



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i
‘Oihana Ho‘okolokolo, Moku‘āina ‘o Hawai‘i

Testimony to the Thirty-Third State Legislature, 2026 Regular Session
Hō‘ike Mana‘o i ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo Kau Kānāwai Kanakolukūmākolou, 2026 Kau Ma‘amau

Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs • Kōmike Kenekoa no ka Mea Hawai‘i
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair • Kenekoa Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Luna Ho‘omalū
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair • Kenekoa Rachele Lamosao, Hope Luna Ho‘omalū

Tuesday, March 24, 2026, 2:05 p.m. • Pō‘alua, Malaki 24, 2026, 2:05 p.m.
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference • Lumi Kūkā Kama‘ilio 224 & Kūkā Kama‘ilio Wikiō

by • na
Johanna K. Chock-Tam
‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Program Administrator • Kuhikuhina ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i

Bill Number and Title • Helu a me Inoa Pila: House Bill 2433, House Draft 1, Relating to the Hawaiian Language

Purpose • Kumuhana: Requires that priority be given to the language of a law that aligns with the intent of the Legislature if there is a difference between the English and Hawaiian versions of the law that is material to its interpretation.

Judiciary’s Position • Ka Mana‘o o ka ‘Oihana Ho‘okolokolo:

Kāko‘o piha ka ‘Oihana Ho‘okolokolo i Pila o ka Hale o nā Luna Maka‘āinana 2433, Kāmua Hale 1, a mahalo i ke kāko‘o mau a ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo Kau Kānāwai i ka ho‘oki‘eki‘e ‘ana i ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i ma ke ‘ano he ‘ōlelo kūhelu o ka moku‘āina.

Ho‘okumu ‘o HB2433 HD1 i ke ki‘ina moakāka a kā‘oko‘a no ka ho‘oholo ‘ana i ka mana ‘ōlelo o kekahi kānāwai inā ‘oko‘a ka ‘Ōlelo Pelekania me ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. Kāpae kēia pila i ke koho puni kānāwai i ka mana ‘Ōlelo Pelekania a pani hakahaka me ke ki‘ina i kau nui ai i ke kumu mana‘o o ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo Kau Kānāwai, e mālama ana i nā ‘ōlelo ‘elua me ka ho‘ohanohano kūlike ‘oiai e hō‘oia ana i ka moakāka a me ke kūpa‘a i ka wehewehe kānāwai.



Ho‘ohālikelike kēia hanana me ke kumu pa‘a o ka ‘ōnaehana kānāwai, ‘o ia ho‘i kau ‘ia ka wehewehena kānāwai ma ke kumu mana‘o o ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo Kau Kānāwai.

Ho‘okūlike kēia ki‘ina iā Hawai‘i me nā ‘āina ‘ē a‘e me nā ‘ōnaehana ‘ōlelo pālua. ‘O ia ho‘i, ma ka Official Languages Act, like ka mana o nā mana ‘ōlelo Pelekania a me ka ‘ōlelo Palani, a ho‘omākalakala nā ‘aha ho‘okolokolo i nā ‘oko‘a ma o ka ‘imi ‘ana i ka mana‘o e kūlike loa me ke kumu mana‘o o ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo Kau Kānāwai. Nānā iā Official Languages Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. 31), ss 13-16; R. v. Daoust, 2004 SCC 6. Ua kāko‘o kēia kahua i kekahi ‘ōnaehana ‘ōlelo pālua pa‘a a maika‘i no nā makahiki he nui, e hō‘ike ana hiki i nā hoa ‘ōlelo kūhelu ke noho pū me ka maika‘i ke alaka‘i ‘ia me nā lula wehewehe moakāka.

‘Āpono ‘o HB2433 HD1 i kēia ki‘ina i hō‘oia ‘ia. Ho‘onoho kēia pila i ka ana kūpa‘a a ma‘alahi ke ho‘okō ‘ia, a ‘āpono i ke koi kumu kānāwai no ka paepae ‘ana i ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, hō‘oia i ka mālama ‘ia ‘ana o nā kānāwai ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i me ka hiehie like, ho‘opakele i ka mahalo pāpa‘u wale me ‘ole ka hua maoli, a kāko‘o i nā hana kākau ‘ōlelo pālua o ka wā i hala a me ka wā e hiki mai ana.

Kāko‘o piha ka ‘Oihana Ho‘okolokolo i Pila o ka Hale o nā Luna Maka‘āinana 2433, Kāmua Hale 1, a mahalo i ke kaupaona o ka kōmike i kēia pila ko‘iko‘i.

* * * * *

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill 2433, House Draft 1, and appreciates the Legislature’s continued commitment to uplifting ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i as a co-official language of the State.

HB2433 HD1 establishes a clear and neutral method for determining which language version of a law should control when the English and Hawaiian texts differ. The measure removes the existing statutory preference for the English version and replaces it with an intent-based standard that treats both languages with equal dignity while ensuring clarity and long-term stability in statutory interpretation. This standard reflects the longstanding principle that statutory meaning is grounded in legislative intent.

This approach aligns Hawai‘i with other jurisdictions that operate within bilingual legal frameworks. For example, Canada’s Official Languages Act provides that English and French versions of federal statutes are equally authoritative, and courts resolve discrepancies by identifying the meaning that best reflects legislative intent. See Official Languages Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. 31), ss 13-16; R. v. Daoust, 2004 SCC 6. These principles have supported a well-functioning bilingual system for decades, demonstrating that co-official languages can coexist effectively when guided by clear interpretive rules.

HB2433 HD1 adopts this proven model. It provides a consistent and administrable standard, affirms the constitutional mandate to promote ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, ensures that Hawaiian



House Bill 2433, House Draft 1, Relating to the Hawaiian Language
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs
Tuesday, March 24, 2026
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language laws are treated with equal dignity, avoids symbolic recognition without practical effect, and supports both past and future bilingual drafting initiatives.

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill 2433, House Draft 1, and appreciates the committee's thoughtful consideration of this important measure.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs
March 24, 2026 at 2:05 p.m.

By

Bonnie Irwin

Chancellor

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

HB 2433 HD1 – RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE.

Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee:

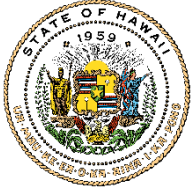
The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) submits testimony in **support with amendments** of HB 2433 HD1.

UH Hilo supports the core purpose of this measure and appreciates the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs' thoughtful response to concerns raised by the Judiciary. We understand that a text-origin approach may present administrative challenges when information about a law's drafting history is not consistently available, and that turning to legislative intent—as evidenced by legislative history, context, and purpose—offers a more workable and durable standard. We can support the HD1 language on that basis.

However, **we respectfully flag one concern with HD 1 as amended**: the proposed change to HRS §1-13 that would replace “English and Hawaiian **are** the official languages of Hawaii” with “English and Hawaiian **shall be** the official languages of Hawaii.” Hawai'i State Constitution Article XV, Section 4—adopted at the 1978 Constitutional Convention—already establishes that “English and Hawaiian shall be the official languages of Hawaii.” Current HRS §1-13 appropriately reflects this reality in the present tense, acknowledging what has been constitutionally true since 1978. We are concerned it could create unintended ambiguity about the settled status of Hawaiian as an official language. We respectfully recommend retaining the current “are” language in HRS §1-13.

UH Hilo is proud to house Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani, the Hawaiian Language College, and to serve a large community of Hawaiian language scholars, students, and practitioners. We strongly support the bill's underlying commitment to honoring the cultural and legal significance of 'ōlelo Hawai'i, and we urge passage of HB 2433 HD1, with the amendment noted above.

Mahalo for your consideration.



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION **KOMIKINA PONO KĪWILA O HAWAI‘I**

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411, HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: (808) 586-8636 · FAX: (808) 586-8655 · TDD: (808) 586-8692

DATE: Tuesday, March 24, 2026
TIME: 2:05 PM
PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 224
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

To: [COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS](#)

Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair

From: Alphonso Braggs, Chair
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: HB 2433 HD1– RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE.
Testimony in SUPPORT

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5. HCRC has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment (Chapter 378, Part I, HRS), housing (Chapter 515, HRS), public accommodations (Chapter 489, HRS), and access to state and state-funded services (HRS § 368-1.5).

HB2433 HD1 affirms the binding authority of Hawaiian language versions of laws under specific conditions. This measure is not only a legal clarification—it is a profound step toward honoring Hawai‘i’s constitutional commitment to its indigenous language and advancing civil rights for Native Hawaiians.

The Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) is charged with eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal access to justice. Language access is a cornerstone of civil rights. By recognizing Hawaiian language versions of laws as binding in certain circumstances, HB2433 HD1 promotes equity by ensuring that Hawaiian speakers can rely on laws in their own language, affirms cultural and linguistic rights, consistent with HCRC's mandate to protect marginalized communities, and supports systemic fairness, reducing barriers in legal interpretation for Native Hawaiian communities.

‘Ōlelo Hawai'i is not merely symbolic, it is a living language central to identity, governance, and justice in Hawai'i. HB2433 HD1 helps to restore parity between English and Hawaiian, correcting historical suppression of the language. It strengthens cultural continuity, enabling future generations to engage with law and governance in Hawaiian.

Furthermore, it aligns with global human rights standards, including Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which guarantees the right to use and transmit indigenous languages.

Article XV, Section 4 of the Hawai'i State Constitution declares ‘Ōlelo Hawai'i an official language of the State. This is not aspirational, it is binding. HB2433 HD1 operationalizes this mandate by ensuring that when a law is drafted or reenacted in Hawaiian, that version carries legal weight. This fulfills the constitutional promise made in 1978 to “give full recognition and honor to the rich cultural inheritance that Hawaiians have given to all ethnic groups of the State.”

HB2433 HD1 is a necessary and overdue measure to uphold constitutional principles, advance civil rights, and normalize the use of Hawaiian in governance.

Thank you for hearing this bill.

HB-2433-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 4:56:38 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| M. Leilani DeMello | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O PIHA this bill as it is imperative that we follow the original intent of laws ma ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. English should be secondary whenever ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i is present.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

HB-2433-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 6:26:39 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Julia Estigoy-Kahoonei | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

‘Ōlelo must be incorporated in all aspects of life in Hawai‘i including within the judicial system.

HB-2433-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 7:53:19 AM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| Shelby Pikachu Billionaire | Testifying for Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands & Ohana Unity Party | Support | Remotely Via Zoom |

Comments:

****Testimony in Strong Support of HB2433 HD1**** ****Relating to the Hawaiian Language****

****Senate Committees on Hawaiian Affairs and Judiciary****

Aloha Chair Senator Tim Richards, Vice Chairs, and esteemed members of the Committees on Hawaiian Affairs and Judiciary,

E komo mai, aloha nui loa. My name is Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I., and I serve as Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party (www.Ohanaunityparty.com). As the ****number one testifier and supporter on the record**** this session for Native Hawaiian justice—from Public Land Trust accountability to protecting iwi kūpuna, revitalizing ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, and every measure honoring our lāhui's kuleana—I rise in ****strong, heartfelt support**** of ****HB2433 HD1****.

Aloha especially to you, Chair Richards—mahalo piha for championing SB1249 last year (Duke Pia's Law), which shielded our kama‘āina farmers and took a real bite out of rural crime, just like McGruff the Crime Dog: "Take a bite out of crime!" Today, we must take that same unrelenting bite out of colonial imbalances in our laws: bite out of the outdated rule that always favored English over Hawaiian, and restore balance so our ancestral language can breathe freely as the official tongue it was meant to be.

The bill's findings speak truth: At the 1978 Constitutional Convention, the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs proposed what is now Article XV, Section 4 of our State Constitution, making Hawaiian an official language "to give full recognition and honor to the rich cultural inheritance that Hawaiians have given to all ethnic groups of the State." This aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, adopted 2007, U.S. support 2010), Article 13: Indigenous peoples' right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit languages, oral traditions, and names to future generations—and states' duty to protect that right and ensure understanding in proceedings.

Yet current HRS §1-13 holds that in any "radical and irreconcilable difference" between English and Hawaiian versions of a law, the English version is binding. HB2433 HD1 heals this wound by amending §1-13 to: - Reaffirm English and Hawaiian as official languages. - Require that, when there's a material difference in interpretation, priority goes to the version aligning with the

legislature's intent—as evidenced by legislative history, context, and purpose. - State clearly that Hawaiian shall not be required for public acts and transactions, but shall be welcomed.

This is ponokea—righteous equity. No new burdens, no mandates—just a fair rule that honors ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as a living, co-equal language rather than a secondary one. It mends the frayed lei of sovereignty, ensuring our kūpuna's words carry weight in law when they best reflect the lawmakers' true intent. For our keiki learning mo‘olelo in Hawaiian immersion, for families preserving place names and traditions, for the lāhui reclaiming voice—this bill says: Your language matters, and it will be heard. The Ohana Unity Party stands united behind HB2433 HD1.

I urge the Committees to pass it swiftly and strongly: remove the English-bias relic, prioritize intent over colonial default, and let ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i stand tall as the official language our Constitution intended. Mahalo nui loa for your kuleana to Hawaiian affairs and for hearing this testimony from your top advocate. I am ready for questions or oral testimony.

A hui hou, me ke aloha pumehana,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Chairman,
Ohana Unity Party www.Ohanaunityparty.com Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com

HB-2433-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 10:23:40 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Johnnie-Mae L. Perry | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2433 HB RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE.