



SB733 SD1 HD1
RELATING TO HAWAIIAN CULTURE
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

March 21, 2023

2:00 PM

Room 325

The Administration of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) will recommend to the Board of Trustees to **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS** on SB733 SD1 HD1, which would require OHA to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of Native Hawaiian cultural centers within the State. **OHA wishes to express its appreciation for the Legislature's amendment to this measure that would allow OHA to endeavor the necessary foundational steps toward addressing this critical need to further develop Hawai'i-based Native Hawaiian culturally-centered infrastructure. OHA offers the following amendments to further enhance this measure by aligning the function and purpose of Native Hawaiian cultural centers with the critical needs of the Native Hawaiian people and the communities that these centers will directly serve.**

OHA offers an amendment to Section 2 subsection (a) of this measure with a rationale following the proposed amended language:

SECTION 2. (a) The office of Hawaiian affairs shall conduct a study to determine the feasibility of establishing Native Hawaiian cultural centers within the State that:

- (1) Focus on elevating and uplifting the Native Hawaiian people;
- (2) Serve as a critical form of culturally-centered infrastructure through their dedication to Native Hawaiian culture and history, emphasizing the particular geographic location of the center;
- (3) Contain static and interactive displays and exhibits for educational purposes;
- (4) Contain native plants and plant habitats as interactive environments;
- (5) Contain functional and interactive models of traditional Native Hawaiian systems and technologies;
- (6) Offer programs that perpetuate Native Hawaiian arts, expression, education, identity, and other cultural practices;



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- (7) Serve as culturally-relevant community work and event space;
- (8) Serve to enhance and benefit communities as a hub for the development of robust service-oriented networks.

OHA Recommends Enhancing The Function and Purpose of Native Hawaiian Cultural Centers To Expand Their Reach for Hawai'i's Better Future Together

OHA truly believes that Native Hawaiian cultural centers can serve as regional hubs that further enhance and benefit not only the Native Hawaiian people, but the diverse communities that they directly serve, as well as the general public. OHA also takes care to note that the functional benefit of Native Hawaiian cultural centers, no matter the region within which they are embedded, will have far-reaching value whether it be through education in direct service to a large metropolitan population or through skills development in service of rural and remote communities.¹

OHA wishes to emphasize the benefits of having communal centers that serve to function as pu'uhonua (place of peace and safety) for cultural practitioners, hālau (meeting place), for community organizers, and ka wahi o ka na'auao (place of enlightenment) to bring together ka wā ma mua me ka wā ma hope (the time before with the time after). OHA emphasizes that these functions have traditionally occurred throughout these Islands, mai ka 'āina (from the land), ma ke kai (to the sea) a me ka lewa i luna (and atmospheric spaces above). However, competing interest in land use and usage have forcefully severed many countless Native Hawaiians from their ancestral homelands – and Native Hawaiians continue to struggle with exercising their constitutionally protected rights² in an ever-changing world where external factors beyond their control are constantly interfering with Native Hawaiian self-determination. While a great many Native Hawaiians still return to wahi pana (storied places) and wahi kapu (sacred places) for cultural purposes, accessibility to culturally significant space; accessibility to connections with our ancestors, their teachings, and our history; and accessibility to each other, continue to be significant issues that could adequately be addressed through a contemporary system of Native Hawaiian cultural centers. OHA has an overwhelming desire to get this right.

Accordingly, OHA strongly believes that this measure can serve as the initial spark, which could ignite a conflagration of sweeping beneficial change for the Native Hawaiian people.

¹ 'Apoākea (Infinite Reach) Native Hawaiian Innovation Institute, Hānai 'Ai Hawai'i Program manual, 2023.

² Haw. Stat. Con. Art. XII Sec. 7 (1978).



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In order to meet the potential of Native Hawaiian cultural centers, OHA recommends expanding the proposed uses beyond cultural and historical components to also include an economic development component where Native Hawaiian and other community members could benefit from financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and workforce development training; business accelerator and incubator services; shared and communal work space; and even a place for kupuna to take courses in tech as a means to reconnect with their loved ones. The impetus for this recommendation is borne from the desire to directly address factors at the core of Native Hawaiian vulnerability to the incredibly high cost of living in the State.

The majority of Native Hawaiian families, in Hawai‘i, are unable to make ends meet,³ with 63% of Native Hawaiians reporting that they are finding it difficult to get by.⁴ Native Hawaiians have the lowest household income.⁵ Native Hawaiians have the highest poverty rates for individuals and families.⁶ Native Hawaiians make less money,⁷ with lower average earnings for both men and women.⁸ Native Hawaiians have the highest rate of using public assistance and homeless services.⁹ Native Hawaiians are overrepresented among the homeless in Hawai‘i.¹⁰ OHA is deeply concerned with Native Hawaiians being driven out of Hawai‘i by economic instability stemming from socio-political-economic upheaval, which has largely disconnected Native Hawaiians from their ‘āina for more than a century. Today, more Native Hawaiians live outside of the Hawaiian Islands, far beyond the boundaries of their own homeland.¹¹

OHA appreciates this opportunity to support SB733 SD1 HD1 and truly hopes that the Legislature will take into consideration our recommendations for the betterment of conditions of Native Hawaiians and the communities that call Hawai‘i, home. Mahalo nui loa.

³ Aloha United Way / United for ALICE, *ALICE in Hawai‘i: 2022 Facts and Figures*, Nov. 2022, p.6.

⁴ Id. at 9.

⁵ Dept. of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, *Demographic, Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics for Selected Race Groups in Hawaii*, Mar. 2018, p.3.

⁶ Id. at 13.

⁷ OHA Report, *Affordable Housing for Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians: Exploring Ideas and Innovation*, Aug. 2020, p.10.

⁸ Dept. of Native Hawaiian Health, John A. Burns School of Medicine, *Assessment and Priorities for the Health and Well-Being in Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders*, 2020, p.12.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Partners In Care, *2022 Point In Time Count*, p.7.

¹¹ “Estimates from the American Community Survey showed that in 2011, there were about 296,400 Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i and about 221,600 on the continental U.S. Just a decade later, those numbers flipped. In 2021, there were about 309,800 Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i and about 370,000 in other states,” Hawaii Public Radio, *More Native Hawaiians Flock to mainland cities and leave Hawai‘i*, Jan. 23, 2023, *citing high costs*, citing the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2021.

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Submitted on: 3/18/2023 8:46:12 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenneth R. Conklin, Ph.D.	Center for Hawaiian Sovereignty Studies	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose.

Hawaii has ethnic-focused "cultural centers" focusing on displays and activities of particular ethnic groups: In Honolulu the Japanese Cultural Center and Filipino Cultural Center, for example. Their buildings were paid for primarily by fundraisers and community groups working together, and their ongoing operating expenses are covered in the same way. From time to time they get grants from the legislature, but those are small portions of their budgets.

This bill proposes a feasibility study of a program to establish "Native Hawaiian cultural centers", where the word "Native" was added to the title found in SD1 to emphasize the racial focus. OHA would be mandated to manage conceptualization, construction, and operation of these "Native Hawaiian Cultural Centers" using government money they have already been given through their 20% racial set-aside of ceded land revenues.

Comes now this bill demanding in Section 3 that "There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 for the office of Hawaiian affairs to conduct a feasibility study pursuant to section 2 of this Act" and then presumably all the other costs to follow as these Native Hawaiian Cultural Centers are constructed and operated on every island, as will undoubtedly be called for in future legislation. That's grossly unfair to Hawaii's people.

According to OHA's financial statement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, OHA had \$823 Million in assets. In 2022 the legislature appropriated tens of millions more "in arrears" and also raised OHA's annual payment of ceded land revenues by more than a million dollars extra per week in the future.

What does OHA plan to do with all that money? Make OHA pay for this feasibility study and all these these new "Native Hawaiian cultural centers." Do NOT appropriate extra money for them. Too much already! If OHA thinks these cultural centers are a good idea, then why has OHA never envisioned, built, and funded their operation already by using its massive cash stash?