

STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 4, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director
Campaign Spending Commission

KEI

SUBJECT: **Testimony on S.B. No. 2313, Relating to Public Financing for Candidates to Elected Office.**

Friday, February 6, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. The Campaign Spending Commission ("Commission") supports the intent of this bill and provides the following comments.

This bill establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices to beginning with the 2028 general election year, appropriates funds to the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund, and appropriates funds to the Commission. This public financing program is modeled after the pilot Hawaii County Council Comprehensive Public Funding Project¹ that ran in 2010 and 2012.

The bill establishes the maximum amount of comprehensive public funds ("CPF Max") for each office as well as the minimum qualifying \$5 contributions ("\$5 MQC") that must be raised for each office. The following table shows the \$5 MQC and CPF Max for each office:

Office	\$5 MQC	CPF Max
Governor	6,250	\$2,500,000
Lieutenant Governor	3,000	\$1,200,000
Senator	250	\$100,000
Representative	125	\$50,000
OHA	100	\$40,000

¹ Act 244, 2008 Haw. Sess. Laws.

Honolulu Mayor	5,750	\$2,300,000
Hawaii Mayor	900	\$360,000
Maui Mayor	1,500	\$600,000
Kauai Mayor ²	875	\$350,000
Hon. Pros. Atty	563	\$225,000
Hawaii Pros. Atty	100	\$40,000
Kauai Pros. Atty	63	\$25,000
Hon. County Council	338	\$135,000
Hawaii County Council	50	\$20,000
Maui County Council	138	\$55,000
Kauai County Council	75	\$30,000

If one candidate for each office qualified and received the CPF Max in the 2028 election period, this program will pay out **\$15,110,000** in public financing to the qualified candidates. In contrast, if one candidate for each office qualified to receive partial public funding in the 2026 elections, the state will pay a maximum of **\$2,948,612** in public financing. Under §11-O of the proposed new subpart to Part XIII of Chapter 11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, there must be a minimum of \$30,000,000 in the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund on September 1, 2027, in order for the Commission to run the comprehensive public financing program established by the bill.

The Commission notes this bill includes \$30,200,000 in general fund appropriation to the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund which is necessary to implement the new comprehensive public financing program. The Commission appreciates the appropriation of \$200,000 in this and the next fiscal years from the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund in Section 7 of the bill for the Commission to hire two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) permanent positions to prepare for comprehensive public financing in the 2028 elections. Currently, the Commission has 5 staff and is in the process of hiring an investigator and elections assistant due to the increase in candidates, candidate committees, and noncandidate committees which require hundreds of staff hours to assist with over the phone, in person, and by email. In contrast to Hawaii County Council Comprehensive Public Funding Project for which this program is modeled, this bill addresses all elected offices, and therefore, the scope and magnitude of providing at least four trainings set forth in Section 11-N will be significant especially in consideration of the penalties set forth in Section 11-M. This further underscore the importance of increasing staff at the Commission.

The balance in the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund is \$2,412,282.94 as of June 30, 2025. This amount is insufficient to pay for the comprehensive public funding program, including the additional personnel the Commission will need, and thus, the total appropriation of \$30,200,000 in Section 6 of the bill is necessary.

² On page 19, line 4 of the bill, “mayor of” should be inserted after “(9) For the office of.”

In addition to the foregoing, the Commission notes the comprehensive funding program is referenced in the bill on page 4 lines 8 and 9 as “the comprehensive public financing program” and then referenced on page 7, lines 7-8 and throughout the remainder of the bill as “a comprehensive public funding program”. The Commission recommends amending page 4, lines 7-8 to read “a comprehensive public funding program” so the term is consistent throughout the bill.

The Commission respectfully requests that this Committee pass this bill as amended.



Committee on Judiciary Chair Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Mike Gabbard

Friday, February 6, 9 am]

Room 016 and videoconference

SB2313 – RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE.

TESTIMONY

Beppie Shapiro, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii thanks the Committee Chairs and members for hearing this valuable and popular bill.

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports SB2313 which: Establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State, to begin with the 2028 general election year. Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. We also offer comments.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that methods of financing political campaigns should enhance political equality for all citizens; protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns; ensure the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections; enable candidates to compete equitably for public office; ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and combat corruption and undue influence in government.

Delegates and voters in the 1978 Constitutional Convention in Hawaii realized the importance of this concept, resulting in the creation of the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund and Hawaii's partial public funding option. Below is a quote from the Convention during the discussion of the HECF: "... if we think these tremendous sums being spent [on elections], these tremendous sums being contributed, are not sums for which we are

going to ultimately pay because of poor government . . . and because of undue influence . . . we are fooling ourselves.” Delegate Naomi Campbell during the 1978 Constitutional Convention.

Public financing of campaigns for political office is an investment in good governance, like budgeting for the Office of Elections or the Campaign Spending Commission or the Legislature itself. (See the recommendations of the Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct). Public Financing can return the value invested in it by increasing the extent to which elected officials work for the benefit of all state residents, rather than wealthy businesses or individuals; increasing voter confidence in government; and encouraging more citizen participation in elections and communication with their representatives.

The cost of this investment in good governance would not be a major portion of the state budget. The writers of this bill, as well as the Campaign Spending Commission (CSC), calculate that to pay for the comprehensive public funding program, even including personnel the CSC would need for implementation, would require an appropriation of \$30,200,000.

It is also probable that legislative spending and state contracts would be more effective and efficient when directed by the needs and values of the population, rather than being swayed by financial relationships with special interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2313, WITH SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING AND PARITY FOR OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS ELECTIONS

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Friday, February 6, 2026, 9:00 AM
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Submitted by: Kalihi Palama Hawaiian Civic Club

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee;

The Kalihi Palama Hawaiian Civic Club submits this testimony in support of the intent of SB 2313 and respectfully offers targeted amendments to address a remaining parity issue affecting elections for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA).

PURPOSE AND LEGAL CONTEXT

SB 2313 establishes a voluntary public financing framework intended to promote fairness, transparency, and equal access across Hawai'i's electoral system. The inclusion of OHA trustee elections within this framework is appropriate and consistent with the statewide nature of those elections.

However, from a statutory parity and equal-treatment perspective, the bill as currently drafted applies a funding and qualification structure to OHA elections that is not fully aligned with how those elections function in practice or how comparable offices are treated under the same bill.

STATEWIDE STATUS AND PARTICIPATION REALITIES OF OHA ELECTIONS

Certified statewide election results from the 2025 General Election demonstrate that Office of Hawaiian Affairs elections are statewide ballot contests.

We recognize that between 37.5% and 45.4% of voters who returned a ballot left OHA races blank, resulting in an effective participating electorate of approximately 55%–62% of statewide voters.

This participation pattern is significantly different from that of State House and State Senate races, where blank-vote rates are substantially lower.

Importantly, however, even accounting for this differential participation, the number of voters who actively participate in OHA elections remains substantially larger than the electorate of any single legislative district.

From a legal and structural standpoint, OHA elections therefore occupy a hybrid position as they are statewide in administration and ballot access, but are decided by a distinct, self-selecting electorate.

PARITY CONCERNS UNDER SB 2313

Under SB 2313 as drafted:

- Candidates for the State House of Representatives may receive up to \$50,000 in public financing.
- Candidates for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs are capped at \$40,000.
- Qualifying contribution and certification provisions rely on a district-based framework that does not clearly correspond to the statewide electorate that determines OHA elections.

This structure raises parity concerns because:

1. OHA elections are administered statewide and require statewide compliance, reporting, and ballot placement;
2. OHA candidates must communicate across multiple islands and jurisdictions;
3. The effective participating electorate for OHA elections is larger than that of legislative districts;
4. OHA candidates are afforded less public financing support than State House candidates.

From a Judiciary perspective, this raises questions of internal consistency within the statutory scheme, rather than questions of policy preference.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO ADDRESS PARITY

To better align SB 2313 with principles of equal treatment and rational classification, the Kalihi Palama Hawaiian Civic Club respectfully suggests the following amendments:

- **Public Financing Cap Adjustment**
 - Amend the bill to provide that public financing for OHA trustee candidates shall be no less than the amount provided for State House candidates, recognizing the statewide scope and larger effective electorate of OHA elections.
- **Clarification of Qualifying Contribution Electorate**
 - Clarify that, for purposes of qualifying contributions and certification, the relevant electorate for OHA candidates is **statewide registered voters**, notwithstanding trustee residency requirements.
- **Retention of Reasonable Qualification Thresholds**
 - Maintain modest qualification thresholds for OHA candidates to ensure accessibility for community-based Native Hawaiian candidates while preserving program integrity.

These amendments are narrowly tailored and do not seek to elevate OHA elections to the funding level of gubernatorial or other executive offices.

SB 2313 represents a meaningful advancement in Hawai'i's public financing framework. With modest amendments to address parity for OHA elections, the bill can better reflect consistent statutory treatment of similarly situated offices, grounded in actual voter participation and election administration realities.

The Kalihi Palama Hawaiian Civic Club respectfully urges the Committee to move SB 2313 forward with amendments that align OHA public financing provisions with principles of fairness, consistency, and proportionality.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.



Cedric Duarte, President
Kalihi Palama Hawaiian Civic Club



Protect Democracy Move Forward

www.indivisiblehawaii.org

info@indivisiblehawaii.org

To: Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee

Hearing Date/Time: 02-06-26 9:00 AM

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2313

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Indivisible Hawai'i, thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2313.

Too many people believe our political system is driven by money instead of community needs. Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions instead of constantly fundraising.

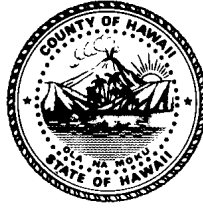
Hawai'i has already shown a commitment to clean elections, and past pilot programs demonstrated that public financing can work here. We thank you for your support of SB2313.

Sincerely,

Marlene Thom

Indivisible Hawai'i Good Government & Secure Elections Team

The mission of the 14-chapter Indivisible Hawai'i Statewide Network (IHSN) is to protect Hawai'i and democracy by defending civil rights, communities and values, most importantly, Hawai'i's Constitutionally protected spirit of Aloha. In October 2025, IHSN with other partners turned out over 22,000 residents on all major islands to say No Dictators! and to stand up for democracy. This call-to-action was part of Indivisible national's mobilization of more than 7 million across the country as the voice of the people, committed to election integrity and to evolving as a place of equity, opportunity and peace.



HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: February 3, 2026

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2

SUBJECT: SB2313

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members,

I strongly support SB2313. Public campaign financing is essential to keeping Hawaii's elections fair and transparent. In a state with small, island-based communities, personal connections and wealthy donors can give some candidates an unfair advantage over others who may have stronger community support but less funding. By encouraging small contributions from everyday voters, this bill strengthens local participation and ensures candidates reflect the voices of residents rather than private interests. It also builds public trust by making the electoral process more transparent.

Hawaii's unique geography, small districts, and history of close ties between money and politics make public financing a critical tool for fairer elections. This system empowers both candidates and communities, ensuring that political power stays with the people—not outside interests with no regard for local needs.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenn Kagiwada", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jenn Kagiwada

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 11:36:17 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
April Lee	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chair Rhoades, Co-Chair Keohokalole and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

*Hawai'i's political system allows a heavy reliance on campaign contributions from donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. **In 2024, I submitted the 19 pages of the most powerful politician we are under right now...to the Finance Committees of both bodies of the State Legislature. They were appalled at the money given & where it came from, however, not only they, but many others have been compromised in their ability to ethically enact The Golden Rule instead of CYA by going along with the "program" of this person who has evidence he has committed a list of wrongdoing. With that, our electorate sinks further into hopelessness...the homeowners from Lahaina are a deeply-disturbing cas-in-point. . As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run **competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.*****

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2313. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for reading & considering my testimony.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:39:45 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in full support of this bill.

We need to remove the money out of politics and create fair elections, where candidates are judged by their beliefs, resumes, and ideas, rather than being perceived as a better candidate because they were able to purchase more advertisements.

I would suspect that those with heavy war chests, large financial backing, and ties to large corporations will be against this bill, but this truly would help create a fair election and result in the best candidate being elected. This will benefit the people of Hawaii and make Hawaii a better place.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Keoni Shizuma

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:24:17 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:36:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Huycke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2313.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:26:15 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support SB2313 which would establish a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State.

Comprehensive publicly-funded campaign programs are intended to improve the process by allowing candidates to compete without reliance on private funds and by also allowing elected officials to make decisions without the influence. This is essential for good democracy.

Younghee Overly, a member of Indivisible Hawaii

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:51:04 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Bonk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a supporter of Indivisible Hawai'i I ask you to pass this bill.
Thank you.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:19:05 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judge daniel Foley (ret.)	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Judiciary Committee,

As former chair of the Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct (CISC), I submit this testimony in support of SB 2313 RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING OF CANDIDATES TO ELECTIVE OFFICE.

CISC proposed a bill to increase public funding of elections to "help counter the repercussions of Citizens United because public funding expands the reach of many small donors and can relieve candidates of the need to rely on the support of special interest groups or large donors." CISC December 1, 2022 Report at 32.

Although the CISC proposed bill was for an increase in partial funding of elections, CISC encouraged the Legislature to be bold and devote additional fiscal resources fo funding elections as SB 2313 would do. Id.

Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:36:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rita Kama-Kimura	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE.

Re: SB2313 Establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State, to begin with the 2028 general election year. Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature.

My name is Rita Kama-Kimura and I once again strongly oppose these types of bills (one of which we saw a couple of years ago) to fund candidates that we don't know and, in many cases, do not support.

If money is to be used to fund any campaigns /candidate, we the people will make that decision ourselves.

So, with that I ask you to stop this bill SB2313, now!

Respectfully but very concerned,

Rita Kama-Kimura

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:48:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Smart	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I vehemently oppose SB2313. We don't need to expand the partial public funding of political candidates to be a more comprehensive program.

This would be a horrendous abuse of taxpayer funds and allow many non-viable candidates to receive money with minimal effort and minimal support of their constituents. It should be up to candidates to convince residents that they are a candidate who deserves their financial support.

We are currently learning how wasteful government programs are and how they have been defrauded. We don't want another government program that wastes tax dollars as this proposal is apt to do.

We don't need a pilot project to determine this is a bad idea.

Do not pass SB2313.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:49:10 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Martha Nakajima	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Thank you. Martha Nakajima, Honolulu, member of Indivisible

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 6:03:13 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Weltin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Elizabeth Weltin, and I am writing in strong support of SB2313.

I believe our democracy works best when elected officials are accountable to the people they serve, not to wealthy donors or special interests. SB2313 takes an important step toward restoring public trust by establishing a comprehensive system of public financing for state and county elections beginning in 2028.

Running for office in Hawai‘i has become increasingly expensive, which discourages qualified candidates—especially working people, young people, and community leaders—from even considering public service. Public financing would help level the playing field, allowing candidates to focus on listening to voters and addressing real community needs rather than spending endless hours fundraising.

This bill also strengthens transparency and accountability by requiring the Campaign Spending Commission to report to the Legislature. That oversight is critical to ensuring the system is fair, effective, and responsive to the public.

Public financing has been shown in other jurisdictions to reduce the influence of big money, increase voter confidence, and encourage broader participation in our democracy. SB2313 moves Hawai‘i toward elections that are more equitable, more accessible, and more representative of the people who live here.

I strongly urge your support for SB2313.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Elizabeth Weltin as an individual citizen and on behalf of Ka‘ū Voices-An Indivisible Chapter and member of the Indivisible Hawai'i Statewide Network (IHSN)

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:53:46 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This should help decrease the risk of corruption in campaigns. Please pass.

Judith White, Psy.D.

Member, Kauai Indivisible

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:02:36 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ron Brown	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

What a joy it would be if elections could not be "bought"!

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 1:38:03 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Brandt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:21:46 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kahi Pacarro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

PUT THE POWER IN THE INDIVIDUAL, NOT THE CORPORATIONS.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:53:17 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am testifying today in strong support of SB2313, which would establish a comprehensive system of publicly-financed elections for Hawai‘i.

Our democracy is built on a simple, powerful ideal: that every voter has an equal voice and that elected officials are accountable first and foremost to the people they serve. Yet, the reality of our current campaign finance system has eroded this foundation. Running for office has become a relentless fundraising race, where candidates must spend countless hours dialing for dollars from wealthy individuals, corporations, and special interests.

This creates a cycle of dependency and influence that distorts our democracy. When campaigns are privately funded, candidates are understandably beholden to the priorities of their largest donors. This dynamic shapes which issues are championed, which bills are advanced, and whose voices are heard loudest in the halls of power. It means that a donor with a large checkbook often has more access and influence than an ordinary constituent.

SB2313 offers a transformative solution: it allows qualified candidates to fund their campaigns using public funds, freeing them from the private fundraising treadmill. This "clean elections" model has a proven track record. In jurisdictions that have adopted similar systems—from Maine to Arizona to cities across the nation—we see more competitive races, more diverse candidates who can run without personal wealth or wealthy networks, and legislators who report spending far more time listening to constituents instead of courting donors.

This bill is an investment in the integrity of our government and the power of our people. It puts voters back in the driver's seat. When candidates are not obligated to any special interest, they are free to be truly accountable to the public interest. They can debate policies on their merits, respond to the needs of their communities, and make decisions based on what is best for Hawai‘i's future, not what satisfies a donor.

Publicly financed elections will foster a healthier, more robust democracy where ideas compete on a level playing field, and where any committed citizen of good character can run for office without being forced into a system of legalized corruption.

For a government that is truly of, by, and for the people, I urge you to pass SB2313.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:05:30 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Lukens	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai'i's political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai'i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That's under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2313. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

[SB 2528](#) - Updates and expands the partial public financing of elections system

I am writing to express support for SB2528, which seeks to increase the amount of partial public campaign financing available for all state and county elective offices. The partial public financing system is long overdue for an update, and this legislation represents a significant step toward enhancing the integrity and accessibility of our electoral process.

The major issue with the current partial public financing system is that for state legislative races, the caps are too low to make a meaningful contribution to a candidate's campaigning. House and Senate candidates who opt-in limit their fundraising abilities while not getting much out of the program, making it not worth much to participate. This is not the case for certain county council races like Maui or Kaua'i where at-large voting means that the caps — calculated based on the number of registered voters in the "district" in the prior election — are much higher.

Critically, this bill raises the expenditure limits across the board by 20%, allowing candidates who opt-in to receive public financing not at as significant of handicap against their opponents, allowing them to raise and spend the money required to win a race.

Increasing public financing can help restore public trust in our political system. When elected officials are less dependent on private contributions, constituents can have greater confidence that policy decisions are made in the public's best interest, rather than being swayed by major donors.

SB 2462 - Increase funding for the public financing of elections

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. I am writing in strong support of SB 2462, which increases the designated income tax check-off amounts for the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund to \$6 for individual filers and \$12 for joint filers with at least that amount of tax liability.

This modest change empowers taxpayers to more meaningfully support clean elections in Hawai'i. The Election Campaign Fund is a valuable tool that allows everyday residents to contribute directly to public financing of campaigns without writing large checks or being part of special interest fundraising. Increasing the check-off amount makes it easier for more people to participate and help build a fund that can support competitive, grassroots candidates who are accountable to voters—not big money donors.

This is an easy way to ensure the Campaign Spending Fund receives more resources without raising any new taxes.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2462.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:23:30 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,**I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.**Hawai'i's political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.**By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.**Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai'i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That's under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.**For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2313. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.**Thank you for the opportunity to testify.*

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:32:51 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Carter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,**I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.**Hawai'i's political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.**By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.**Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai'i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That's under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.**For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2313. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.**Thank you for the opportunity to testify.**Dr. Paul Carter*

201 River Rd, Waih'e, HI

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:46:26 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roger Epstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Getting money out of our elections is critical. You see what's happened at the national level. Various people in Hawai'i been working on this for many years. The time to create a meaningful practical plan is now. Mahal nui loa

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:54:18 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Dinner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Big money in our elections is the reason we are where we are in our political system. Voters have lost control and lost trust.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 10:04:57 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Kizer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill and ask my elected officials to approve/pass. Mahalo.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 10:41:54 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you -- I am a member of Indivisible Windward.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 11:11:02 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai'i's political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai'i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That's under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2313. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Carbon Cashback Hawai‘i Member

Hawai‘i Workers Center Board Member

Honolulu Tenants Union Member

Hawai‘i Tax Fairness Coalition

Clean Elections Hawai‘i Member

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 12:39:56 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 12:49:28 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Pollock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill that establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State, to begin with the 2028 general election year. Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to submit reports to the Legislature.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 1:32:03 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Hagan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,**I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.**Hawai'i's political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.**By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.**Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai'i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That's under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.**For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2313. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.**Thank you for the opportunity to testify.*

Erin Hagan

Waialua

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 2:01:38 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of SB2313. I am in favor of public financing for our elections. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 2:10:51 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I support comprehensive public financing of elections.

Mahalo!

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 2:14:04 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Travis Tsuda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee

I strongly support SB2313

Public financing is a proven way to minimize corruption and encourage participation in government.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of constantly fundraising.

Please consider supporting this bill,

Travis, Kaneohe HI

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 2:18:04 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lila Mower	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 2:36:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in strong support of SB2313.

Too many people believe our political system is driven by money instead of community needs. Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of constantly fundraising.

Hawai‘i has already shown a commitment to clean elections, and past pilot programs demonstrated that public financing can work here.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 2:37:14 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gail Morrison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an individual and member of Indivisible Hawaii, I support this bill to reduce the influence of big money in our elections.

Mahalo, Gail Morrison, Honolulu

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 3:20:44 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Matson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

As a former candidate for State House who ran twice on partial public funding I am writing you in strong support of comprehensive public funding. After reading the current bill I have two points I'd like you to consider.

1) Please consider a change in the formula used for calculations regarding Hawaii County Council funding. It is extremely low and would be almost impossible for a first time candidate to run a competitive campaign at that rate. Please consider an amendment to adjust that one.

2) I continue to remain of the mind that unless and until ALL candidates are required to abide by the same contribution and expenditure restrictions, regardless of public financing or otherwise, it will be impossible to have truly "free and fair" elections.

Please continue to use your positions of influence to advocate for ways to get private interest money out of our elections.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Shannon M.

Hawaii'i Island Resident

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 3:49:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this legislation.

David Ball

Waialae-Kahala

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 3:56:33 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB2313, which will provide comprehensive public funding of elections. By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. So many people today are highly cynical about the political process and distrustful of politicians. We need to get the influence of big money out of politics!!

Mahalo for your consideration,

arcia Kemble

Makiki

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 3:57:25 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Personalized testimony is the most impactful way to influence lawmakers, please use this as a guide to draft your own words

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2313.

Too many people believe our political system is driven by money instead of community needs. Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of constantly fundraising.

Hawai‘i has already shown a commitment to clean elections, and past pilot programs demonstrated that public financing can work here.

Mahalo,

kimdonghyeon

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 4:04:08 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Collat	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We need to level the political playing field by removing money as a variable in campaigning for public office. Soliciting donations from monied interests takes candidates' time away from the important business of connecting with their constituents and makes them beholden to the monied interests that bankrolled their campaign and expect a return on that investment. Let's return politics to the people by publicly funding campaigns!

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 4:13:10 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie Ziemelis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2313.

Too many people believe our political system is driven by money instead of community needs. Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward, **like me!**

It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of constantly fundraising.

Let's make elections fair and get committed citizens to run. Mahalo!

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 4:13:22 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 5:12:58 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Kapono Nakamura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Jordan Kapono Nakamura and I'm a Honolulu resident testifying in strong support of this bill which establishes a system of adequate public financing for state and county public offices. Unlike Hawai'i's current public funding system, which is so prohibitive to candidates that aren't already well funded or connected to wealthy corporate donors that the public funding (especially given the low spending cap) is increasingly refused out of necessity, New York City's far higher 8-1 public funding makes it possible for much more fair representation by allowing candidates who do not have access to large amounts of money to forecast and initiate viable campaigns, and was instrumental in the recent election of their latest Mayor who saw the highest voter turnout in decades. This showcases the affordability of running a campaign's direct relation to increased civic engagement, and how increased public funding creates a much more accurate and fair landscape of candidates who actually resemble their districts and persuade voters to participate in Hawai'i's democratic process. Mahalo for your consideration and kokua for the people and future of Hawai'i.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 5:37:01 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eric Micha'el Leventhal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings and aloha. I'm writing today in support of SB2313. As you know, this bill establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for candidates seeking state and county elected offices in Hawaii, in order to reduce reliance on private donations and the appearance of undue influence from special interests.

Mahalo for supporting this initiative to restore integrity to our political system!

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 6:44:16 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Stover	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:05:55 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Klyman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support legislative actions that fund Hawaii elections in ways eliminate corporate contributions in exchange for payback expectations. This bill is a step in that directions even though it is only voluntary on the candidates willingness to comply. This will help the less wealthy candidates, but will have little effect on well financed and corporate backed candidates that choose not to abide with the public funding guidelines.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:10:00 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruta Jordans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:15:16 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Van Horne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2313.

Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of constantly fundraising.



To: The Senate Committee on Judiciary (JDC)
From: Sherry Pollack, Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Friday, February 6, 2026, 9am

In strong support of SB2313

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the JDC Committee,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org is in **strong support of SB2313** that establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State.

SB2313 will help restore the people's trust in government. Considering the convictions of Senator J. Kalani English and Representative Ty Cullen for cash bribes, it is clear that the legislature must do everything in its power to remove the influence that money has on our politics, including reforms like public financing. Public financing of elections is one of the most important ways to free our state political system from undue influence from corporations, businesses, and special interest groups. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program.

Public financing will make campaigning easier. No one likes asking individuals for large sums of money. Public financing will free candidates from fundraisers and countless phone calls. Reducing or even eliminating candidates' reliance on wealthy donors and the need to perpetually fundraise frees candidates and officials to spend more time with their constituents and to focus on the most pressing issues of their community, such as the impacts from the growing climate crisis. It also promotes public trust in officials and in government.

SB2313 would provide participating candidates with competitive amounts of funding they need to run an effective campaign. This system worked very well for Hawaii County Council races in 2010 and 2012, and currently works very well statewide in places like Connecticut and Maine.

Please take this opportunity to get money out of politics. Pass SB2313.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of this important legislation.

Sherry Pollack
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:55:10 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslee Cook	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 2313, which would strengthen Hawaii's public campaign financing system and help reduce the influence of money in our elections.

Hawai'i's political system is broken. The heavy reliance on campaign contributions from wealthy donors and special interests has led to a system where 2 in 3 people believe elected officials are more focused on the interests of their donors than the needs of their communities. As a result, good policies are often blocked while harmful ones move forward. This dynamic erodes public trust and encourages corruption. SB 51 is a critical step toward fixing this broken system by allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without being dependent on special interest money.

By providing full public financing for qualified candidates, SB 2313 will break the link between private money and electoral success. This will create a fairer and more honest system where elected officials are accountable to their constituents rather than big donors. Importantly, similar programs in other states show that public financing does not lead to higher incumbent turnover or drastic shifts in political makeup, but it does change who holds influence in government—ensuring that everyday people, not just the wealthy few, have a voice.

Public financing is both popular and cost-effective. Three out of four voters support a clean elections program. States like Connecticut and Maine have successfully run similar programs for decades, and Hawai'i County piloted a version in 2010 and 2012. Even if Hawai'i saw higher participation rates than any other state, estimates show the cost would be less than \$10 million per year—just 0.05% of the state budget. That's under \$7 per resident or less than \$1 per tourist—a small price to pay for a more transparent, accountable government.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass SB 2313. This bill will restore trust in our democracy, empower candidates to focus on their communities rather than fundraising, and ensure that our government truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

Thank you for listening to this constituent who represents 50 other voting residents of this state.

Respectfully,

Leslee Cook

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:01:44 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kencho Gurung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2313.

Too many people believe our political system is driven by money instead of community needs. Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of constantly fundraising.

Hawai‘i has already shown a commitment to clean elections, and past pilot programs demonstrated that public financing can work here.

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:20:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2313.

This legislation is long overdue to ensure politicians are not influenced toward supporting or rejecting policies, bills, etc. because by doing so they support the desires of their largest campaign donors. I like to feel I can trust decisions are being made for the greater good of the society and not for only a selective few with money to buy votes. Thank you for introducing a bill to minimize what might be perceived as, or actually might be, donor influence in politics.

Too many people believe our political system is driven by money instead of community needs. Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of constantly fundraising.

Hawai‘i has already shown a commitment to clean elections, and past pilot programs demonstrated that public financing can work here.

Mahalo,

Beth Anderson

Kailua

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 10:03:48 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
LorrieAnn Santos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2313.

Too many people believe our political system is driven by money instead of community needs. Public financing is a proven way to reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests, while giving everyday people a real voice in our elections.

By allowing candidates to run competitive campaigns without relying on private donations, this bill helps level the playing field and encourages more community-focused leaders to step forward. It also allows elected officials to spend more time listening to constituents and working on solutions, instead of fundraising and cowtowing to special interest donors.

Hawai'i has already shown a commitment to clean elections, and past pilot program demonstrated that public financing can work here.

Private fundraising in the US elections corrupts the incentives of elected officials, advantages entrenched elites, and harms electoral competition. Public funding of elections would level the electoral playing field and better align the interests of elected officials and citizens.

The best empirical evidence suggests that public-funding programs promote candidate entry and electoral competition.

'O wau iho no,

Lorrie Ann Santos, Kane'ohe, O'ahu

SB-2313

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 10:08:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Citizens United unleashed large amounts of anonymous money into our elections. An effective way to counter this malign influence is to use public money to level the field.

Please support SB2313 to reduce the effect of secret money in our elections.

Mahalo,

Kathy Shimata