

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:22:09 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marine Advocates	Marine Advocates Collaborating for Sustainable Aquatic Life through Action and Discipline	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

We support this resolution urging the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee to immediately bring its operations into full compliance with its Rules of Practice and all statutory obligations, including the Sunshine Law, within 30 days; to publicly certify such compliance; and to implement corrective actions as necessary. As in statute, the Chair of the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources shall exercise oversight authority over the Executive Director and shall sign off on all compliance verifications and reporting. Failure to comply shall result in formal administrative action, including review of the Executive Director and potential restructuring to ensure accountability.

Based on legislative findings, the Chair of the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources shall conduct a comprehensive performance review of the Executive Director and the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee. In light of documented non-compliance and the duration of such violations, the Chair shall ensure that findings are formally documented and that corrective actions are immediately implemented, including, where appropriate, organizational restructuring to ensure transparency and accountability.

Mahalo nui,

Marine Advocates Collaborating for Sustainable Aquatic Life through Action and Discipline

Advocating for an equitable voice and identity of lawai‘a to be pono in conduct as hoa‘āina of nearshore and marine ecosystems with an emphasis on Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices.



LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT FOR HCR179
RELATING TO THE AHA MOKU ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

HOUSE COMMITTEE on JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Hawai'i State Capitol

April 7, 2026

2:00 p.m.

Room 325

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and members of the committee,

Ho'āla Kealakekua Nui, Inc. (HKN) is in **STRONG SUPPORT for HCR179**, which urges the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee to follow its adopted rules of practice, fulfill its statutory duties, including complying with the Sunshine Law, conduct a performance review of its Executive Director, and establish policies to assure consistent standards of administrative and managerial accountability.

HKN has a unique relationship with the 'Aha Moku and encourages this legislation's support in ensuring the voices of Native Hawaiians are upheld. We take the 'Aha Moku very seriously as it plays a vital role in assisting and advising the State to uphold its statutory obligations held within the 1959 Admission's Act, Article XII, Sec. 7, and many other policies that relate to the betterment of the conditions of Native Hawaiians. The 'Aha Moku has the potential to effectuate policies and laws to support struggling Native Hawaiian communities in far rural reaches. One of its many purposes is to identify and organize skilled individuals that hold Traditional Ecological Knowledge as well as traditions, customs, and practices.

HKN relies on the success of 'Aha Moku and a functioning 'Aha Moku Advisory Council (AMAC). As a Community-based Conservation Management organization that implements traditional methodologies, we would require the 'Aha Moku to demonstrate the highest and best level of transparency and accountability and perform its purpose to ensure the continuum of Native Hawaiians. HKN further supports this resolution to reaffirm the BLNR Chair's duties to conduct a performance review of the Executive Director and the AMAC.

HKN would like to thank this committee for hearing this measure and the opportunity to provide a voice. We strongly urge this committee to pass HCR179.

Mahalo Nui,

Shane Akoni Palacat-Nelsen
Executive Director | CEO



*He Lawai'a no ke kai papa'u, he pōkole ke aho; He Lawai'a no ke kai hohonu
he loa ke aho" "A fisherman of shallow seas uses a short line; a fisherman
of the deep sea uses a long line."*

KALANIHALE

April 5, 2026

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HCR179

Urging the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee to Follow Its Adopted Rules of Practice, Fulfill Its Statutory Duties, Including Complying with the Sunshine Law, Conduct a Performance Review of Its Executive Director, and Establish Policies to Assure Consistent Standards of Administrative and Managerial Accountability

Aloha Chair and Members,

My name is **Kaimi Kaupiko**, and I submit this testimony in **strong support of HCR179**.

I support this resolution because if the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee is to carry the responsibility of representing Native Hawaiian traditional and customary resource management within state government, it must operate with integrity, transparency, accountability, and consistency. The purpose of the 'Aha Moku system is too important to be undermined by failures in governance or public process.

HCR179 appropriately recognizes the origins and intent of the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee. The resolution recounts the puwalu gatherings beginning in 2006, where kūpuna, cultural practitioners, educators, fishers, farmers, community leaders, and others called for the integration of traditional Hawaiian land and ocean practices into state governance and resource management. It also recognizes that Act 288, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2012, established the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee to advise the State on Native Hawaiian traditional and customary resource management practices. That kuleana is significant and deserves to be honored through real compliance with law and proper public accountability.

This resolution is necessary because it raises serious concerns that cannot be ignored. As stated in the measure, the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee reportedly adopted Rules of Practice and Procedure in 2016, yet the Executive Director has acknowledged that the Committee does not follow those rules. The resolution further notes there is no publicly available record that those rules were repealed, amended, or formally discontinued. It also identifies the lack of publicly available agendas, minutes, reports, administrative records, and regular publicly noticed meetings, raising concerns about compliance with the Sunshine Law, oversight of the Executive Director, budgetary accountability, and the committee's ability to fulfill its statutory duties.

These are not small concerns. When a public advisory body receives state funding, is expected to represent Native Hawaiian interests and knowledge systems, and issues positions in its name, it must do so through lawful, transparent, and properly noticed public meetings. HCR179 rightly urges the Committee to comply with the Sunshine Law, hold regular meetings, ensure transparency in decision-making, provide oversight of its Executive Director, submit required reports in a timely manner, and adopt appropriate administrative and managerial policies for

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KALANIHALE

effective governance. It also urges that advisory positions be adopted only through properly noticed public meetings and asks for a formal performance review of the Executive Director.

For many of us who care deeply about 'ike kūpuna, community voice, and responsible stewardship of 'āina and kai, accountability does not weaken the 'Aha Moku system — it strengthens it. If the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee is to fulfill its mandated purpose and maintain the trust of the Native Hawaiian community and the public, it must operate in a way that reflects the values it is meant to uphold. Transparency, public participation, lawful process, and administrative integrity are not barriers to Native Hawaiian governance. They are necessary conditions for credibility and trust.

As someone who cares deeply about community-based stewardship and the proper place of Native Hawaiian knowledge in public decision-making, I believe HCR179 is a needed and reasonable measure. It does not diminish the purpose of the 'Aha Moku Advisory Committee. It calls on the Committee to live up to that purpose.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Legislature to adopt **HCR179**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Kaimi Kaupiko

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:18:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malia Kipapa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Tarnas and Committee Members on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support Resolution HCR179.

My name is Malia Kipapa and I am a lineal descendant of Pahoehoe Kona Hawai‘i, I carry a deep responsibility to ‘āina and community. Through my work across Hawai‘i Island, I have seen the importance of transparency, accountability, and adherence to established practices in institutions that serve our people.

The ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee must follow its adopted Rules of Practice, fulfill its statutory duties, and comply with the Sunshine Law to maintain public trust. Conducting a performance review of its Executive Director and establishing consistent administrative and managerial accountability are necessary steps to ensure effective and pono governance.

As an advocate for aloha ‘āina, place-based management governance, Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices, and marine stewardship, I urge your support for resolution HCR179.

Mahalo for your consideration and opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is U‘ilani Naipo. I am a marine advocate for place-based governance, Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices, and marine stewardship.

I am in strong support of this resolution directing the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee to achieve full compliance with its Rules of Practice and all statutory requirements, including the Sunshine Law, within 30 days, to certify that compliance publicly, and to implement necessary corrective actions. As in statute, the Chair of the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources shall oversee the Executive Director and approve all compliance reporting, with failure to comply resulting in administrative action, including leadership review and potential restructuring.

The success of ‘Aha Moku is very important to me and the work I do in place-based governance. Transparency and accountability are crucial to maintaining the credibility of this very important body. The Native Hawaiian communities' access to and representation from ‘Aha Moku is critical to maintaining the Native Hawaiian footprint in our home landscape.

In light of legislative findings and prolonged non-compliance, the Chair shall conduct a comprehensive performance review of the Executive Director and the Committee, formally document findings, and ensure immediate corrective action, including restructuring as needed to ensure transparency and accountability.

We must focus on correcting our deficiencies, strengthening

what we already do well, and striving to excel in all areas moving forward.

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 5:49:08 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaikea Nakachi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kaikea Nakachi, and I am a Native Hawaiian researcher, photographer, and kahu manō and aloha ‘āina practitioner. I am in strong support of place-based governance based on traditional and customary practices and therefore strongly support this resolution directing the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Council to achieve compliance with its Rules of Practice and all statutory requirements, including the Sunshine Law. The ability of ‘Aha Moku to support and guide place-based governance and rulemaking is important to me and the work I do. I support increased compliance, transparency, and accountability in ‘Aha Moku and all aspects of government. I believe this resolution will help course correct if there are deficiencies and allow us to move forward more efficiently and effectively.

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:18:03 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Coe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT for HCR179 because this resolution is necessary.

As outlined in HCR179, the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee has clear statutory responsibilities, including adherence to its own rules of practice, compliance with the Sunshine Law, and maintaining consistent standards of administrative and managerial accountability.

At its core, this measure is about accountability and transparency in the use of public trust and public funds. **The ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee is supported by taxpayer dollars, and yet there is a concerning lack of accessible, consistent reporting demonstrating that required duties are being fulfilled.** The public and this Legislature deserve clear evidence of work performed, outcomes achieved, and compliance with established laws and policies.

It is also important to emphasize that HR169 does not dismantle ‘Aha Moku. To the contrary, it strengthens the system. The ‘Aha Moku framework is rooted in generations of Native Hawaiian resource management knowledge and is intended to elevate community voices and stewardship practices. Ensuring that the advisory committee operates transparently, lawfully, and effectively only reinforces the integrity and credibility of that system, allowing it to better serve its intended purpose.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a significant gap between how the work of the committee is being represented and the reality experienced by many stakeholders. Legislators should be aware that they may not be receiving a complete or accurate picture of the committee’s current level of activity and performance.

Additionally, concerns have been raised that substantial time and effort have been directed toward advocacy efforts aimed at preserving the current executive leadership position, rather than toward fulfilling the core administrative and operational responsibilities of the role. At minimum, this raises questions about priorities and the effective use of limited public resources.

The fact that a Senate bill version of this measure did not advance further underscores the need for careful, independent review by this body. It is critical that decisions on this resolution be based on objective evaluation of performance, transparency, and statutory compliance, not on advocacy or incomplete information.

HR169 takes a reasonable and measured approach by simply urging adherence to existing rules, conducting a performance review, and establishing clear standards of accountability. These are fundamental expectations for any publicly funded entity.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for HCR179. Mahalo.

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:23:12 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Conall K. Ravenscraft	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Ano ai ke aloha Chair, Vice Chair and JHA Committee members,

Please let this serve as testimony for myself Conall Kahaka'io Ravenscraft in support of this measure HCR179 and companion HR169:

URGING THE ‘AHA MOKU ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO FOLLOW ITS ADOPTED RULES OF PRACTICE, FULFILL ITS STATUTORY DUTIES, INCLUDING COMPLYING WITH THE SUNSHINE LAW, CONDUCT A PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF ITS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AND ESTABLISH POLICIES TO ASSURE CONSISTENT STANDARDS OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mahalo for your time an attention to this issue which impacts our communities and our ability to advocate and steward our needs and resources.

Aloha

C. Kahaka'io Ravenscraft

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 6:35:40 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of HCR179 and its effort to strengthen the effectiveness and integrity of the ‘Aha Moku system.

‘Aha Moku was created to ensure that ‘ike kūpuna and community perspectives remain an active part of modern governance. Its success relies on transparency, shared responsibility, and strong relationships between communities and decision-makers, core elements that define its purpose.

Reinforcing accountability is not a shift away from these principles. By strengthening expectations and oversight, the system can better reflect its original intent and more effectively serve the people it was designed to represent.

It is also important to recognize that the work of ‘Aha Moku is supported by taxpayer dollars. With that support comes a responsibility to operate with integrity, transparency, and a clear commitment to the public interest. When leadership fails to meet these expectations, it raises serious concerns about stewardship of both public trust and public resources.

The concerns surrounding current leadership underscore why this resolution is needed. Efforts should be focused on fulfilling the responsibilities of the position and advancing the mission of ‘Aha Moku and not on deflecting accountability. Public service requires a commitment to the role itself, not to individual preservation within it.

HCR179 presents an opportunity to reaffirm the purpose of ‘Aha Moku and to strengthen the structures that ensure it operates as intended. By reinforcing accountability and transparency, this measure helps restore confidence in the system and ensures it remains a meaningful bridge between traditional knowledge and contemporary governance.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important resolution.

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:39:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laa Poepoe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HR 169/HCR 179 (and HB 2047)

Urging the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC) to:

1. **Follow Rules of practice and procedure**
2. **Fulfill statutory duties, and**
3. **Conduct a performance review of its Executive Director**

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

AMAC is presently operating in noncompliance, potentially to a level of criminal misconduct, and needs a few fixes supported by the legislature within HR 169/HCR 179 and HB 2047:

1. **MANDATE SUNSHINE LAW COMPLIANCE:** require at least one properly noticed public meeting per quarter, and legally void any advisory position or recommendation that was not agendized and approved by a majority vote of the committee in accordance with HRS §92-13 (Willful violation of Sunshine Law) which jeopardizes the validity of positions represented by AMAC in accordance with HRS §92-11 (actions made in violation of the Sunshine Law to be voided)
2. **MANDATE ALL REPORTING:** Maintain a simple digital archive of all meeting minutes, agendas, and formal advisory letters accessible to the public by regularly updating the existing ‘aha moku website. Require the ED to document and report on engagements with each island council before issuing official advice. Provide annual, itemized accounting of the \$286,300 budget, detailing all staff salaries, travel, and administrative costs, and conduct an independent audit of the previous five years to reconcile missing records and verify the lawful use of public funds under HRS §171-4.5 (violation of state fiscal reporting laws)
3. **ASSIGN PERSONNEL ACCOUNTABILITY:** Shift the Executive Director's appointment and supervision to the DLNR Chairperson, implement mandatory annual reviews conducted by the DLNR Chair based on statutory requirements, replace the indefinite appointment of the ED

with fixed-term increments to ensure periodic leadership evaluation, and establish statutory triggers for immediate termination, such as failure to hold meetings (HRS §92-13) or submit reports (HRS §171-4.5)

The executive director and committee chairperson should not find these reasonable compliance measures unacceptable. If the AMAC is fulfilling its duties with confidence and integrity, then regular meetings, open records, and fiscal audits should be welcomed as an opportunity to showcase their success and justify their budget. To oppose these measures suggests that the agency believes it should be exempt from state law.

The 'aha moku island councils are autonomous participants that can operate without administrative rules. However, the AMAC is administratively attached to DLNR, therefore, must adhere to administrative rules. Please pass these measures to ensure that public trust and public funds are managed properly.

HCR-179

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 10:49:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kawika Ruddle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kawika Ruddle, and I am in strong support of HCR179.

I was born and raised on Hawai‘i Island, with deep ties to our coastal communities and the way we care for our resources and each other. Because of that, I believe strongly in the intent behind ‘Aha Moku and the importance of place-based governance grounded in ‘ike kūpuna.

For ‘Aha Moku to truly serve our communities, it must operate with full transparency, accountability, and in compliance with all state laws, including the Sunshine Law. This resolution is not about tearing anything down—it is about strengthening the foundation so that this body can function the way it was intended.

The success of ‘Aha Moku matters. It represents a critical bridge between Native Hawaiian communities and state decision-making. If that bridge is not operating properly, it affects trust, participation, and ultimately the ability to mālama our lands and waters in a meaningful way.

HCR179 provides a clear and necessary path forward—requiring compliance, public accountability, and, if needed, corrective action to restore credibility and effectiveness.

We all want ‘Aha Moku to succeed. This is about making sure it does—by addressing the challenges directly and ensuring it can move forward with integrity.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support.