

**Testimony of KAREN EWALD, Executive Director
State Foundation on Culture and the Arts**

**Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026 Conference Room 308 at 10:00AM**

**HOUSE BILL 1815_HD1
RELATING TO
THE STATE FOUNDATION ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS**



No. 1 Capitol District Building
250 South Hotel Street
Second Floor
Honolulu, HI 96813

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Dear Chair Todd and members of the Committee,

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA), is dedicated to the promotion, perpetuation, and preservation of culture and the arts in Hawai'i.

SFCA **SUPPORTS** H.B. 1815_HD1 which explicitly applies existing grant standards to Performing Arts Grants Program grants under the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

Chapter 9 Hawaii Revised Statutes provides the statutory authority and structure for the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) grants program. It establishes eligibility standards for applicants, sets conditions that grant recipients must follow, and requires that all grant proposals be formally reviewed based on factors such as community need, program quality, and the applicant's ability to carry out the project. The chapter also governs how grant funds are allocated, requires grants to be issued through written contracts, and mandates ongoing monitoring and annual evaluation of funded projects. Additionally, it requires recipients to maintain compliance with eligibility requirements in order to remain qualified for future funding. Together, these provisions ensure that SFCA grant funds are administered responsibly, transparently, and in alignment with the foundation's public purpose. In order to administer the funds appropriated for the Performing Arts Grants Program in a timely manner, it would be appropriate to ensure this program is written in Chapter 9, HRS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

HB-1815-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 3:54:43 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvonne Manipon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1815 to explicitly apply established grant-review standards to the Performing Arts Grants Program under the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. By clarifying expectations and accountability requirements, this bill promotes transparency, prudent use of public funds, and fair evaluation of grant requests. Consistent standards help empower performing arts organizations statewide, especially smaller and emerging groups to compete equitably for support that strengthens Hawaii's artistic and cultural ecosystem.



Hawai'i Arts Alliance

Testimony in Support on HB1815 (HD1)

HEARING DATE & TIME: 02/26/2026 10:00 AM

ROOM: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

COMMITTEE: FINANCE

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Hawai'i Arts Alliance stands in **strong support** of this bill.

The beauty of this measure is that while Act 131 established a new Performing Arts Grants Program, new programs often take many months—or even a year—to fully launch due to the administrative procedures and rules that must be developed. By explicitly applying existing grant standards to the Performing Arts Grants Program under the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, this bill significantly shortens that timeline, allowing funding to reach performing artists and performing arts organizations much more quickly.

We strongly support this approach and stand ready to assist the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) with program administration if needed. Hawai'i Arts Alliance has successfully supported similar programs, including Artists-in-the-Schools, and we can help here as well—through outreach and communication, contract support, payments, compliance, and reporting.

On a personal note, I come to this work not only as an arts advocate, but as a performing artist myself—a retired dancer. I have seen firsthand how performing arts programs strengthen individuals, build connection, and help communities thrive. These programs are not luxuries; they are essential to the cultural, social, and economic health of Hawai'i.

We respectfully urge the committee to support this measure. Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gaye Humphrey
Executive Director
Hawai'i Arts Alliance

HB-1815-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 6:24:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerdine Markus	Pacific Academy of Music	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please accept this bill.

Thank you!

Gerdine Markus, Director Pacific Academy of Music

Pahoa, HI

HB-1815-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:02:05 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laurel Nakanishi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

I am writing to express my support for HB 1815. This bill would assure that the Performing Arts Grants Program under the SFCA adhere to clear consistent grant standards.

Please consider supporting this bill.

Best Regards,

Laurel

HB-1815-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 8:45:19 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin L	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawai'i and its rich culture is known globally for its dance, chanting, and music. But surprisingly, there is very little local support for performers to create meaningful work outside of the Visitor industry. We need performers to be equally supported as visual artists do. Performing arts is one of our top cultural exports. We should give it the support it needs. Mahalo.

HB-1815-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 8:50:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Browne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support updating the performing arts grant standards. SFCA has been awarding grants through the Biennial grant and Community Arts grants for many years. This bill will incorporate the Performing Arts grants into the existing structure which will avoid unnessecary time and paper work. Please help the performing arts advance in the same way the visual arts have.

Susan Browne

HB-1815-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 11:43:44 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randall John Francisco	Hawaii State Foundation on Culture & Arts	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. I am writing in strong support of this legislation as its primary goal is to strengthen the stewarding of the grant funds and maximum its potential for the benefit of the entire spectrum of the arts community. I especially, appreciate the sincere effort and thoughtfulness of this bill that is forward-thinking and as inclusive as possible at a time when the arts communities of the entire country are challenged. Mahalo Nui Loa for your consideration. Randall Francisco, SFCA Commissioner - Kauai.