

**HR-169**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 7:55:07 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Nakachi	Moana Ohana	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai Kakou, My Name is Mike Nakachi from South Kohala. I am in full support of Aha Moku, we need our Lahui to rise within aha moku. Need to magnify this calling to be there for the needs of our people and our ancestral resources. Much appreciation for the support that Aha Moku has shown for our I'a and ancestral aquatic resources where our DLNR has not sided with the people or Aha moku. Time to change this... Malama pono, Mike

**HR-169**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 10:02:44 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

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.

We advocate an equitable voice and identity of lawai‘a to be pono in conduct as hoa‘āina of nearshore and marine ecosystems.

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.*



*Ko'olau Foundation*

P. O. Box 4749 / 46-005 Kawa St., #205  
Kane'ohe, HI 96744

March 30, 2026

To: Rep. Mark Hashem, Chair  
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair  
And Members, Committee on Water & Land

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair  
& Members, Committee on Public Safety

Re: HCR179/HR19 – Urging the Aha Moku Advisory Committee to Follow Its Adopted Rules of Practice, Fulfill its Statutory Duties, Including Compliance 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 Hashem and Belatti, Vice Chairs Morikawa and Iwamoto, and Committee Members:

The Ko'olau Foundation supports these two resolutions with some degree of hesitancy, because much of the language in these resolutions are calling upon a group of Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and kupuna to function in a very “Western” way.

Our organization does, indeed, pray for the continued success of the `Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC), and sees some of these new “requirements” as useful and helpful toward reaching positive goals as the practitioners offer their generational knowledge and mana`o to help guide the State of Hawai`i in its decision-making on matters that affect Hawaiian lands or people.

However, we have observed that there has been some confusion in recent years due to attempts by what we see as possible “rival” groups seeking to access influence and power over state decision-making.

We believe the AMAC is an important and necessary part of the world in which the DLNR and other state agencies should consult with as they address the many important decisions that come before them, and hope that additional departmental support from DLNR will be forthcoming to ensure greater success ahead. Success in working with AMAC can mean less conflict in future decisions.

We appreciate your consideration of our mana`o.

**HR-169**

Submitted on: 3/29/2026 9:30:24 PM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Malia Kipapa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HCR179 & Companion Bill HR169**

Aloha e Chair Hashem, Chair Tarnas and Members of the Committees on Water and Land (WAL) & Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs (JHA),

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of **HCR179 & HR169**. These bills are an important step toward strengthening the structure, transparency, and accountability of the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee.

**HCR179 & HR169** clarifies that the Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources will oversee the appointment and administration of the Executive Director, ensuring clear leadership and consistent oversight. The bill also requires that any formal action or recommendation of the committee be made at a publicly noticed meeting with quorum, reinforcing transparency and community trust. Updated reporting requirements further improve accountability and ensure meaningful communication with the Legislature and the public.

These changes support the long-term integrity and effectiveness of the ‘Aha Moku system and help ensure that traditional knowledge is represented responsibly in resource management.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass **HCR179 & HR169**.

Mahalo nui,

**Malia Kipapa**

North Kona, Hawai‘i

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, strengthen what

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

SUBJECT: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HCR179- Relating to the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee**

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Lamosao, and members of the Committees on Water and Land,

My name is Kēhau Springer, and I am a kanaka ‘ōiwi practitioner and researcher residing in Kea‘au, Moku o Keawe. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HCR179**, which calls for strengthened accountability, transparency, and fulfillment of statutory responsibilities within the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC).

### **History and Origins of ‘Aha Moku:**

The ‘Aha Moku is not a modern invention. It reflects a restoration of traditional place-based governance that organized stewardship through moku and ahupua‘a systems, grounded in ‘ike kūpuna and reciprocal relationships between people and ‘āina.

In the modern era, this work was first advanced through the Puwalu gatherings (2006-2010), where practitioners, kūpuna, and community leaders came together across islands to call for the restoration of traditional resource management systems. This movement led to the ‘Aha Kiole Advisory Committee (Act 211, 2007), and the establishment of the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC) under Act 288 (2012), creating a state-recognized pathway to integrate Indigenous resource management with contemporary governance.

### **Importance of ‘Aha Moku Today:**

The ‘Aha Moku system remains critically important because it provides a mechanism to:

- Restore ecosystem balance through ‘ike based observations and management.
- Support intergenerational ‘ike transfer and community-based stewardship.
- Strengthens mālama and aloha ‘āina grounded in pono.
- Help agencies better understand place-specific cultural and ecological relationships.

Healthy ecosystems and healthy communities are inseparable. When ‘āina and kai are cared for, culturally grounded relationships, food systems, coastal resilience, and stewardship are strengthened. This is further reinforced through the legal framework established in *Ka Pa‘akai o ka ‘Āina v. Land Use Commission* (2000), which affirms the State’s obligation to identify, assess, and protect Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices in its decision-making processes.

### **Acknowledging Recent Challenges and Discourse:**

HCR179 reflects serious and ongoing concerns raised within both the Legislature and the Native Hawaiian community regarding the administration, transparency, and accountability of the AMAC. These concerns include inconsistent public meetings, limited availability of records and reports, and gaps in oversight. These issues are not new. They have been raised through puwalu processes, community discussions, and engagement with agency leadership. Without consistent implementation, even well-intended structures cannot fulfill their purpose.

### **Why HCR179 is Necessary:**

HCR179 does not introduce new obligations, but rather calls for the consistent fulfillment of existing statutory responsibilities. This is critical. The effectiveness of the ‘Aha Moku Advisory Committee depends not only on its intent, but on its ability to operate transparently, consistently, and in alignment with its established mandate.

This resolution provides an opportunity to restore confidence in the structure, reaffirm its purpose, and strengthen its role in supporting 'ike-based resource management across the State.

**Framing Accountability as Restoration & Need for Continued Support**

It is important to emphasize that accountability is not a departure from the purpose of 'Aha Moku — it is a return to it. The original intent of 'Aha Moku was grounded in collective responsibility, transparency within community, and pilina between people, place, and governance. Strengthening accountability structures allows the 'Aha Moku system to realign with these core values and better serve its intended role.

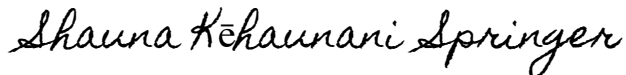
At the same time, accountability must be paired with adequate support. The AMAC has long operated with limited administrative and structural resources. If the State is committed to Indigenous resource management, it must also invest in administrative capacity, support for island-level engagement, clear pathways for agency integration, and long-term program sustainability. Accountability and support must move together.

**Closing:**

The 'Aha Moku system remains a vital bridge between 'ike kūpuna and contemporary governance. HCR179 provides an opportunity to strengthen that bridge by reaffirming accountability, transparency, and purpose.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's 'āina, kai, and communities.

Na'u



na Shauna Kēhaunani Springer  
Kea'au, Moku o Keawe, Hawai'i  
Founder & Executive Director, Ka Pa'akai Consulting  
Member of Nā Kai 'Ewalu  
PhD Candidate, Te Whare Wānaga o Waikato (The University of Waikato)

**HR-169**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 9:54:04 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

In strong support of HR169.

This resolution is necessary. As outlined in HR169, 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 HR169.

**HR-169**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 10:15:07 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supporting HR169 and HCR169 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.

**HR-169**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 8:19:10 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/31/2026 10:00:00 AM

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 Committees,

AMAC is potentially operating in noncompliance 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 taken and 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. Require the ED to document and report on engagements with each island council before issuing state-level advice. 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 'aha moku island councils are autonomous organizations and can operate without rules.

The AMAC is administratively attached to DLNR, therefore must adhere to administrative rules.