



holomua

COLLABORATIVE

OUR MISSION

To support and advance public policies that make Hawai'i affordable for all working families.

OUR VISION

Collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based public policies that create a diverse and sustainable Hawai'i economy, an abundance of quality job opportunities, and a future where all working families living in Hawai'i can thrive.

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Josh Wisch
President & Executive Director

827 Fort Street Mall, 2nd Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

+1 (808) 909-3843
info@holomuacollaborative.org

HolomuaCollaborative.org

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Committee: House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Bill Number: HCR 11 / HR8, Urging the Counties to Devote Sufficient Funding to Their Respective County Ethics Boards or Commissions
Hearing Date and Time: March 23, 2023 at 2:00pm (Room 325)
Re: Testimony of Holomua Collaborative in support

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Committee Members:

We write in support of HCR 11 / HR 8, Urging the Counties to Devote Sufficient Funding to Their Respective County Ethics Boards or Commissions.

Many recent corruption cases have occurred at the county level, such as a former Hawai'i county housing official and a former Maui county director each separately pleading guilty to taking almost \$2 million in bribes, and a former Kaua'i councilmember being sentenced to 20 years in prison for leading a drug trafficking ring. And yet, as noted in this resolution, many of the county ethics boards or commissions lack the necessary resources to adequately meet their constitutionally mandated obligations.

This is particularly true of the county ethics boards of Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i. While the volunteer board members and commissioners work hard, the limited (or zero) staff capacity with which they are faced prevents these county ethics boards or commissions from doing as much as they otherwise could to investigate complaints, provide advice to county employees, or offer trainings on how to follow the pertinent code of ethics. Indeed, the Hawai'i County Ethics Board chair has referred to their own operations as "shoestring."¹

As budgets reflect priorities, we think this resolution is a good way of urging county governments to underscore this work as a priority by providing sufficient funding to their respective county ethics boards or commissions.

As part of Holomua's mission, we aim to build cross-sector collaborative support to work alongside our appointed and elected government leaders and partners to co-create viable, sustainable solutions that benefit all working families in Hawai'i. We believe policies that help improve government functions, and public confidence in government, further that goal. We appreciate the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Josh Wisch
President & Executive Director

¹ See, "[County Ethics Watchdogs Need More Money to Do The Job Right, State Panel Says](#)," Civil Beat, November 11, 2022.