



Date of Hearing: 26 February, 2026

To: Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Subject: **HB2047 HD1**, Relating to the Aha Moku Advisory Committee

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy **supports HB2047 HD1** and is interested in the community response to this bill. We look forward to listening to committee deliberations as well as reviewing the testimony submitted by other state departments, organizations, and community members.

Currently, under HRS §171-4.5, the Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC) is composed of eight members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate from a list of nominations. Each member is from a different island. The committee members are then responsible for selecting the committee chairperson from among the members. This committee may advise the chairperson of the board of land and natural resources (BLNR).

The AMAC holds responsibilities regarding the integration and identification of indigenous resource management, fostering the use and understanding of these practices, sustaining our island's resources, providing and fostering education and awareness around these practices, and developing an administrative structure.

As-is, the AMAC may hire an executive director (ED), however, HB2047 HD1 would amend bill language to allow the chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources as responsible for appointment, oversight, and administrative authority over the ED of the AMAC. This amendment transfers the power of the council in appointing their own director to the chairperson of the BLNR. We provide comments on this in order to raise the question as to whether or not this amendment impedes/infringes upon the AMAC's ability to self-govern in the process of advising the chairperson of the BLNR and what the impact in this transfer of power implies.

Beyond the transfer of power in selecting the ED, we do support the explicit and public eligibility requirements with current minimum qualifications not appearing to be listed for the position and we also do support the consideration of the current members suggestions – this consideration potentially alleviating concerns about the transference of power as the AMAC is still able to self-appoint their committee chairperson. We are also in support of the explicit term limits with ability to reinstate the incumbent ED; clauses justifying for-cause removal of the ED; and, the addition of annual reviews.

Given the above, we support HB2047 HD1 and look forward to committee deliberations.

Mahalo,
Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

HB-2047-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 1:40:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealii Pang, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Keali‘i Pang, Ph.D. I am a resident of Kaimukī, a lifetime member of the Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu, and have served as an environmentalist in Hawai‘i for the last 35 years. I am also a retired federal biologist and currently serve as a State Commissioner. I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 2047, HD1, which seeks to strengthen the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC) through improved accountability, transparency, and administrative structure.

A Legacy of Vision and Purpose

The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs has long held a vision for a system that bridges the gap between traditional Hawaiian ecological knowledge and modern resource management. The ‘Aha Moku system is the realization of that vision—a framework rooted in the ancestral wisdom of our *kupuna* that ensures our *‘āina* and *wai* are managed according to the specific needs of each *moku*.

For over two decades, I have supported the evolution of this work. We recognize that for indigenous management to be truly effective within a state government framework, it must be supported by a structure that is both resilient and transparent.

Why HB 2047, HD1 is Necessary

As a retired federal biologist and current State Commissioner, I understand that institutional stability is what allows cultural wisdom to be successfully integrated into state policy. I support the provisions in this bill for the following reasons:

- **Clarified Leadership (Section 2, §171-b):** Establishing clear procedures and minimum qualifications for the Executive Director—including knowledge of traditional practices, administrative leadership, and understanding of environmental laws—ensures that this position is held by individuals capable of navigating both traditional and bureaucratic worlds.
- **Operational Excellence & Transparency (Section 3, §171-4.5e):** By requiring that all formal recommendations be adopted at duly noticed public meetings and strengthening reporting requirements (including English and Hawaiian versions), this bill honors the

community. Transparency does not hinder our traditions; it protects the integrity of the *aha* process.

- Institutional Stability: Aligning the AMAC's administrative oversight with the Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) provides the structural support necessary to ensure the committee's recommendations are not just heard, but integrated effectively into state policy.

Conclusion

The 'Aha Moku system is a vital link to our past and a necessary tool for our future. To ensure this system thrives for the next twenty years and beyond, we must provide it with the legislative clarity found in HB 2047, HD1. As the bill indicates, this is about optimizing the benefit of the program for the Native Hawaiian community while ensuring alignment with resource management priorities.

This bill does not change the *mission* of the 'Aha Moku; it strengthens the *vessel* so that the mission can be successfully carried out.

I respectfully urge your committee to PASS HB 2047, HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Keali'i Pang, Ph.D. Member, Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu