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Honolulu, HI 96826

LATE

February 14, 2016  
Chair Brian T. Taniguchi, Senate Committee on Higher  
Education and the Arts

Chair Mike Gabbard, Senate Committee on Water, Land and Agriculture

Committee Members

Re: SB 2427 Relating to the Historic Places Review Board

Dear Chairs Brian T. Taniguchi and Mike Gabbard, and Committee Members

Thank you for considering Senate Bill 2427 to allow the State's Historic Places Review Board (HPRB) to continue visiting historic properties and cultural sites without the requirements of HRS 92-2.5 and 92-3.

I am strongly in support of this bill.

Senate Bill 2427 will allow the ten members HPRB to visit as a group sites proposed for State historic place designation, without providing notice to the public. These visits include cultural sites, houses, and other structures proposed for designation and placement on the State Register of Historic Places.

The site visit of a site is an important part of the decision-making process, as it allows the professional Board members to ascertain firsthand the merits of adding a site or property to the State historic registry.

Before 2014, the HPRB made regular site visits to allow members to have a first-hand impression of the merits of a particular property and to determine if it met all criteria for listing. During the site visits, there was no discussion of the site's merits. Decisions were not made during the site visit, and were only made during the HPRB meeting held in accordance with HRS 92.

Lacking site visits, the board must make decisions based solely on the applicants' submittals and the State Historic Preservation Division's staff recommendation. We feel that this is often not adequate to our "need to know" and hampers our decision-making capabilities. The proposed administrative rule-change would assist us greatly.

Thank you for your attention.



William R. Chapman  
Chair, Hawai'i Historic Places Review Board

**LATE**

**Written Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Higher Education & the Arts,  
and**

**Water, Land and Agriculture**

**Thursday, February 16, 2016**

**By**

**Thomas Lim**

**Subject: SB 2427      RELATING TO THE HISTORIC PLACES REVIEW BOARD**

Chairs Taniguchi and Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara and members of the Senate Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 2427, which would authorize the current members of the State Historic Places Review Board (review board) to visit historic properties in a very narrow and limited capacity without regard to Sections 92-2.5 and 92-3 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). I strongly support Senate Bill 2427.

My name is Thomas Lim. I am a current member of the Hawai'i State Historic Places Review Board and the Director of the Planning and Management Systems Office of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawai'i at Manoa. I am providing personal testimony here today.

As a current member of the board and the former architectural branch chief of the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, I appreciate the merits of site visits, from the perspective of a board member who has been privileged to see in person nominated sites and buildings, as well as from the point of view of a staff member who was accountable for logistic arrangements, as in the formal practices and procedures under Chapter 91 HRS.

From my experience, I can attest to the irreplaceable value of the site visits to help the board members understand and connect to the cultural and spatial context of a "sense of place" or the archaeological significance of a nominated building, as well as to feel the tactile texture of materials or review up close the craftsmanship of the construction.

With the recent interpretation of Chapter 92 for general public access, SHPD actions and restrictions have gravely hampered the review board members' timely and efficient visits to nominated sites. Conflicts to the review board visits for various reasons, including the retention of privacy and confidentiality of the properties, should impose limits to site visits for the general public. Alternatives proposed are cumbersome and impractical unless this bill is passed.

If these restrictions continue, the integrity of the review board is at risk. It is important to be transparent in how we confer our historical legacy, but it is vital that we protect the board members' reasonable and efficient access to the sites. This is necessary for independent

observations to confirm the level of significance of the state or national register criteria according to which the board shall exercise its responsibility to deliberate and validate the written application forms. Without firsthand witness, the board would be dependent on and at the mercy of the applicant's narrative and photographic views. The board members must be able to discern outside and beyond the narrative and photographs' framing to gain an accurate 360 perspective. They need to walk about to understand the character of the site and the contributions of the greater cultural patterns of the neighborhood in context.

Imagine not being able to see firsthand the subtle shift in design elements from Vladimir Ossipoff's early-period homes to those of his late period. Each member of the review board, whether trained as an architect or as an architectural historian, should be able to experience the interior space beneath a double-pitched Charles W. Dickey roof.

A shift in practice would undermine future board review and oppose historical norms of the national practices of historic review boards of the past and across the nation.