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**STATE OF HAWAII
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TESTIMONY
OF
RUSS K. SAITO, COMPTROLLER
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES
TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON
TOURISM, CULTURE & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
ON
FEBRUARY 7, 2009

H.B. 506

RELATING TO A MUSEUM ARTIFACT AND ARCHIVAL CONSERVATION
SUMMIT

Chair Manahan, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 506.

The Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) appreciates the intent of this bill to address the preservation, storage, maintenance, and treatment of artifacts and archival documents. However, DAGS Archives Division, has concerns. DAGS does not have the fiscal resources to carry out this conservation summit. If funds were appropriated for the summit, DAGS has concerns that the bill would adversely impact the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget Request for fiscal years 2009-2010. The planning group would include a larger group of members from professional organizations such as the Hawaii Association of Museums, The Association of Hawaii Archivists, and the Society of Hawaiian Archaeologists.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

TO: Representative Joey Manahan, Chair, and Members of the
House Committee on Tourism, Culture & International Affairs
TCItestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov

FROM: Sara Collins, Ph.D., Legislative Committee Chair
Society for Hawaiian Archaeology
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HEARING: February 7, 2009, 9:00 AM, House Conference Room 312
SUBJECT: Comments on HB 506, Relating to a Museum Artifact and Archival Conservation Summit

I am Dr. Sara Collins, Legislative Committee Chair of the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology (SHA). We have over 200 members that include professional archaeologists and advocates of historic preservation in general. We support the general intent of HB 506 but believe that substantive revisions are needed to improve the bill and make its implementation more successful. HB 506 directs the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) to organize a museum artifact and archival conservation summit.

Perhaps the most pressing issue facing museums in Hawai'i as well as a number of public and private entities is the need to curate an ever-increasing amount of archaeological materials that are recovered pursuant to Chapter 6E, HRS as well as Federal statutes such as the National Historic Preservation Act. In addition to the archaeological items themselves such as soil samples or artifacts, there are associated records ranging from field notes to photographs, all of which are required to be maintained in perpetuity for the public's benefit. Many of SHA's members have been curating such materials for decades; a recent article in the Big Island Weekly (<http://www.bigislandweekly.com/articles/2009/02/04/read/news/news01.txt>) outlines the growing crisis. SHA members have begun a multi-year inquiry into how many are affected by this problem and what quantities and types of materials are contained in curated collections. We believe that a summit, such as the one proposed in HB 506, could be even more valuable if it included an evaluation of the curation problem in Hawai'i and proposed solutions. We therefore recommend the following amendments.

We recommend that the first paragraph of Section 1 be amended as follows:

“The Legislature finds that the high cost of preserving archaeological collections, artifacts, and associated documents, including archives, have placed a great burden on Hawai'i's museums, archaeological firms, universities and colleges, and government agencies. The Legislature finds that these materials hold great cultural value, particularly for the Native Hawaiian community in the instances of archaeological collections recovered from traditional Native Hawaiian historic sites. The Legislature also finds that the collection and curation of these materials is mandated through Federal and State historic preservation law and related statutes. The Legislature further finds that there is an imperative need to better preserve these materials in a cost-effective manner.”