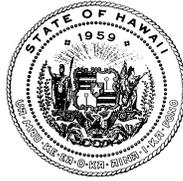


DAVID Y. IGE
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WRITTEN
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 697
RELATING TO KALAUPAPA MONTH**

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date: 2/24/2021

Room Number: Videoconference

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** None
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The department supports SB 697 designating the month of January as
- 3 "Kalaupapa month."
- 4 The department supports this bill because of its great significance to the people of Hawaii, in
- 5 recognition of the sacrifices many individuals made during its history and the legacy that endures
- 6 as an important part of Hawaii's history. Notably, January was the month when the first twelve
- 7 Hansen's disease patients arrived on the peninsula, as well as the birth month of Saint Damien,
- 8 Saint Marianne, and Mr. Ambrose Hutchison, who was the first Kalaupapa superintendent as
- 9 well as a patient.
- 10 Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.
- 11 **Offered Amendments:** N/A.

February 24, 2021

TO: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

From: Joseph Lapilio, Executive Director
Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa

Re: Support for SB697, Relating to Kalaupapa Month and Request for Amendment

Good morning, my name is Joseph Lapilio. I am the Executive Director of Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa, an organization founded by patient residents of the Kalaupapa community and formally registered as a 501(c)3 non-profit in 2003.

I am proud to share that I am a direct descendent of Bonepake Lapilio and Louisa Lui, both of whom sent to Kalaupapa as young children, later met, married and had seven children there. Bonepake and Louisa are my great grandparents. I like to think I am here today to speak on their behalf and in support and recognition of the more than 8,000 people who went to Kalaupapa between 1866 and 1969.

Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa is asking the Legislature to designate January as Kalaupapa Month in Hawai'i so that it will be observed annually.

No month contains no more important dates throughout the history of Kalaupapa than the month of January. This is the month when the first 12 people were sent to Kalaupapa in 1866; the month of the birthdays of Father Damien and Mother Marianne who have both been canonized; the month when the United Church of Christ celebrates Kalaupapa Sunday – and other important dates.

Kalaupapa Month would be an opportunity to acknowledge and remember the people who were sent to Kalaupapa. Many of us see these people as victims of a disease, exiled, forsaken, isolated from their families and the lives they knew. It is a lesson of politics based on fear looks like - a reminder that policy decisions have real life consequences. And the photos of Kalaupapa residents during that time focuses us on the pain and suffering of people and the people they left behind in the homes in which they once lived.

There are two other reasons establishing Kalaupapa Month would be important.

The first is using Kalaupapa Month as a reminder of the social justice issues we face. Just as we learned with COVID 19, some communities, whether because of ethnicity, income, social status or education assume a disproportionate share of the negative impacts of the ills we face.

And second, Kalaupapa is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. The first 12 people who arrived in Kalaupapa in 1866, had no support from the government and, if not for the aloha of the original inhabitants of Kalaupapa faced terrible odds. It is a story that in spite of the odds, the people sent to Kalaupapa moved beyond the labels, made friends, started families, and built a community.

The people of Kalaupapa today are viewed not only as valuable members of society, but as some of the finest citizens in Hawai`i who have overcome the most difficult of circumstances and have much to teach the rest of the world. In the words of Mercy Hutchison Bacon, the great niece of Kalaupapa leader Ambrose Hutchison, the people of Kalaupapa are, “the pride of a nation.”

There are only 12 people left today who are patient residents of Kalaupapa. They are getting older and it is harder for them to attend and participate in meetings such as this to share their voice. Just last year, the Ohana’s President, Uncle Boogie Kahilihiwa, was here to speak on behalf of this proposal. Today he cannot.

It is no longer possible for him and the other kupuna to speak out and make sure we remember. Kalaupapa month is going to make sure we do that.

We respectfully request your Committee’s support of SB697 with a proposed amendment. It is intended to give to the patient residents of Kalaupapa the acknowledgement they so richly deserve by proposing that January be proposed Kalaupapa Month.

The Amendment, which we ask be attached to SECTION 1 of the Bill reads:

The following information was confirmed by Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa, formally formed under the laws of the State of Hawaii as a nonprofit, Native Hawaiian organization consisting of Kalaupapa patient residents of Kalaupapa, their extended ohana and long-time friends and stakeholders of the Kalaupapa community.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment.

SB-697

Submitted on: 2/19/2021 11:24:14 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2021 9:31:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lynn Murakami-Akatsuka	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I **strongly support** the passage of SB 697 to establish January of each year as "Kalaupapa Month" to remind our citizens here and abroad about the importance of Kalaupapa, its residents with Hansen's Disease and those that provided care, support and love to them in the past and currently. Kalaupapa is a special place and I am glad that this bill recognizes it during January annually.

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chairman
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Testimony of Valerie Monson
vmonson175@gmail.com

Hearing: February 24, 2021 at 9:31 AM
Strong Support for SB697 - Relating to designation of January as Kalaupapa Month annually in Hawai'i

Dear Chairman Rhoads, Vice Chairman Keohokalole and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Kalaupapa Month has been proposed by Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, a nonprofit organization established in 2003 at the request of the Kalaupapa community. Ka 'Ohana is made up of Kalaupapa residents, family members and descendants, friends and anyone interested in this important history. I am a founding member of Ka 'Ohana and the former Executive Director.

Ka 'Ohana has been identifying the nearly 8,000 men, women and children who were sent to Kalaupapa by name and finding out what we can about the lives they lived at Kalaupapa. In the process, we have helped more than 800 descendants learn about their Kalaupapa ancestors.

Kalaupapa Month would be a wonderful way to remember this history and celebrate the people. Ka 'Ohana envisions this month as a perfect time for classrooms to talk about Kalaupapa, for churches to remember the churches organized by people at Kalaupapa and the public paying tribute to these strong and resilient people who still have much to teach us.

Because a number of significant dates throughout the history of Kalaupapa occurred in January, this is the ideal month to honor this community. It's also a great way to start off a new year.

There are now just 12 residents who were once isolated at Kalaupapa now living. Let us assure them that their collective history and individual stories will always be remembered.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

With aloha,



Valerie Monson

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Jarrett Keohokaole, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Testimony of DeGray Vanderbilt
degray.vanderbilt@gmail.com

Hearing: February 24, 2021 at 9:31 AM

Strong Support for SB697 - Relating to designation of January as Kalaupapa Month

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokaole and Members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is DeGray Vanderbilt. I am member of the Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa Board of Directors, an organization that the patient residents of Kalaupapa felt needed to be formed to insure that as their numbers grew smaller their voices would continue to be heard and the legacy they envisioned for Kalaupapa's future would be realized.

The organization is made up of the patient residents, their extended 'ohana and long-time friends of the Kalaupapa Committee.

I've had the privilege over the last 27 years of assuming the role of Santa at the Kalaupapa Lion's Club annual Christmas party at Kalaupapa.

I am testifying today as an individual. In an effort to assist your Committee meet its daunting workload during this Covid period, I will only be providing written testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of SB697 with the hope that your Committee will approve the small amendment in Section 1 of the Bill, which is intended to recognize that the Bill was proposed by Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa for legislators to consider. This recognition is important to the patient residents and their descendants and other key figures with the 'Ohana, who have worked with passion and determination for almost two decades to fulfill so many dynamic accomplishments for the Kalaupapa community.

Many of these accomplishments have involved educational activities/programs with schools throughout the state; reconnecting more than 800 families with their Kalaupapa ancestors, developing a traveling exhibit on the connection of the Royal Family to Kalaupapa, which has traveled around the State and is currently on display at Iolani Palace; working with the Legislature to pass an apology resolution to the people of Kalaupapa in 2008 and other measures involving the legislature, which have benefitted the residents.

The latest undertaking by the 'Ohana is the design and construction of the Kalaupapa Memorial, which will list the names of the approximate 8000 names of Hawaii citizens separated from their lives and families because of government's policy tied to a disease, leprosy.

There are less than 1,000 marked graves with identifiable names. A rendering of the Memorial drawn by G70 International's Hitoshi Hida is attached. The Memorial is to be located in the Kalawao ahupua'a of Kalaupapa just across Damien Road from historic St. Philomena Catholic Church.

In a letter from the Most Reverend Larry Silva, Bishop of the Honolulu Diocese, he shared that the "Memorial would serve as a kind of communal headstone so that all buried on the Peninsula, whether in marked or unmarked graves, could be remembered." He went on to state that establishing the Memorial in Kalawao would enhance the feeling of sacred place and would have the positive effects of, among other things, providing opportunities for educational and interpretation activities.

Having January be designated Kalaupapa Month will sustain an awareness and appreciation for this extremely important part of Hawaii's history and will contribute to ensure that its legacy is fulfilled as envisioned by the residents of Kalaupapa.

Your support for SB697 along with the proposed amendment will be greatly appreciated.

Me ke aloha pumehana

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "DeGray Vanderbilt". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

DeGray Vanderbilt

Attachment

