	\$0.06
Kauai Attorney	1	1	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	2.5	\$6,250.00	\$12,500.00	\$25,000.00	\$0.00
Kauai Council	7	7	\$30,000.00	\$210,000.00	5	\$105,000.00	\$210,000.00	\$420,000.00	\$0.07
OHA	9	9	\$40,000.00	\$360,000.00	2.5	\$90,000.00	\$180,000.00	\$360,000.00	\$0.06
Total	128	128	\$8,030,000.00	\$15,110,000.00	N/A	\$4,761,250.00	\$9,522,500.00	\$19,045,000.00	\$3.29

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:22:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kim Cordery	Aloha Freedom Coalition	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I appose SB51 SD1! This bill goes against freedom of speech bc it mandates the tax payer \$ to support candidates. This takes away the individual rights to chose who we want to support!

I appose SB51!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:24:48 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeannette Gurung	WOCAN	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Mahalo, Jeannette

77-6412 Kepano Place, Kailua Kona

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:45:28 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dave Mulinix	Our Revolution Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha JHA Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members [Belatti](#), [Cochran](#), [Hashem](#), [Kahaloa](#), [Perruso](#), [Takayama](#), [Todd](#), [Garcia](#), [Shimizu](#),

On behalf of Our Revolution Hawaii's 5,000 members and supporters statewide, we Stand in Strong Support of SB51 that Establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State of Hawai'i, to begin with the 2028 general election year. Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature.

Since the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court's controversial 2010 [decision](#) that swept away more than a century's worth of campaign finance safeguards, funding for candidates by special interests has grown exponentially. Overwhelming majorities of Americans have consistently [expressed disapproval](#) of the ruling, with at least [22 states and hundreds of cities](#) voting to support a constitutional amendment to overturn it. *Citizens United* reshaped political campaigns in profound ways, giving corporations and billionaire-funded super PACs a central role in U.S. elections and making untraceable dark money a major force in politics.

While the chances for meaningful reform in Congress appear slim, it falls on state governments to lead the charge to make funding elections fairer and more inclusive. The best way to combat special interest money having undue influence on our elections is for Hawaii to join the many jurisdictions across the nations that already offer various types of public financing for elections, the [most powerful solution](#) to the problem of big money in politics.

Hawai'i started a partial public funding program after adding it to the State Constitution in 1978. That early effort showed a commitment to ethical elections. This new proposal expands on that foundation. Between 2010 and 2012, the Hawai'i County Council pilot program gave about \$363,000 in public funds to 16 candidates. Many praised the pilot project for reducing reliance on wealthy contributors and for showing that publicly funded elections can work in Hawai'i.

This investment can help protect the integrity of elections for all residents. Reducing dependence on large private donations can cut the costs linked to corruption or investigations later on.

Please pass SB51.

Mahalo for your kind attention,

Dave Mulinix, Statewide Organizer

Our Revolution Hawaii



Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Wednesday, March 12, 2025
2:00PM Auditorium

RE: **SB51** Comprehensive Public Financing of Elections - **Support**

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 450 small businesses and entrepreneurs across the state that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity.

As small business owners who believe we can strengthen Hawaii's economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment, we urge this committee to vote in favor of passing SB51, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money on our elections.

Voter turnout and public trust in government are at an all time low. Corruption is perceived to be a part of the democratic process. Two in three people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. In order to regain the public's trust, we need to break the link between corporate dollars and winning our local elections. SB51 would allow candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on big money and special interest groups, creating a fairer and more honest system that makes elected officials accountable to constituents.

3 out of 4 voters support a clean elections program. Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Estimates show the cost would be less than \$10M per year-just 0.05% of the state's budget. That's under \$7/resident - a small price to pay for public trust in a more transparent, accountable government. Drastic shifts in political makeup and high incumbent turnover are not a result of similar public financing programs in other states. But who holds influence over elected representatives does change, which ensures that our government serves the people of Hawaii, not the wealthy few. SB51 has the opportunity to restore democracy in our electoral process and empower candidates to focus on constituents in their community rather than fundraise.

Please pass SB51. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hawaii Legislative Council Members

Joell Edwards
Wainiha Country Market
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman
Island Naturals
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson
Niko Niko
Family Dentistry
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia
Hawaii Taro Farm
Wailuku

Maile Meyer
Na Mea Hawaii
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger
Kihei Ice
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki
Abundant Life
Natural Foods
Hilo

Tanya Aynessazian
Principal Contractor

Chamber of
Sustainable Commerce
808.445.7606
P.O. Box 22394
Honolulu, HI 96823



Committee: Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 2:00pm
Place: Conference Room 325 & Via Videoconference
Re: Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of SB51 SD1
Relating to Public Financing for Candidates to Elected Office

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and Committee Members:

The ACLU of Hawai'i **supports SB51 SD1 Relating to Public Financing For Candidates Elected to Office. Specifically, we ask that you fully fund this measure, make it permanent and implement no later than 2026.**

In our view, the answer to concerns over the escalating cost of political campaigns is to expand, not limit, the resources available for political advocacy. **Thus, the ACLU supports a comprehensive and meaningful opt-in system of public financing that would help create a level playing field for every qualified candidate.**

A representative democracy functions best when it closely mirrors the electorate. And this is accomplished when access to public candidacy isn't limited by personal wealth or the deep pockets of private interests.

Financial means, or lack of such, can have a wide array of impacts. Access to wealth often results in better educational and health outcomes over the course of one's life. Those individuals and families impacted by our criminal justice system are predominately those who live in poverty. **So too do financial means impact our electoral system. Those with greater financial means and access to high-quality education are more likely to run for, and win, elected offices.**

Giving potential candidates the option to access a meaningful pool of public money will go a long way toward leveling the playing field against well-funded and entrenched incumbents. And a well-funded public financing system could very-well encourage individuals from these under represented demographics to run for public office.

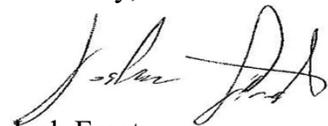
When our legislative officials have in common shared lived experience, not just geographic proximity, with those they represent we can all be uplifted with bolder public policy that acknowledges our most vulnerable and works to uplift them.

We will continue to advocate for reform of the current system, including in support of our longstanding commitment to public financing of campaigns. In doing so, we will stress fidelity to

the principles protected by the First Amendment with the goal of expanding, not limiting, political speech.

Please pass and SB51 SD1 on a permanent basis and starting no later than 2026. Mahalo for your service!

Sincerely,



Josh Frost
Policy Assistant
ACLU of Hawai'i
jfrost@acluhawaii.org

The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i for over 50 years.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 11:23:55 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the JHA committee,

My name is Will Caron. I live in Kahalu‘u on O‘ahu's windward side. I am testifying in strong support of SB51 SD1, which would establish a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State of Hawai‘i, to begin with the 2028 general election year.

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010) was a landmark decision in U.S. campaign finance law that has led to a significant concentration of political power in the hands of wealthy entities, compromising the integrity of our democracy. In the 15 years since that decision, our elections have become increasingly dominated by big-monied interests, which has left the interests of the working class—which cannot afford to purchase political influence—behind.

We’ve created a system where money buys elections. Those who want to serve and represent their communities first need to acquire tons of cash. Without it, there is almost no chance of successfully running for election. This has eroded our democracy to the point that it is now being ransacked by a cabal of billionaire elites led by an authoritarian who has no problem taking away human and civil rights, plundering the natural environment for profit, and sacrificing the health and wellbeing of the rest of us in the process.

There is no easy way to undo the damage caused by *Citizens United*, and the oligarchy that has come roaring into power in the wake of that flawed ruling. We must claw our democracy back one step at a time. Creating a system of elections whereby a candidate can win without relying on big monied interests is one of the biggest steps we can take here at the state level. We need leaders who are accountable to the working class—to the people of Hawai‘i—not to corporations, billionaires, and other special interests.

Please support and pass SB51 SD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 11:27:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support.

Larry Smith

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:28:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB51. Please pass this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:30:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mina H Elison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai,

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai‘i’s elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai‘i’s partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Sincerely,

Mina Elison

Ke‘ei, Kona Hema, Hawai‘i

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:37:09 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lory Ono	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB51. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

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Mahalo,

Lory Ono

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:51:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The success of Hawai‘i’s partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Mahalo, Barbara Best, Wailuku

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:52:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai‘i’s elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai‘i’s partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

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SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:59:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Witeck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support publicly financed elections. It's time to take away or lessen the impact of big corporate donations to campaigns and yo reduce the influence of very wealthy individuals on campaigns and their outcomes. Please pass this measure and strengthen democracy in the islands.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:59:40 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruta Jordans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please take the money out of politics. It is shameful that the person with the most money gets elected. If everyone candidating for the same position had the same amount of money then the voters could and would look at the candidate's ability and we might get qualified people elected. Please support SB51to have an equal playing field.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 3:59:56 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert H. Pahia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill will ultimately increase public trust in the legislative process

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:12:21 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!

Public finance of elections is better than the current system where funding is dominated by wealthy private interests.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:14:58 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl hendrickson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:19:28 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I SUPPORT SB51 SD1 which establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State of Hawai‘i, to begin with the 2028 general election year. Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

I believe that Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence. It is especially important here in our islands to ensure that qualified and interested people can pursue a position without the huge challenge of fundraising

C. Burghardt

Kou Oahu

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:34:37 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Hagan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:46:44 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jayven Okuda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, ‘o Jayven ko‘u inoa, and i support this SB5.

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai‘i’s elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai‘i’s partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:47:13 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emelia Briscoe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:58:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealakai Hammond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Mahalo,

Kealakai Hammond

Honolulu, HI

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:04:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Maddux	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB51. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:20:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai‘i’s elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai‘i’s partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:29:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Chair and Committee Members,

Please support SB51. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawaii’s elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawaii’s partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Mahalo,
Marcia Kemble
Makiki

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:41:41 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Thank you

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:48:09 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dennis O'Shea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this and hope you will too.

Mahalo

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 6:07:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan Deets	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 6:25:29 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eliel Starbright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process. Eliel, Kapaa

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 7:03:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeannine Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB51 SD1. I have been a huge supporter of publicly funded elections since 2007. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 7:22:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel R Freund	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee Members,

Follow the money. For far too many political campaigns it ends up coming from wealthy individuals and organizations. It looks bad and it smells bad. And it tarnishes you, our elected officials. Time to break the cycle and move to public financing.

- Dan Freund, Kapaa

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 7:54:02 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 7:57:21 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabrielle Igarta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee members,

My name is Gabrielle Igarta and I am writing to you in support of SB51. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors and have recently been called into question in public discourse. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence. It also incentivizes higher engagement in the election process amongst residents who are either not registered to vote or residents who are registered but do not bother submitting a ballot.

Please support SB51 and mahalo for your consideration.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 8:32:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Siobhan Coad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of **SB 51 SD1**. Public financing is critical for reducing the undue influence of wealthy donors, corporations, and special interest groups on our political system. By allowing candidates to rely on public support rather than large financial contributions, this legislation will foster a more competitive, diverse, and truly representative electoral process.

If SB51 is passed into law, Hawai‘i will serve as a beacon of equity and democracy, setting an example for other states to follow. This measure has the potential to inspire transformative change in election systems nationwide, shifting power back to the people and away from those with the largest checkbooks.

Thank you for your time,

Siobhan Coad

Honolulu, HI

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:09:44 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Stayton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Thank yo for your consideration,

Susan, Lawai, Kauai

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 9:58:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pamela burrell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

please support SB51!

It levels the playing field and frees candidates from big donors who might try to influence them. Candidates who choose this system pledge to reject donations from lobbyists, corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals. This allows elected officials to make decisions based on public needs rather than donor demands.

It's only fair.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

pamela Burrell, Kalihiwai, Kaua'i 96755

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 10:38:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

To: Judicial Chair Tarnas and Committee Members
From: Brodie Lockard, Common Cause Hawaii Board Member
Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 2:00 pm

In strong support of SB51

Dear Chair Tarnas and Committee Members—

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai'i's political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai'i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That's under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Brodie Lockard
Common Cause Hawaii Board Member

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:07:04 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fred Flores	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:45:32 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Culbertson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members!

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo!

R A Culbertson

Honokaa

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:01:12 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Montague	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB51. Hawaii needs to have elections that are not bought by large corporations or wealthy individuals.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:02:33 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KEALA FUNG	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

My name is Keala Fung from Honolulu, and i fully SUPPORT SB51. Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community.

SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year.

If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo.

Keala Fung, Honolulu

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:02:48 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marion McHenry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB51. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

This is a very important time to pass this excellent bill. Thank you for your public service.

Sincerely,

Robert and Marion McHenry

Princeville, Kauai

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:04:03 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I write to you in support of SB51. Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo.

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:11:12 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dita Škalic	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai‘i’s elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai‘i’s partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:14:34 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealohi Hanohano	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:18:44 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:29:09 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
mary drayer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

this is an important bill - people without the backing of the super-pacs and unions are at a huge disadvantage financially ..good people are not on the ballot simply for lack of money... let's give everyone an opportunity to serve ... mahalo.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:31:35 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joelle Seashell	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Corrupt. Strongly oppose

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:53:15 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lora Santiago	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly OPPOSE SB51.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:55:07 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of public financing for our elections. Such financing is a crucial tool in any good government package, opening up elective offices to a wider array of citizen candidates. This is a wise investment in the health of our democracy at a moment in which it is being sorely tested, both nationally and locally. Please advance this crucial bill with its original intent intact.

With aloha,

Dave Ball, Waialae-Kahala

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:55:28 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruben Ongos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE THIS BILL!!!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:56:55 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laurence Limasa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:57:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Myers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now. Mahalo nui.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:00:06 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emerson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Not my tax dollars getting laundered. People dont want to pay for anything any more. DOGE is going to come audit you guys and when they do. See you later.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:09:08 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorinda Ohelo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:11:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kamakani de dely	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill !

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:14:08 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Candice Applegate	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii needs this bill. Please vote for support.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:14:38 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mallory De Dely	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill !

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:22:01 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Priscilla Stuckey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Members of the Committee,

Please support SB51. We need fully publicly funded elections to restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have usually depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

Mahalo,

Priscilla Stuckey

Kihei, HI

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the committee,

Strong support of Senate Bill 51.

SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. Public campaign financing can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. Public financing for campaigns works for all residents and not just the wealthy few.

Pass SB51 now.

Keith Neal
Waimea

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:29:38 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Dedely	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill !

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:32:23 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to respectfully ask that you support of SB 51, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:37:57 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joan Heller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo.

Joan Heller

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:46:37 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Sutherland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo.

Scott S

Honolulu, Hawaii

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:51:27 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marsha Hee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Pass SB51 now. Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:54:39 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Giles	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Oppose SB51,

Paul Giles

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:54:59 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin D. Ganitano	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51 in which taxpayer dollars would fund all political campaigns and private donations are banned.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:11:57 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelli Bolger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

When money dominates politics, it results in policies favoring wealthy donors over community needs. SB51, a clean elections program, would break this link by publicly financing campaigns, freeing candidates from special interest fundraising. With 75% voter support, it promises a more ethical and representative government, proven successful in Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County. This cost-effective program, under \$10 million annually, will prioritize constituents over wealthy interests. Pass SB51 to end corruption and create a government that represents our community.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:14:23 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roger Epstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If anything demonstrates how money has ruined our political system, it is the \$255million that Musk gave to Trump, who now has enough of a war chest to control elections all over the country.

As a legislator, it should be clear that you could much better spend your time, than raising funds for reelection.

Many have been trying to get this passed for years.

NOW IS THE TIME.

Mahalo nui

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:27:58 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noela von Wiegandt	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose SB 51. I do not want my tax dollars to fund this. Thank you.

Noela von Wiegandt

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:29:30 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bronson Teixeira	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I strongly oppose this bill, mahalo.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:34:54 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blaine De Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose SB51. My tax dollars should not be funding anything political. This is just another way the state if Hawaii wants to launder my hard earned tax dollars.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:36:03 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gordon b peterson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Public funded elections makes elections more fair. Elections should not be for sale to wealthy donors.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:51:36 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Domingo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE SB51

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:53:36 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

I am writing in support of SB51, Fully Funded Public Elections.

Elections shouldn't be bought, and it shouldn't go to those who have the biggest purse who can buy the most advertisements and have the most signs and handouts that are available for the constituents. The ability for elections to be heavily influenced by the one who has the most money has led to the public not trusting those we are voting in. Conversely, candidates who come from the community and who would garner mass community support shouldn't be held back by the fact that they don't have as much money as their opponent. This is how many good candidates lose elections, not being able to financially compete with their opponent.

Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawaii's elections. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing elections fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the biggest bankroll.

Mahalo for your consideration,
Keoni Shizuma, from Kaneohe, Oahu.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:04:13 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pamela Elders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Pass SB51. It's time to limit big money in elections!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:14:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane E Arnold	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB51. Hawaii needs to get big money out of our elections by comprehensive public financing. Thank you.

Jane E Arnold

1763 Iwi Way, Apt D

Honolulu HI. 96816

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:25:31 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai‘i’s political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai‘i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai‘i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That’s under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo considering this testimony,

Diane Ware, Ka'u Moku 96785

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:27:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miles Kushima	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose sb 51. Never should my tax dollors be wasted for political campaigns. Never!

Mahalo,

Miles K.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:31:33 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Littleton	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:31:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann V Saffery	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai‘i’s political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai‘i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai‘i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That’s under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Ann V Saffery

Honolulu, HI

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:35:34 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee,

As former chair of the Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct, I submit this testimony in support of SB 51 SD1 RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE.

The Commission in recommending an increase in partial public funding of elections, made it clear is was supportive of a bill like this one if fiscal resources are available. See Commission December 1, 2022 Final Report at page 32.

This bill "expands the reach of many small donors and can relieve candidates of the need to rely on the support of special interest groups or large donors." Id.

Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:55:55 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bad bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:01:19 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sally Lee	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose. This bill is not in the best interest of the people of Hawaii.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:06:33 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary True	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Thanks for your time and attention! Mary True, 96783

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:07:26 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cari Sasaki	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE SB51. Taxpayer money shouldn't be funding political campaigns and it certainly shouldn't be the primary (or sole) source of campaign funds. The public should personally support candidates they believe to have their best interests at heart.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:08:19 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Bodien	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:18:56 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carla Allison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I strongly support SB51.

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, **we need to pass SB51 now.**

Mahalo.

Carla Allison - Honolulu

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:27:10 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Kamau	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51 SD1. Mahalo.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:10:36 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MaryAnn Wagner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo,

MaryAnn Wagner

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:12:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Matson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

As a candidate who ran for State House twice on partial public funding, I am in strong support of this bill. We need to make it easier for candidates to run on public funding and get large, private donations OUT OF OUR ELECTIONS for good. Please pass this bill and work to make full public funding a reality.

I would ask the members of this committee to please review the amounts listed, especially in regards to Hawai'i Island County Council, as they seem pretty low if you are actually facing a challenger. Please amend them to make them more competitive.

Finally, I am still hoping for a bill that will hold ALL candidates to strict campaign spending limits, whether they run on public funds or not, so that we can actually have more equitable and value based community run and supported elections.

Mahalo,

Shannon M.

Hawai'i Island Resident

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:15:39 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bart Burford	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please recognize that I am opposed ro this bill -

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:18:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Nichols	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose Senate Bill No. 51 because I believe it's a reckless waste of taxpayer dollars and a pointless drain on legislative time. As a taxpayer and resident of Hawaii, I see this proposal to create a comprehensive public funding program for candidates starting in 2028 as an expensive experiment that we can't afford and don't need. I'm frustrated that the bill demands unspecified sums from our general revenues for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027, plus a staggering \$30,000,000 minimum in a special fund just to get off the ground. That's money I'd rather see go to fixing our crumbling roads, supporting our schools, or helping families afford housing—not handed out to politicians, some of whom might not even face serious competition. I can't stomach the idea of my hard-earned dollars funding a candidate who's unopposed or has no real shot at winning, just because they checked a few boxes to grab public cash. And what happens if the fund doesn't hit that \$30,000,000 mark? Either I'm stuck paying more to prop it up, or the whole thing collapses after we've already sunk millions into it—both options feel like a slap in the face.

Beyond the money, I think this bill is a colossal waste of time. I look at the rules—counting \$5 contributions, tracking seed money, filing endless reports—and I see a bureaucratic mess that'll bog down candidates, clerks, and the Campaign Spending Commission for years. I don't understand why we need four trainings per election cycle, annual guides, and reports in 2026, 2027, 2028, and 2029, when we've got real problems like a shaky economy and high living costs to tackle. The bill's sloppy too; it says it takes effect in 2057 but aims for 2028—either way, I'm left wondering why we're spending years planning something that might not even happen if the funding falls short. I already know Hawaii has a partial public funding system since 1978 that works fine; why waste time building this overcomplicated replacement instead of tweaking what we've got? And honestly, I doubt many candidates will even sign up—those strict rules and harsh penalties, like paying triple for overspending, might scare them off, leaving all this effort for nothing.

I'm tired of seeing my tax dollars and my lawmakers' energy thrown at something that doesn't fix a clear problem. Sure, the bill talks about wealthy donors, but I haven't seen proof our current system's so broken we need this drastic overhaul. I worry candidates might game it—collect contributions, snag big payouts, then drop out—wasting my money and everyone's time. I'd rather see us focus on what matters: lowering my cost of living or helping our kids thrive. This bill feels like a distraction, a pet project that sounds noble but leaves me footing the bill for something I didn't ask for and don't trust. I urge lawmakers to ditch this wasteful plan and put our resources where they'll actually help people like me, not politicians chasing handouts.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:21:41 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivy Hsu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:24:13 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maki Morinoue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I stand in **STRONG SUPPORT** of SB51, which would establish comprehensive public financing for Hawai'i elections.

For too long, money has dominated our political system, resulting in policies that serve special interests while neglecting community needs. The evidence is clear: Two-thirds of people believe elected officials prioritize wealthy donors over constituents.

SB51 offers a proven solution by breaking the link between private money and electoral success. By freeing candidates from dependence on wealthy donors and special interests, we create a more ethical and representative government—which is why three-quarters of voters support clean elections.

The success of similar programs in Connecticut, Maine, and Hawai'i County Council demonstrates that publicly financed elections work effectively and affordably. These programs haven't disrupted electoral balance but have fundamentally shifted how legislators respond to constituents instead of donors.

At less than \$10 million annually—a tiny fraction of our state budget—we can easily afford this investment in democracy. The return on this investment will be immeasurable: a government that is genuinely responsive to all residents, not just the privileged few.

If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for everyone, we must pass SB51 now.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Maki Morinoue
Holualoa
Hawai'i

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:40:07 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. Thank you

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:40:08 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brett Kulbis	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Chair Tarnas and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY OPPOSE SB-51 and stand by my previously submitted written testimony.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:44:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Umiamaka	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: Opposition to SB 51 – Constitutional and Legal Concerns

Dear Legislators,

I write to express my strong opposition to SB 51, which seeks to establish a taxpayer-funded public campaign financing system while banning private donations. While campaign finance reform is a laudable goal, SB 51 raises significant constitutional and legal concerns that undermine free speech rights, contravene federal precedent, and infringe on the principles of limited government. Below, I outline the legal foundations for these objections.

First Amendment Violations

SB 51’s prohibition on private political contributions directly conflicts with Buckley v. Valeo (1976), where the U.S. Supreme Court upheld contribution limits but struck down expenditure caps, affirming that political donations are protected speech under the First Amendment. The Court ruled that while contribution limits may prevent corruption, outright bans on private funding unduly restrict political expression. Similarly, in Citizens United v. FEC (2010), the Court emphasized that independent expenditures (including those by corporations and unions) cannot be restricted, as they are core to free speech. By eliminating private donations, SB 51 effectively silences individuals and organizations, violating these precedents.

Federal and State Legal Precedent

- 1. Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA)**
Federal law permits private contributions to candidates within regulated limits (e.g., \$3,300 per election to a federal candidate). SB 51’s blanket ban exceeds federal standards and conflicts with FECA’s framework, which balances anti-corruption measures with free speech rights.

2. **Hawaii Revised Statutes § 11-323**
Existing state law already provides partial public financing for candidates who voluntarily opt in, ensuring transparency without abolishing private participation. SB 51's mandatory taxpayer-funded system disregards this balanced approach.
3. **Hawaii Administrative Rules § 3-162-5**
Current regulations strictly prohibit misuse of public campaign funds (e.g., personal expenses, donations to other candidates). Expanding public financing to all campaigns risks misuse of taxpayer dollars, as seen in existing safeguards that SB 51 does not address.

Compelled Speech and Taxpayer Burden

Forcing taxpayers to fund candidates they oppose violates the First Amendment's prohibition on compelled speech, as established in *Wooley v. Maynard* (1977). The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that individuals cannot be coerced into subsidizing speech with which they disagree. SB 51's use of public funds for campaigns—without opt-out provisions—imposes ideological burdens on citizens, undermining democratic choice.

Proposed Alternatives

Rather than banning private donations, Hawaii should:

- Strengthen disclosure laws to enhance transparency (e.g., HB 149, requiring corporate political expenditure reports).
- Adopt Connecticut-style pay-to-play reforms to curb contractor influence.
- Expand existing partial public financing (HB 308, SB 345) without eliminating private participation.

Conclusion

SB 51's approach is constitutionally untenable and risks costly litigation. I urge the legislature to uphold First Amendment freedoms and focus on reforms that balance accountability with free speech. For further legal analysis, see *Buckley v. Valeo*, *Citizens United v. FEC*, and Hawaii's existing campaign finance statutes.

Sincerely,
Deborah Umiamaka

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:54:08 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ethan Porter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support publically financed elections in Hawai'i.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 12:58:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terry Murakami	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:00:32 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha ~

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:12:47 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Cabjuan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose tax \$ going to this.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:21:36 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Mitsumori	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and all Committee Members,

I'm writing in SUPPORT of SB51 SD1.

This measure is important in addressing the systemic problem of big money in our elections, and in helping to restore trust in our democratic institutions.

Studies and analyses over the past years have demonstrated that the funds invested in this program result in overall cost savings, as we saw in Hawai'i County.

Public financing can return the value invested in it by increasing the extent to which elected officials work for the benefit of all state residents, rather than wealthy businesses or individuals; increasing voter confidence in government; and encouraging more citizen participation in elections and communication with their representatives.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of SB51 SD1,

Michele Mitsumori
Hilo

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:33:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kencho Gurung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB51. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:37:05 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TOM DIGRAZIA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:37:36 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. PATRICIA Mullen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai‘i’s political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai‘i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai‘i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That’s under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify

Dr Patricia Mullen

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:55:46 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sierra Mcveigh	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose SB51.

-Sierra Mcveigh

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:00:58 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pam Murphy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the barrier of big-money fundraising. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:06:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Fallbeck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our present Crisis for Democracy could be avoided if we had Concerned Individuals running for government offices instead of only the rich people who can afford it. We need government that can relate to ALL the citizens. **SB 51 SD1** would go a long way to assure that we could focus on an Individual's values and ideas, instead of his wallet if we **had Fully Funded Public Elections.**

For your constituents, for your family, for all our grandchildren, please vote for this bill!

Dr. Patricia Fallbeck

1341 Kapiolani Blvd. #18-B

Honolulu, HI, 96814

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:12:39 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheryl Summers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. **This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program.**

This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. **If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.**

Mahalo

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:23:06 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alika Valdez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:41:03 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keani Rawlins-Fernandez	Individual	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support with amendments.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:44:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chanara Caey Richmond	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51. The government should not use the taxpayer money to support candidates. Chanara Richmond, HD42

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:54:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayla Marie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 3:01:06 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paisley Veilleux	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai‘i’s political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai‘i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai‘i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That’s under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 3:21:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Kaawa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly oppose

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:00:12 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Langham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to take special interests out of elections by funding by taxpayers.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:20:27 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Huycke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB51.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 4:39:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lesha Mathes	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill. I do not want my tax dollars used for candidates. They can do their own fundraising. Not to mention most funds would go to democrats. This is overstepping of government. Government does not have the right to tell us who we can support running for office. This is basically a 1st amendment violation. Stop the nonsense! What, are you afraid the democrats are going to start losing? That's the only reason I can see why you would try to push this garbage. Again STOP IT!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 5:35:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Willis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Strongly Oppose

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 5:38:43 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Lum, 'Ewa Beach

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 5:59:56 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanoë Willis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:16:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
james walace	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51 SD1.We already paying for that rail!!!Why is this government addicted to wasting money!!!!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:47:55 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dayna Matsumura	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:12:40 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louella Vidinha	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In opposition. Public funded campaign is not right. The candidate carries the burden.

Louella Vidinha

Hawaii resident

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:17:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo, and **I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51**, which would strengthen Hawai‘i’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

As a community member and advocate for a just and equitable Hawai‘i, I have seen firsthand how money in politics distorts our democracy. Too often, decisions that impact our communities are made to benefit wealthy donors and special interest groups rather than the people of Hawai‘i. This has led to a system where two out of three residents believe elected officials are more focused on their donors than the needs of their constituents. The result? Policies that prioritize corporate and elite interests over housing, environmental protection, and Native Hawaiian rights.

SB 51 is a critical step toward changing this reality. By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, this bill would ensure that electoral success is not dependent on fundraising from special interests. Instead, it would allow leaders who are deeply rooted in their communities to run competitive campaigns without the pressure to court big money. Public financing has been successfully implemented in other states, and data shows it does not cause instability or drastic political shifts—what it does change is who holds influence in government.

This type of reform is not only necessary but also widely supported. Three out of four voters back a clean elections program. We have seen models work in states like Connecticut and Maine, and Hawai‘i County even piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. The estimated cost—less than \$10 million per year or 0.05% of the state budget—is a small investment in restoring public trust and ensuring a government that truly serves the people.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. Let’s break the grip of big money on our politics and create a system that puts Hawai‘i’s people first.

me ke aloha ‘āina,
Nanea Lo
Mō‘ili‘ili, HI 96826
Sierra Club of Hawai‘i Executive Committee Member
Board Member, Hawai‘i Workers Center

Kanaka Maoli/Lineal Descendant of the Hawaiian Kingdom

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:32:19 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB5. Implementing fully publicly funded elections can help restore trust and integrity in Hawai'i's elections, which have historically depended on wealthy donors. The success of Hawai'i's partial public funding program and past pilot programs demonstrates that this approach can work, reducing undue influence and increasing voter trust in the electoral process.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:51:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheri Matsumura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai‘i’s political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai‘i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai‘i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That’s under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:23:06 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Lindbergh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB51 for clean elections.

Thank you.

Julia Lindbergh

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:35:12 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tamra Hayden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Living in Hawai'i for 37 years, and being a voter at ever opportunity I have had moments that I wonder why I bother to vote. Voting in Hawai'i is poor, and from what I gather on the West side and from my friends in town, is they don't think it matters. Mainly because the person with the most money from backers wins. We can change that by passing this bill which is very popular among constituents.

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. 2 in 3 people think elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than the needs of their community. SB51 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from special interests and the wealthy. This is why 3 in 4 voters support a clean elections program. This program can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seats, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB51 now.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:33:43 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zac Nosugref	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 1:58:14 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Healy	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 6:30:22 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shani Hough	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our taxpayer dollars would fund all political campaigns and private donations are banned!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 8:20:05 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Boranian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii has an opportunity to lead the way on election reform that could influence other states to follow suit so that we, the people, reclaim our voice through our elections. Please vote in support of this bill. Mahalo!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 8:47:13 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danelle Guion	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai‘i’s political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai‘i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai‘i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That’s under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 51. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Danielle Guion, Makakilo

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 11:21:25 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/12/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Makuanani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the committee,

I am an O‘ahu citizen in **strong support of SB51**. There is a long tragic history in Hawai‘i with the way money and capital interests affect and influence our government and decision-making. The overthrow of the Kingdom being the foremost example, when plantation and business owners conspired a coup to create policies that served their business interests. Unfortunately the strong hold of money over Hawai‘i politics never truly ended, and we as a people have the chance to put policies in place that will mitigate those opportunities in the future.

With everything that is happening in national politics right now and the oligarchy taking control, Hawai‘i citizens need a boost of confidence in our own local governance and I believe offering opportunities for complete public funded campaigns helps restore community trust. It is something that Hawai‘i deeply needs. I urge you to pass SB51 to ensure more open, fair, and clean elections, free from even the appearance of corruption.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this very important measure.

Andrea Mākuanani

Makakilo, Hawai‘i