



STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 24, 2025

TO: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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, February 26, 2025
10:04 a.m., Conference Room 211 & 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.



Committee on Ways and Means
Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki]

February 26, 2025, 10:04 Room 211
SB51 SD1 — RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO
ELECTED OFFICE.

TESTIMONY

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

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members: The League of Women Voters of Hawaii thanks the Committee Chairs and members for hearing this valuable and popular bill.

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports SB51 SD1 which: Establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State, to begin with the 2028 general election year; Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit a progress and final report to the Legislature; and appropriates funds. We also offer comments.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that methods of financing political campaigns should enhance political equality for all citizens; protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns; ensure the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections; enable candidates to compete equitably for public office; ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and combat corruption and undue influence in government.

Delegates and voters in the 1978 Constitutional Convention in Hawaii realized the importance of this concept, resulting in the creation of the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund and Hawaii's partial public funding option. Below is a quote from the Convention during the discussion of the HECF: ". . . if we think these tremendous sums being spent [on elections], these tremendous sums being contributed, are not sums for which we are going to ultimately pay because of poor government . . . and because of undue influence . . .we are fooling ourselves." Delegate Naomi Campbell during the 1978 Constitutional Convention.

Public financing of campaigns for political office is an investment in good governance, like budgeting for the Office of Elections or the Campaign Spending Commission or the Legislature itself. (See the recommendations of the Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct). 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.

The cost of this investment in good governance would not be a major portion of the state budget. The writers of this bill, as well as the Campaign Spending Commission (CSC, testimony on SB51) calculate that to pay for the comprehensive public funding program, even including personnel the CSC would need for implementation, would require an appropriation of \$30,200,000.

It is also probable that legislative spending and state contracts would be more effective and efficient when directed by the needs and values of the population, rather than being swayed by financial relationships with special interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



To: The Senate Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)
From: Sherry Pollack, Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 10:04 am

In strong support of SB51 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and WAM 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



**Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: SB51
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 at 10:05am; Conference Room 211**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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'.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 8:13:01 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John & Rita Shockley	Testifying for Free Access Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

The Free Access Coalition strongly supports SB51 which will open the door to a more free access to political office from candidates who are not backed by big money interests.

Mahalo for your time



150 Hamakua Drive #341
Kailua, HI 96734

our-hawaii.org

Testimony in Support of SB51

Submitted to the Senate Ways and Means Committee
by Evan Weber, Managing Director, Our Hawai'i, 2/27/2025

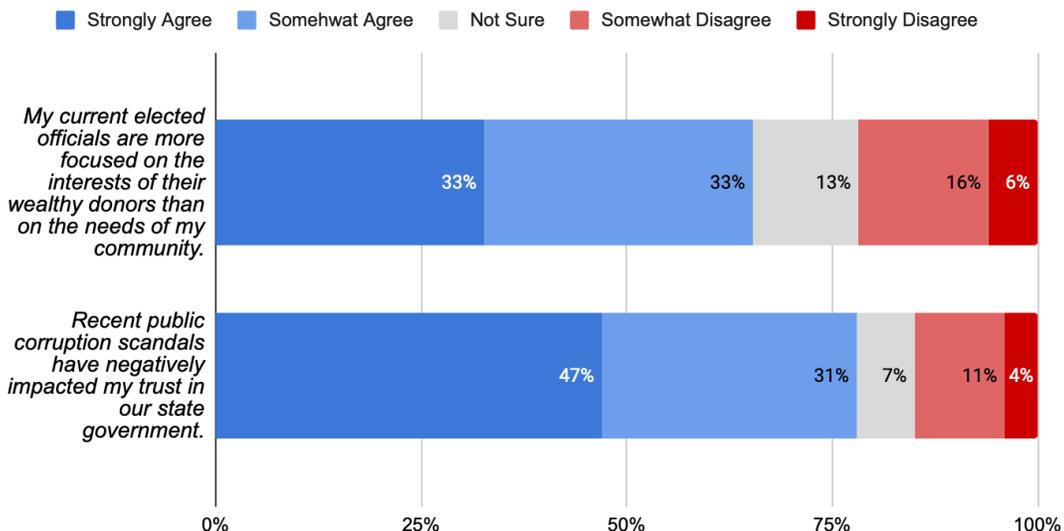
Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and all Committee members,

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, I write in strong support for Senate Bill SB51, relating to public financing of candidates to elected office. Our members and supporters are local people — kama'āina and kānaka maoli, keiki and kūpuna, from Kaua'i to Kohala, Kailua to Kapolei and every place in between. They have joined our movement to fight for a Hawai'i that puts local people — not big money interests — first, because they are deeply worried about the direction of our islands and believe now is the time for change.

Our supporters are not alone. 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 incomplete 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, consisting of over 3-dozen local organizations, showed **that two out of three voters (66%) believe that "elected officials care more about wealthy donors than the needs of my community."** Ouch. 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."

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



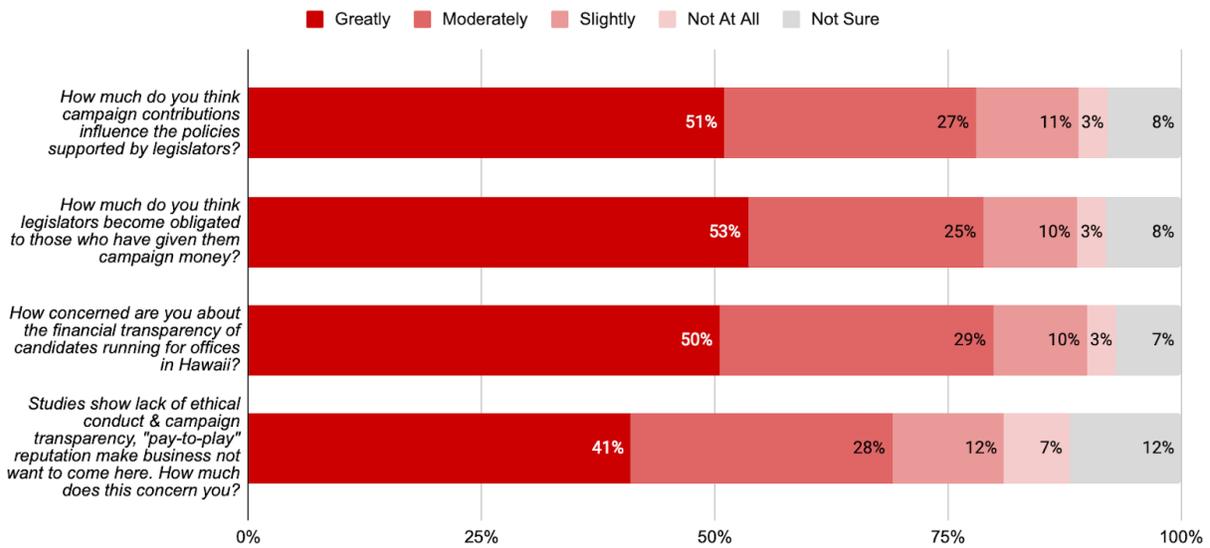


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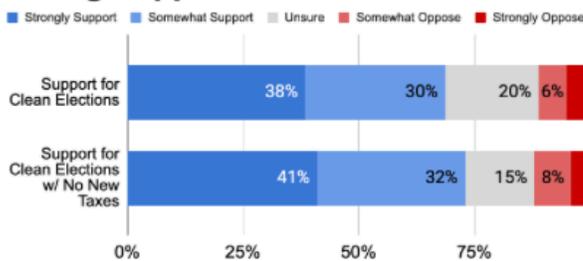
This poll was conducted in March 2024, right *before* an April 17th [bombshell exposé dropped on the front page of the New York Times](#), exposing to the world the deep culture of pay-to-play corruption that has existed at high levels of Hawai'i political leadership. The exposé specifically called out the loophole in our campaign finance laws which this legislation and other similar bills introduced this session seek to close. **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.**

"Great" Concern Over Money In Politics and Private Campaign Spending for Majorities

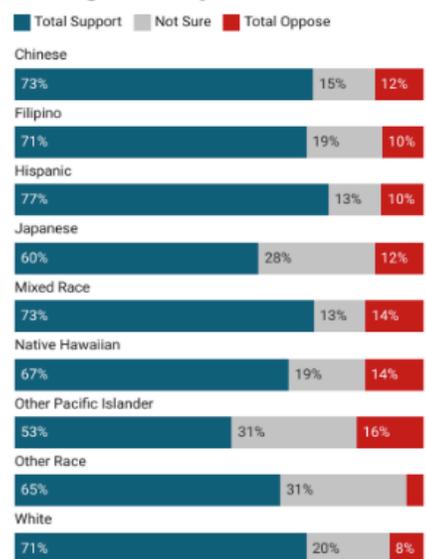


Luckily, a solution is on the table for you to solve this problem. The same voters, across race, ethnicity, income level, and political party, **overwhelming support a Clean Elections program** when it is described to them in plain terms, with **68% of voters saying they would support passing a law to 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.

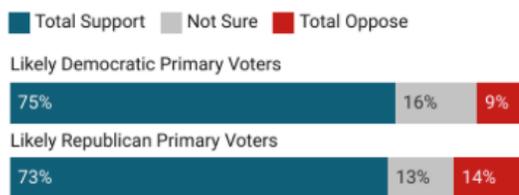
Strong Support for Clean Elections



Broad Support for Clean Elections Among all Groups



3 in 4 Likely Primary Voters Support Clean Elections





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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.** That's how democracy is supposed to work!

We know that 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 \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget.** That's just over \$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.](#)

We have the policy. We have the public desire for change. We have the resources. The only question is do we have the political will? That will be up to you to make it so. As you deliberate, know the public is watching.

Mahalo nui loa for your courage and action. Laulima, we can move forward to a better future for our Hawai'i.

Attached you'll find the press release on the polling referenced from the Clean Elections Hawai'i Coalition as well as the results, cross-tabs, and analysis from the polling firm SurveyUSA who conducted the research.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12th, 2024

Contact: team@cleanelectionshawaii.org

POLL: Two Out of Three Voters Say Elected Officials Care More About Wealthy Donors Than Needs of Communities, Want ‘Clean Elections’ as Solution

71% of voters support a Clean Elections program to publicly fund campaigns, with only 12% opposing.

9 in 10 say campaign contributions influence and obligate legislators, and 66% say elected officials care more about wealthy donors than communities.

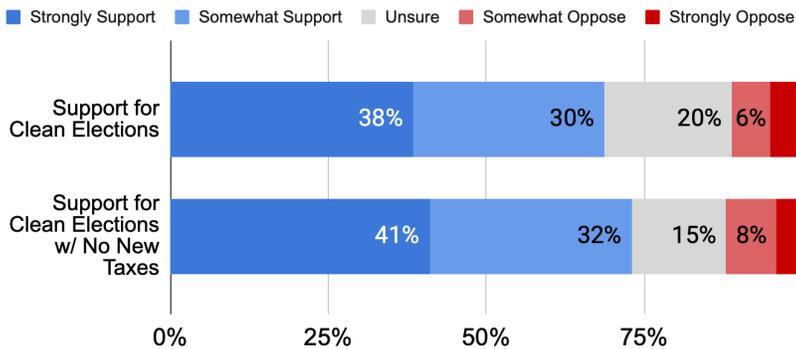
[\[Link to SurveyUSA analysis and results\]](#)

HONOLULU, Hawai‘i — More than 3 in 4 (78%) Hawai‘i voters believe legislators are influenced and obligated by campaign contributions and have had their trust in government impacted by recent corruption scandals, 2 in 3 (66%) believe elected officials care more about “wealthy donors” than the “needs of their communities,” and about the same amount (71%) support a “Clean Elections” publicly-financed elections program as a solution, according to a new poll conducted by SurveyUSA from February 27th - March 6th, 2024 and released by the Clean Elections Hawai‘i Coalition. The survey interviewed 1,008 registered and likely voters across Hawai‘i and found widespread and deep concern about money in politics and corruption in government, as well as broad and deep support for a “Clean Elections” program of public financing as a reform solution across ethnic and racial, gender, geographical, and political demographics.

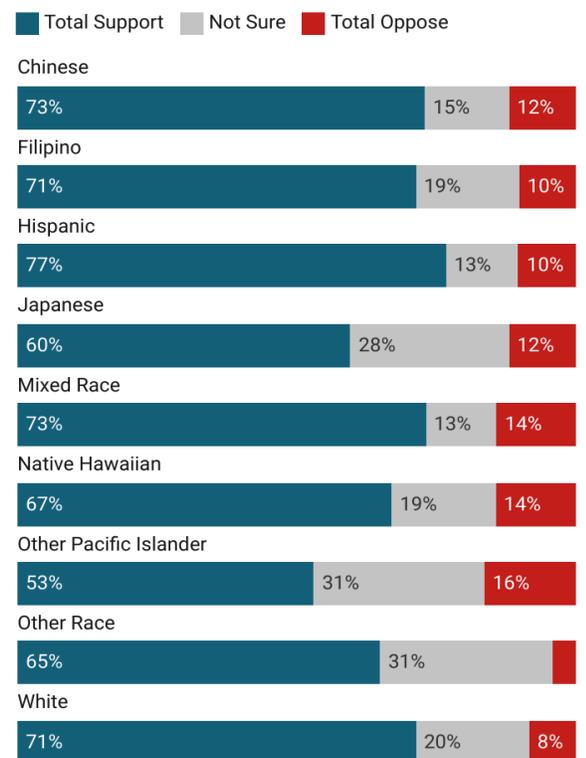
“Clearly, the idea of Clean Elections is one with strong appeal to a very broad cross-section of Hawaii voters,” said **Ken Alper, President of SurveyUSA** who conducted the poll. “Two thirds of voters say their representatives care more about their donors than they do about local communities – and not coincidentally, two thirds of voters support a Clean Elections program in Hawaii. This tackles a major issue for voters, and that’s why you see such strong numbers in support of it.”

Poll results show strong support for a “publicly-financed elections” program across all likely voters, across all major ethnic groups, and across political parties, with 3 out of 4 likely Democratic and Republican primary voters supporting the program, and voters being 4 times more likely to support (42%) than oppose (10%) a candidate for office who supports Clean Elections.

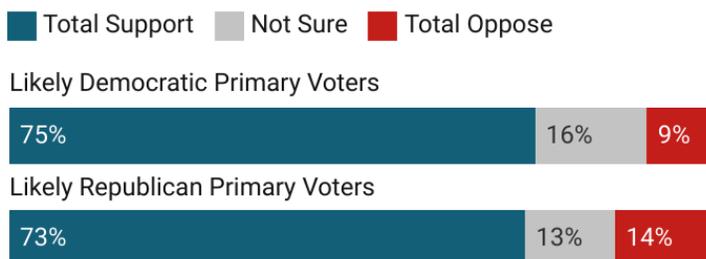
Strong Support for Clean Elections



Broad Support for Clean Elections Among all Groups



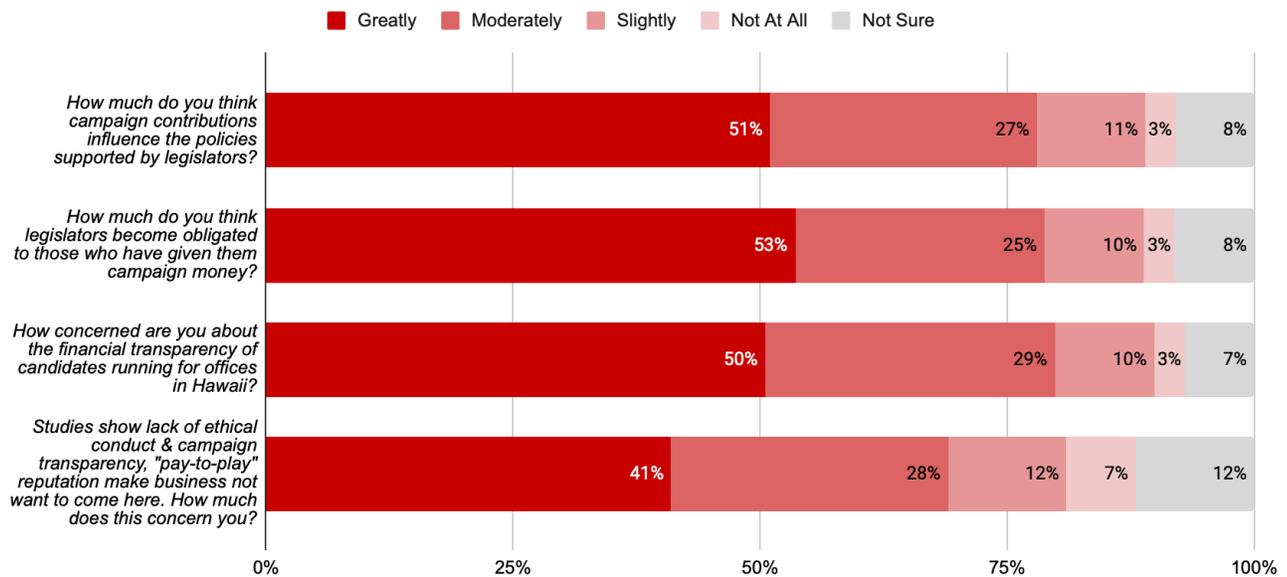
3 in 4 Likely Primary Voters Support Clean Elections



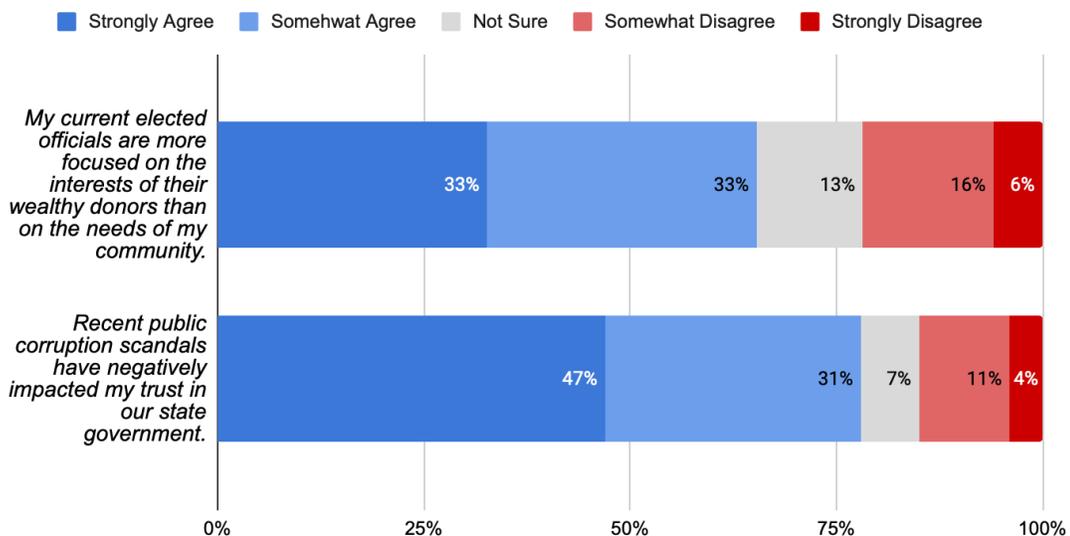
At the same time, results are alarming as it relates to current concern over money in politics, private campaign financing, and trust in elected officials and the government. **A jaw-dropping half or more of all voters think that private campaign contributions are “greatly” influencing or obligating their legislators and are concerned about the financial transparency of candidates running for office, with 9 out of 10 likely voters sharing these concerns to some degree. 2 out 3 likely voters believe elected officials are more focused on wealthy donors than the needs of their community, and 3 out of 4 have had their trust in government shaken by recent corruption scandals.**

“This survey should be a wakeup call for our elected officials — ordinary working people do not trust that you are working in our communities’ interest.” said **Sergio Alcubilla, Executive Director of the Hawai’i Workers Center and a spokesperson for the Clean Elections Hawai’i campaign.** “Last year’s marginal reforms have not moved the needle on public perception or trust in legislators. But a solution is on the table and ready for legislators to win back the public trust and make meaningful reform to a system that many feel is rigged against them. It’s time we put the best interests of the community first. The time for Clean Elections is now.”

"Great" Concern Over Money In Politics and Private Campaign Spending for Majorities

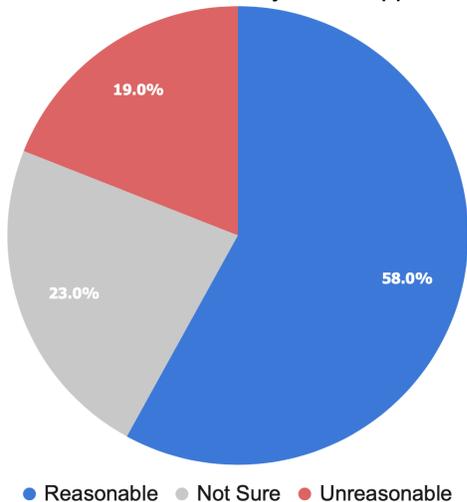


Two Out of Three Voters Say Elected Officials Care More About Wealthy Donors Than Needs of Communities



Opponents of Clean Elections in Hawai'i have tried to point to its cost as a deterrent, and suggested that voters would not be willing to shoulder the burden. However, when asked directly about the cost per taxpayer of a Clean Elections program, 58% say the cost is reasonable while less than 1 in 4 believe it is unreasonable. [Maybe: Even when opposition framing which contains falsehoods about cost is shared about Clean Elections, voters still show net support for the program by double digits — 19 percentage points. Furthermore, voters seem enthusiastic about a variety of ways to pay for the program. Early this month, legislation for publicly financed elections described as the “last shot” for legislators to make reform before the elections passed the Hawai'i Senate and was transferred to the House of Representatives, where today it was [scheduled for a hearing](#) on Thursday, March 14th in the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs committee at 2pm in Capitol Conference Room 325. Members of the media and the public are encouraged to attend.

Majority Say \$6 Per Taxpayer Each Year for Clean Elections "Reasonable," Only 1 in 4 Oppose



Question: A fully publicly financed election system that would allow candidates to run without needing contributions from private individuals and interests in Hawaii is projected to cost \$6 per resident. Would you consider that cost reasonable or unreasonable?

###

About SurveyUSA and the Polling Methodology: SurveyUSA is an independent, apolitical and non-partisan research organization that conducts custom, local opinion research for universities, non-profits, local and state governments and small to medium-sized businesses, ad agencies and public relations firms. Nate Silver's fivethirtyeight.com rates 517 polling firms on an ongoing basis, and no research company of any size scores as highly as SurveyUSA on four key metrics: SurveyUSA is in the 94th percentile for absence of partisan bias, the 98th percentile for accuracy, the 98th percentile for predictive value, and the 100th percentile for most prolific.

SurveyUSA interviewed 1,265 adult respondents from the entire state of Hawaii 02/27/24 through 03/06/24. Of the adults, 1,008 were identified by SurveyUSA as being registered to vote and were asked the substantive questions which follow. This research was conducted using a blended sample, mixed mode approach. 71% of registered voters were online panelists chosen randomly who were shown the survey questions on the display of their smartphone, laptop, or tablet. 29% of registered voters were texted on their cell phones by live operators who secured the cooperation of each respondent before linking them to an online survey. The pool of adult respondents was weighted to US Census targets for gender, age, ethnicity, education, and home ownership.

About Clean Elections Hawai'i: The Clean Elections Hawai'i Coalition represents dozens of leading local organizations coordinating to advance a pro-democracy agenda in our islands and help end the corrupting influence of big money on our politics. Supporting organizations include: Common Cause Hawai'i, Sierra Club of Hawai'i, League of Women Voters of Hawai'i, Our Hawai'i Action, The Hawai'i Workers Center, Hawaii Alliance for Progressive Action, Lāhainā Strong, Free Access Coalition, Chamber of Sustainable Commerce, Global HOPE (Hawai'i Organization for Peace and the Environment), HOPE Services Hawai'i, Kaua'i Women's Caucus, Friends of Makakilo, Kauhako 'Ohana Association, Living Wage Hawaii, 350 Hawai'i, Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus, Imua Alliance, Pono Hawai'i Initiative, Our Revolution Hawai'i, LGF Consulting, Community Alliance Partners, Habitat for Humanity Hawaii Island, Going Home Hawaii, Young Progressives Demanding Action, HULI PAC, Holomua Collaborative, League of Women Voters of Honolulu, Malama Makua, Americans for Democratic Action Hawaii, Indivisible Hawaii, Kihei Community Association, Aloha 'Āina Women's Patriotic League, Clarity Project, Funder Hui, Saturation Point, Hawaii-Fi, Makawalu Creatives, Energy Transitions, Public Citizen, Rethink Media, and more.

For more information, contact team@cleanelectionshawaii.org

If a bill to finance Clean Elections were passed, how would you like to see it paid for?

Respondents were asked to choose as many options as they want, these were the most popular choices.

	Proposed "pay-for"	% support
1	Imposing fees on wealthy super PACs.	51%
2	Closing tax loopholes for out-of-state developers.	51%
3	Closing tax loopholes for the wealthiest Hawaii residents.	50%
4	Imposing fees on lobbyists.	43%
5	Closing tax loopholes for major landowners.	43%
6	Closing tax loopholes for hotel companies.	35%
7	Closing tax loopholes for energy companies.	30%

Table: Clean Elections Hawai'i • Source: SurveyUSA • Created with Datawrapper

Results of SurveyUSA Mkt Research Study #27066



Geography: Hawaii
Data Collected: 02/27/2024 - 03/06/2024
Release Date: 03/12/2024
Percentages

Sponsor:
Clean Elections Hawaii ()

Strong Support in Aloha State for 'Clean Elections' Program to Publicly Fund Campaigns; Majority Says Projected Cost Would be Reasonable; 34% of Hawaii Voters Say Legislators Become Obligated to Campaign Donors; Deep Concerns About Financial Transparency of Candidates For Office:

Results of SurveyUSA research conducted exclusively for Clean Elections Hawaii show strong support across the state for a publicly funded system for political campaigns, with two-thirds of voters in favor of such a program as soon as the idea is broached.

68% of registered voters say they would support passing a law to create a Clean Elections program in Hawaii (38% strongly support, 30% somewhat support); only 11% are opposed. Support is no less than 60% among any demographic subgroup.

When asked if they would support or oppose a Clean Elections program if it did not result in new taxes, the percentage supporting increases 5 points, to 73% (41% strongly supporting, 32% somewhat supporting), with the largest increases in support seen among Japanese voters (18 points), Latinos (11 points), and Democrats (9 points).

58% of voters say the estimated \$6 per resident cost of the program is reasonable; just 1 in 4, 23%, say it is unreasonable.

42% of voters say they are more likely to vote for candidate who supports Clean Elections; 31% say it makes no difference in their vote. Only 1 in 10 voters say they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate; White voters and those with 4-year college degrees are the most likely to say they'd be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports Clean Elections; the youngest voters are the most likely to say they'd be less likely to support such a candidate.

23% of voters, 66%, agree with this statement: "My current elected officials are more focused on the interests of their wealthy donors than on the needs of my community." 33% strongly agree; 33% somewhat agree. 22% disagree (16% somewhat, 6% strongly). 84% of Republicans agree, compared to 57% of Democrats.

34% of registered voters, 78%, agree with this statement: "Recent public corruption scandals have negatively impacted my trust in our state government." 47% strongly agree, 31% somewhat agree; only 15% disagree. Agreement is at or above 72% among every demographic subgroup.

A 51% majority say campaign contributions greatly influence the policies supported by legislators; another 27% say contributions have a moderate impact – 78% in all. 11% say they have a slight influence, 3% no influence at all. Voters age 50 to 64 are the most likely to say contributions have at least a moderate influence; those aged 18 to 34 are the least likely.

78% also say legislators become obligated to those who donate money to their campaigns, with 53% saying they become greatly obligated, 25% moderately obligated. 10% say they are only slightly obligated, 3% not at all. No fewer than 70% of voters in any demographic subgroup say legislators become obligated.

By more than 2:1, voters say limiting the size and number of campaign contributions helps to prevent corruption in politics, with 54% feeling that way; 23% say these limits have no impact on corruption. Democrats are more likely to say limits help prevent corruption; Republicans and independents are less likely to say so.

69% are moderately (28%) or greatly (41%) concerned that businesses may not wish to expand in Hawaii if it has a reputation for a lack of ethical conduct, a lack of campaign transparency, or a "pay-to-play" reputation. 12% are just slightly concerned; 7% are not concerned at all. Concern increases with age, from 60% of 18 to 34-year-olds being moderately or greatly concerned, to 69% of 35 to 49-year-olds, to 73% of those age 50+.

79% are concerned (29% moderately, 50% greatly) about the financial transparency of candidates for office; 10% are slightly concerned, 3% not concerned at all. No fewer than 70% of voters in any demographic subgroup are concerned.

Last, voters were asked how they would like to see Clean Elections paid for, should a bill to finance them pass. Respondents could select as many items as they wished, ranked here from most to least: 51%: Imposing fees on wealthy super PACs. 51%: Closing tax loopholes for out-of-state developers. 50%: Closing tax loopholes for the wealthiest Hawaii residents. 47%: Imposing fees on lobbyists. 43%: Closing tax loopholes for major landowners. 35%: Closing tax loopholes for hotel companies. 30%: Closing tax loopholes for energy companies. Fully bracketed results

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 2:00:55 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
robert brower	Testifying for Surfrider Foundation Kauai Chapter	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Although Surfrider is a 501C-3 and cannot support individual candidates for office, our org recognizes the influence on election outcomes from large private donors. Many times these large donors have an agenda that is detrimental to the environment.. This Bill is a start to reverse that undemocratic ingredient to how we choose our leaders.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 8:34:31 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-chair Moriwaki, and Members of Committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmeryCo, I am Co-chair of the Green Party of Hawai'i. We are in Strong Support of SB51 SD1. Public financing of campaigns will level the playing field for all people who would like to serve their communities as an elected official.

We , the Green Party of Hawai'i, ask that you please pass SB51 SD1.

Sincerely,

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauiilo

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 12:54:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly support Senate Bill 51, which would establish a comprehensive public funding program for candidates seeking election to state and county offices in Hawaii. This bill represents a crucial step towards improving our democratic process and restoring public trust in our elected officials.

The current campaign finance system unfairly favors wealthy donors who can use their contributions to gain undue influence over candidates and elected officials. By providing a mechanism for candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private funds, SB51 would allow elected officials to make decisions free from the influence, or appearance of influence, from special interests. This program would require candidates to demonstrate grassroots support by collecting small qualifying contributions from voters in their district, ensuring that public funds are allocated to viable candidates with genuine community backing. Furthermore, the bill includes strict guidelines on the use of public funds and penalties for violations, promoting accountability and responsible use of taxpayer money. While the program's cost may seem significant, it pales in comparison to the state budget and the projected increase in public confidence in our political system. By implementing this comprehensive public funding program, Hawaii has the opportunity to become a leader in campaign finance reform and set an example for other states to follow.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:43:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy Shaver	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.

Christy

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:45:18 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacey Alapai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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: 2/24/2025 2:50:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha , please support SB51 so that we can " even the playing field " for all those interested in engaging in the political and legislative arena . Mahalo for your support .

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:50:29 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
fred hofer	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.

Fred Hofer

Hilo

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:55:31 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emelia Briscoe	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: 2/24/2025 2:56:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	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.

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:59:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I strongly support Senate Bill 51, which aims to strengthen Hawai'i's public campaign financing system and reduce the influence of money in elections. Our political system is broken, with heavy reliance on contributions from wealthy donors and special interests. This has led to a widespread belief that elected officials prioritize donors over their communities, blocking good policies and advancing harmful ones. SB 51 addresses this by enabling candidates to run competitive campaigns without depending on special interest money.

By offering full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 51 severs the link between private money and electoral success, fostering a fairer system where officials are accountable to constituents, not donors. Similar programs in states like Connecticut and Maine have proven effective without increasing incumbent turnover or drastically altering political dynamics. Instead, they shift influence from the wealthy to everyday citizens.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support clean elections, and Hawai'i County's pilot program in 2010 and 2012 demonstrated its feasibility. Even with high participation, the estimated annual cost is under \$10 million—just 0.05% of the state budget, or less than \$7 per resident. This is a small price for a more transparent and accountable government.

I urge you to pass SB 51 to restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities, and ensure our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo,
Jennifer Lum, 'Ewa Beach

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:59:06 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Thank you for moving this very important bill thru ~ the public's trust must be regained!

best, Linda Legrande

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:00:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica May	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: 2/24/2025 3:03:10 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keith Neal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

Strong support of Senate Bill 51

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.

Keith Neal

Waimea

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:03:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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: 2/24/2025 3:09:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chamundi Sabanathan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I beg you to support Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of moneyed interests 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. Similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup. 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 help restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and help ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:11:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Egbo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

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

Hawai‘i’s **political system is broken**. The overwhelming reliance on **campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests** has created a system where **two out of three residents** believe that elected officials prioritize their **donors over their communities**. This dynamic **blocks good policies**, advances **harmful ones**, and **erodes public trust**, ultimately encouraging **corruption**.

SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this system by enabling candidates to run **competitive campaigns** without being **dependent on special interest money**.

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

Public financing is both **popular and cost-effective**:

- **Three out of four voters** support a **clean elections program**.
- **Connecticut and Maine** have successfully run similar programs for decades.
- **Hawai‘i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012**.
- Even with **higher-than-average participation**, estimates show the cost would be **under \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget**.
- That’s less than **\$7 per resident or under \$1 per tourist—a small price 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: 2/24/2025 3:18:08 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Barbour	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: 2/24/2025 3:21:54 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lory Ono	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.

Lory Ono

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:22:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

This will ensure legal, resonable, elections

Richard Janik, MD Lihue, Kauai

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:31:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:33:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Austin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill, which will help insure all voices are heard!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:41:18 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Warmest aloha committee members

I strongly SB 51 ! It 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.

let's have Hawaii lead the way to creating a true democracy.

I appreciate your time and consideration,

pamela burrell, Kalihiwai, Kaua'i, 96754

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:41:55 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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. I have seen public financing in Maine. People win because of their qualifications, not the amount of money they can spend. A candidate should not win due to having more money, as has been happening. Please support SB51.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:00:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Puppione	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.

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: February 24, 2025
TO: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2
SUBJECT: SB 51 SD1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:10:50 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorothy Aiwohi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee:

Our system of governing and electing representatives has silenced the voices of the majority of Hawaii's citizens. Most of us have come to accept that we will not be heard and therefore becoming involved, is futile. Sadly, we pay little attention to the measures being introduced or the bills enacted - all of which can impact each of us. It is disheartening when reading the list and amounts of campaign contributors - and then we understand where their loyalties lie.

I urge you to help bring about a truly representative government by passing SB51 which will provide full public financing for qualified candidates. This can create a truly representative government and have our elected officials accountable to the citizens instead of their largest donors.

Trust in our democracy is eroding right before our eyes and we must do everything we can to empower candidates to focus on Hawaii's people and their communities.

Mahalo,

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:16:51 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelsea Ann Napualani Furtado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Alohal all!

My name is Chelsea Furtado and I support this bill. Transparency is key and if we are electing officials we deserve that. This eliminated certain factors of corruption and should definitely be implemented.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:17:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Strongly support.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:22:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marian Heidel	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.

This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors.

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. This is important to me!

Mrs. Marian Heidel

Kailua, HI 96734

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:35:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Crawford	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: 2/24/2025 4:38:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:42:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Senators,

i strongly support this bill.

It is long past time to get rid of institutionalized bribery.

I urge you to pass SB 345 to strengthen our democratic institutions and ensure that the voices of all Hawai'i residents are heard.

Mahalo.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:47:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheri	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: 2/24/2025 4:47:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

LET'S RESTORE TRUST IN OUR STATE GOVERNMENT.

MAHALO

B. Besr, Wailuku

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:55:34 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kumella Aiu	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. Since first contact, outside money and influence has worked against the wellbeing of this community. 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
Kumella Aiu*

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 5:09:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jamie Valdez	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: 2/24/2025 5:20:03 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Grandinetti	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.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 5:42:27 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
sandi ioakimi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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 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: 2/24/2025 5:49:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lana Bilbo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This election season I worked with a county council candidate who had never been elected to office for her campaign. It really opened my eyes to the impacts of even moderate amounts of money in our politics. At the county level, having the funds to send a mailer to households can make or break an election. We were working enormously hard to fundraise for a single mailer, while still doing all of the other activities to promote her candidacy. Meanwhile large interest groups sent out mailers for multiple candidates, sometimes without even the approval of the candidates in question! This really highlighted what an uneven playing field we are on. If she had had the baseline funding to level the playing field it would have had a huge impact on her campaign. I can easily see how this could apply to all levels of government.

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 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: 2/24/2025 5:50:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

It's past time to fix our electoral system. This is a fundamental importan step.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 5:51:53 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly support this bill for full public funding of our elections, to limit or end the unhealthy impact of large private citizen and corporate contributions. The current system ties candidates to the interests and positions of their largest contributors and can affect and sway the results of elections to favor the best funded campaign. There is no equal playing field for candidates.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 5:52:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Culbertson	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.

R A Culbertson

Honokaa

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 5:56:21 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee.

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 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: 2/24/2025 5:58:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Keala Fung and 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,

Keala Fung, Honolulu

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:04:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

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 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,

Kealakai Hammond,

Honolulu, HI

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:21:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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 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.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:23:29 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

ALoha

I support 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 Hawai‘i, to begin with the 2028 general election year. Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 4/23/2057. (SD1)

and researching about public financing, I would like to highlight this reason for voting in support of this bill " *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.*"

It is time that we give everyone the opportunity to participate and be supported for our communities.

C. Burghardt

Kou, Oahu

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:35:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support public financing of Elections. We have seen corruption run rampant through Hawai'i elections. Almost everyone who I know that votes and those who do not vote say they have no faith in elections because of dark money. It would help me register more voters and put more confidence in those who do vote if elections were publicly financed. It seems everything comes here last. It would be amazing to say Hawai'i was one of the first states to publicly fund elections. Please listen to the people and pass this bill. I had just read in civil beat how few bills actually get passed by the legislature. It was pretty dismal. For the voters to have any faith in our legislative process we need you to hear our voices and vote for what constituents want, not what legislatures want.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:42:53 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

In order to have truly free and fair elections, candidates must not be forced to rely on wealthy donors and lobbyists for funding, to whom they are then beholden. Hawaii needs candidates who stand for the people, not for the interests of a privileged few. I support this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:47:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jim Klyman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill. This is a positive step the State of Hawaii can take to help candidates focus on their campaign issues instead of working to seek funding. By reducing the potential influence for 3rd party funding influences, a candidate will be better focused on their platform issue positions and messaging to their potential constituents.

This bill will benefit the general public's well being and reduce a candidate's bias to large campaign donor influence..

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:53:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Please support this important bill. If enacted, SB51 would provide a vital investment to protect the integrity of elections. Implementing fully publicly funded elections will help to restore public trust in, and integrity to our state elections. Public financing levels the playing field, allowing a more diverse slate of candidates running for our state and county offices. It will foster a government that truly reflects the will of Hawaii's people, rather than those with deep pockets and connections to influence.

Sincerely,

Robert and Marion McHenry

Princeville, Kauai

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:56:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Teresa Landreau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In this time of fear and distrust of government, 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

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 7:41:12 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I urge you to support SB51, which will fully publicly funded elections. This can help restore trust and integrity in Hawaii'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: 2/24/2025 7:54:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB51 SD1. Please support this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 8:11:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Holmes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 51, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

In Hawai'i today, 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. People see that good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step forward by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

It creates a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. I urge you to pass this bill, for the good of all. Mahalo for your attention.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 8:13:56 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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 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. Eliel, Kapaa

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 8:29:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ravi Bugga	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.

Sample Testimony in support of SB345 for Expanding the Current Partial Public Financing Elections Program:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I strongly support SB 345, which seeks to enhance the Hawai‘i Partial Public Financing Program by increasing the maximum amount of matching funds available to candidates, raising expenditure limits, and improving the matching fund ratio. These reforms are essential to promoting fairer elections and reducing the undue influence of wealthy donors and special interests in our political process.

Currently, candidates often rely heavily on private contributions, which can lead to unequal representation and policies that favor the affluent over everyday citizens. By increasing the cap on matching funds and adjusting expenditure limits, SB 345 empowers candidates with limited personal wealth or access to large donors to run competitive campaigns. This fosters a more diverse pool of candidates and ensures that elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than to major donors.

Moreover, enhancing public financing amplifies the voices of regular citizens by prioritizing voter engagement over large-scale donations. Candidates will be encouraged to connect with a broader base of supporters, leading to policies that better reflect the needs and desires of our communities.

Implementing these changes is a proven, cost-effective investment in the integrity of our democracy. Similar programs in other states have successfully increased voter participation and trust in the electoral system without imposing significant costs. By adopting SB 345, Hawai‘i can take a significant step toward a more equitable and representative government.

I urge you to pass SB 345 to strengthen our democratic institutions and ensure that the voices of all Hawai‘i residents are heard.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Ravi Bugga

Lahaina

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:15:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

PLEASE pass clean elections!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:31:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiana Otsuka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Kiana Otsuka, and I am writing in **STRONG support of 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 2026 general election year.

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!

Kiana Otsuka

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:32:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Please support SB51. 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 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,

Erin Hagan

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:33:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANDREW ISODA	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.

Andrew Isoda

Lahaina, Mau'i

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:38:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jonathan Simonds	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is the most important bill this session and I strongly support.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:38:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cardenas Pintor	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.

Cardenas (Cards) Pintor

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:53:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kilihea Inaba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

This testimony is in support of SB51 which seeks to implement publicly funded elections. We have seen time and time again how big money goes into certain pockets which only benefits the wealthy few. Public financing will allow for more diverse and true community servants to run for office without having to compete with those individuals whose pockets are supported by big-money corporations. This is a huge step in the right direction for the people of Hawai'i who matter most- those who are born and raised here. Please do what you know is right.

Mahalo,
Kilihea Inaba

Kaloko, Kona, Hawai'i

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:58:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I strongly support SB 51 to strengthen Hawai‘i’s public campaign financing and reduce the influence of big money in our elections.

Right now, wealthy donors have too much power, leaving everyday residents unheard. SB 51 allows candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on special interests, ensuring elected officials answer to their communities—not their biggest contributors.

Public financing is popular, cost-effective, and proven to work in other states. It’s time for Hawai‘i to follow suit. Pass SB 51 and help restore trust in our democracy.

Mahalo for your time.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:07:43 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

It appears that public turnout for elections is very low in Hawaii because many people think candidates are bought and paid for by big money interests.

So please support SB51, because 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: 2/24/2025 10:12:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kate Paine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Passage will judge you in a favorable light, because taxpayers will know you all are not it for the dole out.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:13:09 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Crossland	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I submit this testimony as a concerned citizen, rooted in the values of limited government, individual freedom, and fiscal responsibility, urging you to **VOTE NO** on S.B. No. 51. This bill, proposing a comprehensive public financing system for elections starting in 2028, is a misguided overreach that undermines our democratic principles, wastes taxpayer dollars, and threatens the integrity of Hawaii’s electoral process. While I speak from a perspective that prioritizes personal liberty and accountability—values many Republicans hold dear—I appeal to Democrats as well, who care about fairness, economic justice, and practical governance, to see the flaws in this legislation.

1. A Taxpayer-Funded Boondoggle

This bill forces hardworking Hawaiians to foot the bill for political campaigns, funneling millions—potentially tens of millions—into a system that benefits candidates regardless of their merit or voter support. Section 11-H promises up to \$2.5 million for gubernatorial candidates and \$100,000 for state senators, all from public funds. Democrats, you’ve fought for working families—why divert their tax dollars to prop up politicians when our schools, roads, and healthcare need investment? This isn’t fiscal responsibility; it’s a blank check for campaigns, and the \$30 million minimum fund requirement (Section 11-O) proves it’s a luxury we can’t afford.

2. Stifling Free Speech and Competition

By banning private contributions for participating candidates (Section 11-I), this bill silences the voices of citizens who want to support their chosen leaders with their own money. Democrats, you’ve championed free expression—why back a system that muzzles grassroots donors while handing bureaucrats control over who gets funded? The free market of ideas thrives on competition, not government handouts. This bill rigs the game, favoring establishment insiders who can navigate its red tape over scrappy outsiders who rely on real voter enthusiasm.

3. A Bureaucratic Nightmare

The complex web of rules—qualifying contributions (Section 11-F), seed money caps (Section 11-E), and endless reporting (Section 11-J)—creates a playground for unelected officials at the Campaign Spending Commission to meddle in elections. Republicans distrust big government overreach, but Democrats should too when it risks corruption or favoritism. With \$5 contributions determining eligibility (e.g., 6,250 for governor), this system invites fraud and

manipulation, undermining the “clean elections” it claims to champion. Do we really trust a commission to fairly dole out millions without bias?

4. Punishing Candidates and Voters, Not Special Interests

The bill claims to curb special interests, but it punishes candidates who opt out by leaving them to face publicly funded opponents with no private backing (Section 11-I). Voters lose too—limited to candidates who play by these rules, not those who reflect their true priorities. Democrats, you’ve pushed for choice and diversity in politics—why shrink the field with a one-size-fits-all funding scheme? Special interests will still find loopholes; only honest candidates and their supporters get shackled.

5. An Unproven Experiment with Proven Failures

Citing Maine and Arizona (page 2), the bill ignores the mixed results of public funding elsewhere—low participation rates, uneven benefits, and no clear reduction in influence peddling. Hawaii’s own pilot spent \$363,060 on just 16 candidates with little evidence of transformative change (page 3). Republicans demand results, not theories, and Democrats should too when taxpayer money is at stake. Why gamble on a system that’s more about optics than outcomes?

Conclusion: Vote No for Freedom and Fairness

S.B. No. 51 isn’t about restoring trust—it’s about consolidating power in a government-run election machine that wastes money, restricts liberty, and fails to deliver. Republicans see it as an attack on free markets and personal choice; Democrats should see it as a betrayal of working families and democratic diversity. I urge you to reject this bill and protect Hawaii’s elections from this costly, ill-conceived experiment. **VOTE NO.**

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:21:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

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 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,

Kathy Shimata

Honolulu. 96822

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:37:12 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Annalise Hart	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, 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: 2/24/2025 10:38:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mariana Monasi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As we witness the gross consequences of oligarchic fascist government across the federal government, there is a dire need for publicly funded elections more than ever.

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 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 for putting the right foot forward towards a real democracy, where diverse people can represent their communities.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:45:43 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn Morais Webster Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB51--a critically important bill in these deeply troubling times. As our elected leaders, you should too.

We need to do ALL we can to protect democracy and good government, free from the corrupting influence of money. The destructive effect of BIG MONEY is being demonstrated every day across the nation by the billionaire donor who has taken a wrecking ball to government in the name of POTUS.

Please support SB51. Public financing levels the playing field, allowing more diverse and community-driven candidates to run for office without the race being skewed by Big Money donors.. It fosters a government that truly reflects the will of the people, rather than those with the deepest pockets and connections to influence

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 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.

PLEASE MAKE PUBLIC FINANCING A REALITY IN HAWAII. We need to reduce the barriers and encourage the emergence of new leaders. Please pass SB51.

Mahalo.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:09:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenna Grabowski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Make government fair for all.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:42:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerald Tariao Montano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am Gerald Montano. I am a resident of Maui.

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.

Additionally, only people with capital can successfully run and win a campaign, leaving out diverse voices, such as the working class, racial minorities, and LGBT people. The legislature is biased towards those with 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.

Regards,

Gerald Montano

Kahului, HI

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:13:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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 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: 2/25/2025 12:26:23 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruth Robison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and WAM Committee Members,

I am a voter who lives in Hilo. I am testifying in support of SB 51 RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE

This bill is one of many that is related to the House Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct. The overarching goal of that commission is to restore the public’s faith in our state government by discouraging the “pay to play” political culture that led to criminal convictions of corrupt legislators. This bill moves us toward that goal by providing the option of increased public financing to qualified candidates.

SB 51 establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State of Hawai`i, beginning with the 2026 general election year. It requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature. It appropriates funds to implement the bill.

According to its website, the Brennan Center for Justice believes that “the most effective and promising solution to the problem of big money in politics [is] small donor public financing, a system in which public funds match and multiply small donations...Designed right, small donor public financing also permits candidates to raise and spend what they need to compete in the super PAC era, should they choose to opt in.”

I urge you to pass SB 51 RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE and help to reduce the effect of big money in politics.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Thank you for your service to the people of Hawai`i.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 2:49:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Llanes	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.

We have the perfect example playing out in DC when a person buys their way into politics. This is not what I want for Hawai'i.

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: 2/25/2025 3:39:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane E Arnold	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.

Jane Arnold

1763 Iwi Way, Apt D

Honolulu HI. 96816

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 5:24:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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 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 Gurung

77-6412 Kepano Place, Kailua Kona, 96740

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 6:51:58 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl M Nakagawa	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 support this critical bil SB51.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 6:53:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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 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: 2/25/2025 7:13:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I oppose this bill. Stop this corruption.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:14:19 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bruce Javellana	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:14:42 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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: 2/25/2025 7:24:35 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I oppose SB51 which establishes a comprehensive taxpayer-funded campaign system.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:25:01 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I'm writing in favor of this bill SB51 SD1. I believe that public financing will help reflect what the people want instead of corporate interests. I've heard counterarguments which suggest that having the government finance elections will be tyrannical, but what we have right now is a lot of dark money from megacorporations from who knows where involved which to me is not a reflection of the people, where an elected government is. I believe public financing will break the reliance on candidates being beholden to big donors instead of the populace. Mahalo for your time to this important bill.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:29:30 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaiulani Bowers	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:47:08 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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: 2/25/2025 7:48:50 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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: 2/25/2025 7:51:03 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I oppose this bill!

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:52:17 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support SB51 as a good way to safeguard our elections and ensure that our politicians are paying attention to what the community wants, and not big donors.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:01:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Oppose this bill. Do not use taxpayer money for a wasted cause as this. Be better at selecting causes that will benefit the people and not the government.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:05:07 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaioluhia Miguel-Hamakua	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Do not infringe upon our rights to choose who we want representing us.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:17:31 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reid Oya	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:27:44 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Haskin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

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 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 for your consideration.

Jessica Haskin, Kauai

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:29:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deven English	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong opposition of this bill. NO I do not want my taxes going to pay for a one party campaign. Any and ALL persons running for an elected seat whether incumbent or newcomer should finance themselves and not seek or have more than what the laws allows now, and the law should not be changed just to suit one party as it does here in Hawaii.

Committee on Ways and Means
Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki

Wednesday, February 26, 2025, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

Sb 51, SD1, RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED
OFFICE

TESTIMONY

Janet Mason, Honolulu

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members:

I support this bill, 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 2028 general election year.

I served on the 2022 State Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct; having a robust public financing of elections program in Hawaii was one of our top priorities, if not the very top priority. Yet three years later the promise of “Improved Standards of Conduct” remains unfulfilled because this foundational recommendation has not been a State priority. While there is no guarantee that improvements in Hawaii’s public financing program would prevent public corruption, no reasonable person would deny it would help.

Legitimate concerns have surfaced about this proposed program. The Department of Budget and Finance has previously testified that they do not support the measure because it is difficult to determine whether the program would be self-sustaining. Under the bill, the Hawaii election campaign fund could draw revenue from five sources. True, it is likely the fund will continue to rely on appropriations from the legislature, but if this program reflects the will of the people so be it. Annual reports to the legislature from the Campaign Spending Commission are required, and Section 11-0 of the bill requires a check on the sufficiency of funds available for the next election period, which mitigates running out of funds during the campaign period.

The Honolulu Elections Division has also objected to the bill’s requirement that County Clerks assist in verifying donor qualifications as required under the bill. The language of the measure could be changed to specifically allow the Campaign Spending Commission (CSC) access to the State’s voter registration system, to permit the CSC to do this verification.

Please appropriate \$30 million for this bill so that a tradition of public service by elected officials can be further separated from the task of raising money from private donors with special interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:40:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Aguigui	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly oppose the progression of this bill, it effectively entrenches incumbents and limits free and fair competition of other candidates that may serve the community better. Once again, I strongly oppose this bill.

Respectfully,

Brian Aguigui

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:47:12 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

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 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,

Nalani a. From Lahaina

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:47:17 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gabrielle davidson	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: 2/25/2025 8:52:02 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reina Loughlin	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51. This is an unnecessary and dangerous system of tax payer money. Limited accountability, controlled and accounted by whom? The public already has great distrust in the election system, campaign funding, and do not need another factor to draw corruption concerns. Allow campaign contributions under outlined and fair accountability measures as people choose.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:54:28 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Fund those candidates who reject private donations.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:58:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha nō.

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 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.

Na,

Leo Nahe Smith | Pearl City, HI

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:58:50 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

As we have seen in the current presidency, money can let you buy your way into positions of power. Voters in Hawai'i deserve to be protected from this abuse of power, and it is the legislature's duty to protect residents and voters. I strongly support SB51 because it would ensure that elections in Hawai'i cannot be bought.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:12:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tryslynn Kauionalani Jones	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose this bill because the members should do their own work to raise funds and have their actual supporters give them the funds, instead of taking it out of everyone's wallets automatically without doing any work.

Mahalo for your time.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:22:48 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

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 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 for your consideration,

Susan, Lawai, Kauai

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:42:05 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rita Massey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB51 to get money out of politics. Public funding would allow lawmakers to focus on the job of serving their constituents rather than spend countless hours fundraising, and then be beholden to corporate donors who are interested in their own agenda, not the wellbeing of our communities.

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 this reason I urge you to pass SB51 to ensure we have a government that serves the people, not the wealthy few.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Rita Massey

Kihei

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:45:42 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marley Alexandra Kalikopuanoheaokalani Aiu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to kako‘o Senate Bill 51, which would strengthen Hawaii’s public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections, re-centering our lahui and the people of Hawai‘i.

Hawai‘i’s political system is broken. Hewa.

Relying 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. Not only is this unjust, it is unsustainable.

As a result, policies that better our lahui and our future generations are often "shot down" while harmful policies are approved and implemented. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption.

SB 51 is a critical step toward mending this system. It allows 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 more fair, just, and honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than privae kala.

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 and begin to regain autonomy in the system we have.

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, and many more that would take the length of a novel to write, I URGE you to pass SB 51. This bill is a stepping stone on the path toward a future where Hawai'i is truly empowered again.

Mahalo for taking the time to consider my testimony.

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:55:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Lyle and Family	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, our family supports SB 51 and SB 345 and have supported similar bills many times in past years. As voter registration and turnout have fallen in recent years we need to change the way we finance and hold our elections and this is one very important way to do that. Please take this opportunity to make this critical step in the process. Respectfully, Lyle Ohana in Volcano

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:59:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn O'Brien	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives of We the Citizens of Hawai'I~

Mahalo for taking time to read & review our votes via these letters on topics at hand, i know it takes extra on your part & i do so appreciate it, GOD BLESS YOU!

I stand in opposition to SB51 re: taxpayer-fyunded campain systems. This is paving the way to entrench cerain incumbents (& Hawaii is well-known for being a Blue State of almost all Democrats). It would further limit free-market competition in Hawaii elections. This is beyond legal and goes against the Constitution of our state and of our nation. This is not fair elections by the people, of the people & FOR the people.

In summary, I strongly oppose SB51 as a proposal for further destruction of the integrity & finances & livelihood of our State of Hawaii.

Mahalo for your kokua!

Aloha & Malama Always,

Dawn O'Brien

President, HOPE HI, Inc.

Lifelong resident & taxpaying citizen

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:02:43 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Oppose

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:04:19 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Healy	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill.

Vote No.

Mahalo

Mary Healy

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:16:35 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly oppose SB51. I DO NOT want my hard earned tax dollars funding candidates that I do not want representing me.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:19:36 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cliff mello	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN STRONG OPPOSITION TO SB51

To the Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

I submit this testimony in **firm opposition** to **SB51**, an unconstitutional, ineffective, and legally indefensible bill that directly infringes on the **Second Amendment** and does nothing to prevent crime.

SB51 seeks to **expand the list of prohibited places where individuals can lawfully carry firearms**, essentially making it nearly impossible for law-abiding citizens to exercise their right to self-defense outside their own homes. **The Supreme Court in Bruen explicitly ruled that states cannot create excessive "sensitive place" restrictions** to prevent legal gun owners from carrying. This bill **directly violates that ruling** and will not hold up under legal scrutiny.

Bruen & the Supreme Court's Warning Against Overreach

In **New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen (2022)**, the Supreme Court **explicitly ruled that states cannot impose excessive, arbitrary restrictions on gun ownership that do not align with historical tradition**.

SB51 ignores that ruling **entirely**, imposing restrictions that have no basis in history or law. **This bill is unconstitutional, unenforceable, and a direct violation of the Supreme Court's decision**.

Gun Rights & the Aloha Spirit—A False Narrative

There has been a **dishonest attempt to gaslight the people of Hawaii** into believing that **gun rights do not align with the "Aloha Spirit."** This is **an insult to every law-abiding citizen who values self-defense and personal responsibility**.

The **real threat to the Aloha Spirit is violent criminals, not responsible gun owners**. There is nothing peaceful about leaving innocent people defenseless while allowing criminals to continue preying on them.

This Bill Will Not Stop Crime

If lawmakers truly wanted to reduce crime, they would focus on:

- **Increasing penalties for repeat offenders**
- **Improving mental health care and intervention programs**
- **Targeting illegal firearm trafficking**

Instead, **SB51 punishes the very people who follow the law while doing absolutely nothing to address those who break it.**

A Vote for SB51 is a Vote Against the Constitution

Legislators who support SB51 are not just **wrong**—they are **acting outside the law**. Supporting SB51 is a **direct violation of your oath to uphold the Constitution**.

I urge you to reject SB51. Do not be complicit in stripping away the rights of law-abiding citizens. Uphold your oath, follow the law, and respect the Constitution.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:20:52 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mishka Sulva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing in strong support of Senate Bill 51, so we can strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections. Candidates who choose the proposed 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.

A majority agrees that Hawai'i's political system is broken. Two out of three people believe that elected officials are more focused on the motivations of their donors than on the people they serve in their community. This is due to the overwhelming influence of special interest money in our elections.

As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption.

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.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:43:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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 for the opportunity to testify.

Diane Ware, Volcano 96785

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:46:56 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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 consider amending them to make them more competitive in future drafts of this legislation.

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

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:59:05 AM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I oppose SB51,

Paul Giles

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 11:14:59 AM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:58:58 AM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I **strongly support** public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in Hawaii.

Please keep SB51 moving forward.

Thank you,

Carla Allison

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 11:20:15 AM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am a resident of the State of Hawaii and support this bill.

Please approve and implement SB51

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 11:26:13 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support sb51 as a step toward reducing the influence that corporations and big-money special interest groups have in our government. Public financing of elections will better allow the people's voices to be heard, and will be a step toward repairing the broken trust between the public and our representatives.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:23:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Committee Chair 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. Hawaii'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 Hawaii County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawaii 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 Hawaii.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 11:39:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I oppose SB51

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:48:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
D Y	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose SB51

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:52:13 PM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judie Hoepner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:54:11 PM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I Strongly Oppose

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 1:10:27 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tasman Kekai Mattox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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 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.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 1:18:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiare Smith	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

****Testimony in Opposition to SB51****

Aloha Mai Kākou, Honorable Members of the Senate,

My name is Tiare Smith, a Native Hawaiian born and raised in Kahalu‘u, O‘ahu, where I have resided for 45 years. As a kama‘āina deeply rooted in this community, I speak not only from personal conviction but also from a profound concern for the democratic integrity of our islands. I stand in firm opposition to SB51, a bill that proposes a comprehensive public financing system for candidates to state and county offices beginning in 2028. While its stated intent—to mitigate the influence of wealthy donors and bolster public confidence in elections—may appear laudable, a closer examination reveals it to be a flawed, impractical, and ultimately disenfranchising measure that undermines the very principles it purports to uphold.

First, SB51 precipitously shifts the burden of electoral funding from voluntary private contributions to a mandatory public dole, siphoning resources from Hawaii’s already strained fiscal coffers. The bill predicates its feasibility on a minimum of \$30,000,000 in the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund subaccount, yet it offers no credible mechanism to ensure this threshold is sustainably met. Hawaii’s state budget, hovering in the billions, faces perennial demands—housing, education, healthcare, and cultural preservation among them—that far outweigh the speculative benefits of this program. To divert such sums toward a system modeled on Maine’s Clean Election Act, a state with a markedly different socio-economic fabric, is to gamble recklessly with taxpayer resources. The legislature’s own acknowledgment that costs are “dwarfed” by the budget belies the reality: every dollar allocated here is a dollar denied to pressing needs that directly serve our people.

Second, the bill’s structure is antithetical to equitable representation, particularly for grassroots candidates like those from Native Hawaiian and rural communities such as Kahalu‘u. The requirement of collecting hundreds—or, in the case of gubernatorial candidates, thousands—of \$5 qualifying contributions imposes a logistical gauntlet that disproportionately burdens those without established networks or urban access. Far from leveling the playing field, SB51 erects a new barrier, one that privileges candidates with pre-existing organizational capacity over those who rely on organic community support. This is not democratization; it is a subtle form of exclusion masquerading as reform. For a state that prides itself on aloha and inclusivity, such a measure risks further alienating voices already marginalized by systemic inequities.

Third, the bill's restrictive covenants—barring certified candidates from accepting private funds not only during campaigns but throughout their terms in office—stifle political agency and innovation. Elected officials, bound by these shackles, would be unable to adapt to unforeseen exigencies or engage in the robust discourse that private support can facilitate. This rigidity contrasts sharply with the flexibility inherent in Hawaii's existing partial public funding system, established in 1978, which balances public interest with practical governance. SB51's absolutism threatens to ossify our electoral process, rendering it less responsive to the dynamic needs of our communities.

Finally, the promise of restored public confidence is illusory. The legislature cites Arizona, Maine, and Connecticut as exemplars, yet evidence from these jurisdictions reveals mixed outcomes at best—participation rates remain uneven, and public trust has not risen commensurately with expenditures. In Hawaii, where familial and cultural ties often shape political allegiance more than financial influence, SB51 misdiagnoses the root of voter skepticism. Rather than addressing transparency or accountability directly, it imposes a costly bureaucratic overlay that may deepen cynicism rather than alleviate it.

As a Native Hawaiian resident who has witnessed O'ahu's evolution over four and a half decades, I urge you to reject SB51. It is not a solution but a distraction—a well-intentioned but ill-conceived experiment that risks disenfranchising the very constituents it aims to empower. Let us instead refine the systems we have, rooted in our unique island values, rather than import untested frameworks that erode our sovereignty and resilience. Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Tiare Smith

Kahalu'u, O'ahu

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 1:48:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James K. Rzonca	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 5:11:13 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
robert Petty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Isn't a shame we have to have this kind of Bill in the first place? Please listen to the people and support sb51 SD1. I don't want to see our beautiful state to be taken over by those who would exploit it.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 6:33:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marsha Hee	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.

Sincerely, Marsha Hee, life-long citizen of Hawaii

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:00:02 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

It is not right to use taxpayers money and it also creates a Barrier to free market competition in the elections.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:04:13 PM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elijah Kim	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB51! Do NOT establish a comprehensive taxpayer-funded campaign system! It will entrench political incumbents and limit free-market competition in Hawaii elections! Instead, we should have term limits for state representatives! My tax money should not support people that do not represent me and my beliefs.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:19:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Abellanida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill. Vote no

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:51:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elisa W Johnston	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support SB51 and all efforts to fully fund local elections, a necessity if we are to level the playing field and make citizen interests the guiding influence in our local politics.

Thank you,

Elisa W. Johnston

Makiki

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:27:44 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristen Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I'm a Honolulu resident and I strongly 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.

We have an opportunity to make way for leaders who will truly represent us and effect needed change in our communities. Please vote for equity and pass this bill.

Mahalo,

Kristen Young
Honolulu, HI 96813

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 10:04:54 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 7:21:39 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Rzonca	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB 51. Taxpayer money should not be going to fund political campaigns.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 7:21:39 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Rzonca	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB 51. Taxpayer money should not be going to fund political campaigns.

LATE

SB-51-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 8:16:23 AM
Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:04:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Tiritas	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill