



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMMENDMENTS FOR SENATE BILL 2528 SD1
RELATING TO PARTIAL PUBLIC FINANCING OF ELECTIONS

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Ho‘okolokolo a me ke Kuleana Hawai‘i
(House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs)
Ke Kapikala o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 18, 2026

2:00PM

Lumi 325

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS SB2528 SD1**, which increases the amount of public funds available to candidates for public office who participate in the State’s Partial Public Financing program and increases participating candidates’ expenditure limits.

OHA supports public financing as a good government measure, as it makes the public financing program a more viable option for candidates by increasing available funding. Publicly financed campaigns make elections more accessible, open, and fair.

However, OHA objects to the continued disparity with which it is treated under the Partial Public Financing law. HRS § 11-423(d) sets the campaign expenditure limits for candidates receiving public financing using a formula that multiplies the “number of voters in the last preceding general election registered to vote” in the relevant voting district by a specific dollar amount. OHA Trustees are the only candidates who run Statewide election campaigns that are not explicitly listed in this subpart, and thus default to the lowest multiplier category with “other offices,” or \$0.20 (20 cents). As a point of comparison, the Lieutenant Governor, who also runs a Statewide campaign, has a dollar multiplier of \$1.40. As a result, current expenditure limits for OHA candidates are approximately \$172,174, while expenditure limits for the Lieutenant Governor are \$1,205,215.

The statewide OHA Trustee races receive comparable votes to the Lieutenant Governor races. In the 2024 General Election, the OHA Moloka'i-Lāna'i race received 287,216 votes, the Kaua'i race received 284,571 votes, and the OHA At-Large race received 325,858 votes. In the 2022 Primary Election, the Democrat Lieutenant Governor's race received a total of 242,350 votes, and the Republican Lieutenant Governor's race received 66,830 votes.

The total expenditure limits in HRS § 11-423(d) in turn affect the amount of public financing available to a candidate under HRS § 11-425, which sets public funding as a percentage of the total expenditure limits. While OHA appreciates that this measure would increase the maximum amount of public financing available to OHA candidates, this is still far below what comparable office holders would receive.

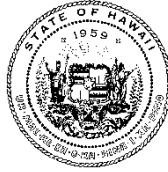
As a matter of fairness and equity, OHA respectfully offers the following amendment to page 2, line 19:

"(3) For the office of Trustee for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs-- \$1.68;"

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS SB2528 SD1 with AMENDMENTS.**

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

KRISTIN E. IZUMI-NITAO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PHONE: (808) 586-0285
FAX: (808) 586-0288
WWW.HAWAII.GOV/CAMPAIGN

STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

March 17, 2026

TO: The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

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

SUBJECT: **Testimony on S.B. No. 2528, S.D.1, Relating to Partial Public Financing of Elections.**
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. The Campaign Spending Commission (“Commission”) supports this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to enhance Hawaii’s partial public financing program by increasing the maximum amount of public funds available for all offices to qualified candidates. It also makes a downward adjustment of the minimum qualifying contributions for certain offices because it appears that publicly financed candidates for those offices were having a difficult time raising the minimum qualifying contributions. Respectfully, the Commission is submitting this bill as an attempt to boost an existing program that is mandated by the State Constitution which has not changed and whose maximum dollar amounts have not changed since 1995.

This bill amends Hawaii Revised Statutes (“HRS”) sections as follows:

- 1) Increases the expenditure limits for elected offices by 20%,
- 2) HRS §11-425 by increasing the maximum amount of public funds available for all office of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Mayor of City and County of Honolulu or County of Hawaii from 10% to 20% and for a candidate for the office of State

Senator, State Representative, County Council Member, or prosecuting attorney from 15% to 25%. The bill also increases the maximum amount available for candidates for Mayor of the counties of Kauai and Maui by from 10% to 25% by moving those offices from subsection (a) to subsection (b) and increasing the maximum amount of public funds available for a candidate for trustee of OHA from \$1,500 for the election period to 7.5% of the expenditure limit for each election established in HRS §11-423(d).

- 3) HRS §11-429(a) by increasing the amount of qualifying contributions required for a candidate for trustee of OHA from more than \$1,500 in the aggregate to more than \$5,500 in the aggregate.
- 4) HRS §11-429(a) by reducing the minimum amounts of qualifying contributions for the office of prosecuting attorney for the city and county of Honolulu (from \$30,000 to \$25,000), and counties of Hawaii (from \$10,000 to \$5,000) and Kauai (from \$5,000 to \$3,000), and for the office of county council for the county of Maui (from \$5,000 to \$4,000) thereby making it easier for candidates to qualify.
- 5) HRS §11-429(b) by increasing matching fund payments from \$1 for each \$1 of qualifying contributions in excess of the minimum qualifying contribution amounts to \$4 for each \$1 of excess qualifying contributions.

For illustration, here is a comparison of the present partial public funding program in contrast to the enhanced partial public funding program set forth in this bill. For a qualified Senate candidate running opposed in District 1 in the 2026 election, the maximum amount of public funds available is \$7,269 in the primary election and another \$7,269 in the general election. In contrast, under this bill, this same candidate would receive \$14,537 in the primary election and another \$14,537 in the general election. For a qualified House candidate running opposed in District 1 in the 2026 election, the maximum amount of public funds available is \$3,562 in the primary election and another \$3,562 in the general election. In contrast, under this bill, this same candidate would receive \$7,124 in the primary election and \$7,124 in the general election.

For a qualified candidate running opposed for Kauai Mayor in the 2026 election, the maximum amount of public funds available is \$9,635 in the primary election and another \$9,635 in the general election. In contrast, under this bill, this same candidate would receive \$28,906 in the primary election and \$28,906 in the general election. For a qualified candidate running opposed for Maui Mayor in the 2026 election, the maximum amount of public funds available is \$23,002 in the primary election and another \$23,002 in the general election. In contrast, under this bill, this same candidate would receive \$69,005 in the primary election and \$69,005 in the general election. Lastly, for a qualified OHA candidate running opposed in the 2026 election, the maximum amount of public funds available is \$1,500 for the election period. In contrast,

under this bill, this same candidate would receive \$15,496 in the primary election and \$15,496 in the general election.

Under the bill, assuming one qualified candidate for each elective office¹ in the state, the maximum amount of public financing available would be \$2,636,526 in the 2026 primary election and another \$2,636,526 in the 2026 general election. As of June 30, 2025, the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund (“HECF”) balance was \$2,412,282.94. A general fund appropriation into the HECF is necessary if this bill is passed.

The Commission requests that this committee pass this bill.

¹ The Commission is aware that not all elective offices appear on the ballot in an election year.



Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Chair David Tarnas, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe
Wednesday, March 18 2 pm
Room 325 and RELATING TO PARTIAL PUBLIC FINANCING OF ELECTIONS OF BILL

TESTIMONY

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

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members: **The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports SB2528 SD1 which would restore the partial public financing program to its former relevance by increasing the expenditure limit and the amount of partial public campaign financing available for all state and county elective offices, adjusting the minimum amount of qualifying contributions certain candidates must receive to participate in the program, and increasing the matching fund payments for excess qualifying contributions. It also appropriates funds for the program.** We also offer a suggestion for your consideration.

The League of Women Voters of the US believes that methods of financing political campaigns should enable candidates to compete equitably for public office and ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public. Although a comprehensive public funding program, such as proposed by SB2313, would be the best way to meet these goals, the enhancement to Hawaii's Partial Public Funding Program (PPFP) proposed by SB2528 and **especially by SB2528 SD1** offers an important step to move toward those goals.

The amount available through the PPFP to publicly funded candidates has not changed in over two decades. Inflation in media prices, postage, labor costs etc. make the current amounts far less than competitive. The current amounts available to qualified candidates for public funding are far below the average amounts spent by privately funded candidates who won election to the same office. Not surprisingly, the number of candidates using the PPFP has decreased every year since at least 2016. The increases proposed in SB2528 SD1 would make the PPFP truly a viable option for candidates seeking election.

In addition, SB2528 SD1 cuts the number of qualifying contributions required to access public funding for several offices, making the program easier to access.

Finally, recognizing the increased costs for these changes, and for the intended increase in the number of qualifying candidates, SB2528 SD1 provides for increased funding for Hawaii election campaign fund (HECF). This is even more important than it might seem because under the definition of the PFPF, if the HECF runs out of money before all qualified candidates have received the anticipated payments, the program will stop making the payments, thus eroding both candidates' trust and willingness to use the program and citizens' appreciation of the PFPF.

Suggestion: Recognizing the CSC staff demands of preparing for, implementing and monitoring these changes, and to the intended increase in the number of candidates initiating use of the PFPF, we suggest funding an added staff .5 FTE position to the CSC, which is already overloaded with important requirements for its small staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



MARCH 18, 2026

SENATE BILL 2528 SD1

CURRENT REFERRAL: JHA

808-679-7454
kris@imuaalliance.org
www.imuaalliance.org
@imuaalliance

Kris Coffield,
President

David Negaard,
Director

Mireille Ellsworth,
Director

Justin Salisbury,
Director

Eileen Roco,
Director

Beatrice DeRego,
Director

Corey Rosenlee,
Director

Amy Zhao,
*Policy and Partnerships
Strategist*

POSITION: SUPPORT

Imua Alliance supports SB 2528 SD1, relating to partial public financing of elections, which increases the expenditure limit and the amount of partial public campaign financing available for all elective offices; adjusts the minimum amount of qualifying contributions certain candidates must receive to participate in the program; and increases the matching fund payments for excess qualifying contributions.

Imua Alliance is a Hawai'i-based organization dedicated to ending all forms of exploitation, including corporate abuse of our democracy. Government should work for the public interest, not special interests.

Hawai'i has had partial public campaign financing in place for decades, rooted in the 1978 Constitutional Convention's direction to establish a campaign fund for partial public financing. Few candidates participate, however, because the current partial funding model fails to provide sufficient resources to run competitive campaigns.

Hawai'i's electoral environment is comparatively uncompetitive. An average of about 90% of incumbents were reelected over the past decade and challengers face structural disadvantages in establishing fundraising networks and building name recognition. Strengthening the match and availability of public funds, as this bill proposes, helps give participating candidates a realistic chance to keep pace with private financing.

Public financing programs are also associated with broader and more diverse participation in democracy, particularly when they amplify small contributions. For example, analysis of New York City's matching system found it increased both the number and diversity of residents who participate as donors, shifting candidate incentives toward engaging everyday constituents instead of concentrating time on large donors. Importantly for Hawai'i, this policy conversation is not abstract:

Hawai'i has confronted repeated corruption scandals in recent years, and a UHERO policy brief explicitly situates public campaign financing as one reform to reduce reliance on wealthy donors and corporate interests.

Buttressing public campaign financing also has indirect, but important benefits for Hawai'i's clean economy and climate action goals. Hawai'i has some of the most ambitious climate targets in the nation—codifying 50% greenhouse gas reductions by 2030 and a carbon-neutral economy by 2045—but achieving these goals depends on responsive, accountable governance, and public trust in policy decisions that affect energy, transportation, land use, and economic incentives.

Research on public financing systems finds that when candidates rely less on large special-interest money and more on broad public support, they are encouraged to engage more directly with voters and prioritize community-wide concerns over narrow donor agendas, including long-term challenges like climate resilience and clean energy transitions.

Reinforced public financing can help ensure that elected leaders are empowered to advance policies—such as investments in renewable energy, equitable EV infrastructure, and climate adaptation funding—that reflect broad public support rather than industry influence. By making Hawai'i's democratic process more transparent and competitive, This bill supports governance that is better aligned with the state's clean economy and climate commitments.

Strengthening partial public financing is a pragmatic democracy reform: it can make elections more competitive, expand the role of small donors, and reduce candidates' dependency on narrow funding networks, while building on recent good government reforms to diminish the corrupting role of corporate money in local politics.

With aloha,

Kris Coffield

President, Imua Alliance



March 18, 2026

TESTIMONY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUBS
To the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
In Support of

SB2528 SD1 – RELATING TO PARTIAL PUBLIC FINANCING OF ELECTIONS

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

The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs **supports** SB2528 Relating to Partial Public Financing of Elections, increases the expenditure limit and the amount of funds available to candidates who qualify for the partial public financing program, and appropriates funds to implement the program. These amendments will encourage more community members to utilize public financing and seek elected office to represent the communities in which they live.

The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs adopted Resolution 2025-34, “URGING THE HAWAI‘I STATE LEGISLATURE TO ENSURE PARITY IN PUBLIC FUNDING FOR OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS CANDIDATES” at our 2025 convention in Keauhou, Hawai‘i. This resolution recognizes that candidates for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Trustee positions must campaign statewide to a significantly larger electorate than candidates for district-based offices, while also educating the public about the unique constitutional role of OHA.

The increases proposed within SB2528 represent meaningful progress in strengthening the partial public financing program. We respectfully ask the committee to consider whether the maximum amount of partial public financing for candidates for Office of Hawaiian Affairs Trustee could be increased to twenty-five percent. This adjustment would achieve parity for OHA Trustee candidates with the financing limits afforded by SB2528 to candidates for state senator, state representative, or mayor of the counties of Kaua‘i or Maui. Such an increase would better reflect the statewide electorate for OHA Trustee candidates.

Founded by Prince Kūhiō in 1918, the Hawaiian Civic Club movement is the oldest Native Hawaiian community-based advocacy movement. The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs is a not-for-profit organization that is a confederation of 61 individual and autonomous Hawaiian Civic Clubs and 3,000 members located across Hawai‘i and across the continental United States.

We appreciate your favorable consideration of this bill.

ASSOCIATION OF HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUBS

A RESOLUTION

NO. 2025 - 34

URGING THE HAWAI‘I STATE LEGISLATURE TO ENSURE PARITY IN PUBLIC FUNDING FOR OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS CANDIDATES

WHEREAS, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) was established by the will of the people of Hawai‘i in 1978 as a constitutional expression of self-determination and kuleana to uplift the conditions of Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, OHA Trustees are entrusted with sacred kuleana to advocate for the lāhui and steward resources in the spirit of mālama ‘āina, mālama kanaka, and ‘ike kūpuna; and

WHEREAS, although OHA is a Native Hawaiian-serving institution, its Trustees are elected through statewide elections open to all registered voters, not exclusively by or for those of Native Hawaiian descent; and

WHEREAS, in contrast, members of the Hawai‘i State Senate and House of Representatives are elected only by voters within their respective senate or house districts, representing significantly smaller electorates; and

WHEREAS, voter statistics from the Hawai‘i State Office of Elections demonstrate the significantly larger electorate OHA candidates must reach, with 287,216 voters casting ballots in the OHA Moloka‘i-Lāna‘i race, 284,571 in the OHA Kaua‘i race, and 325,858 in the OHA At-Large race, in contrast to only 153,543 voters across 8 Senate districts (an average of 19,182 voters per Senate race), and 329,002 voters across 35 House races (an average of just 9,685 voters per House district); and

WHEREAS, unlike candidates for other offices with widely understood functions, OHA candidates must also invest limited campaign resources in educating the general public on the purpose, powers, and significance of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs — an institution unique in its constitutional mandate to serve Native Hawaiians and steward trust resources; and

WHEREAS, despite the broader electoral base required to be reached by OHA candidates, current public campaign financing under Hawai‘i’s partial public funding program provides only \$1,500 for OHA candidates, equal to or less than the funding for district-based candidates (State Representatives receive up to \$1,500; State Senators up to \$2,000); and

WHEREAS, recent legislation such as House Bill 370, HD1 SD1 (2025), Relating to Partial Public Financing of Elections, proposes substantial increases in public funding for legislative and executive offices — up to \$40,000 for State Senators and \$20,000 for State Representatives — while allocating only \$5,000 for OHA Trustees, despite their obligation to campaign statewide; and

WHEREAS, the bills introduced this year at the Hawaii State Legislature concerning partial public financing of elections did not move out of conference committee, it is anticipated that similar bills will be introduced at the next legislative session in 2026; and

WHEREAS, the values of pono and ho‘okipa compel us to ensure fair, equitable, and inclusive electoral processes so that all who carry the kuleana of leadership — especially within Native Hawaiian institutions — have the means to reach and educate the broader community; and

WHEREAS, the work that OHA Trustees do has far-reaching impacts not only on Native Hawaiians, but on the community at large; and

WHEREAS, the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs has long upheld the values of mālama ‘āina, mālama lāhui, kia‘i kūpuna, and ho‘oulu lāhui, and continues to advocate for structures that empower Native Hawaiian voice, governance, and leadership.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs at its 66th Annual Convention in Keauhou, Hawai‘i, in the malama of Welehu and the rising of Mōhalu, this 1st day of November 2025, urging the Hawai‘i State Legislature to ensure parity in public funding for Office of Hawaiian Affairs Candidates; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Association urges the Hawai‘i State Campaign Spending Commission to collaborate with the Legislature to adopt equitable public financing formulas that recognize the broader voter base of OHA candidates and fund their campaigns at a level equal to or greater than those of State Senators; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission consult with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Native Hawaiian advocacy organizations to create fair and culturally appropriate funding guidelines that empower candidates to engage effectively in statewide campaigns and voter education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Hawaii State Campaign Spending Committee, all elected members of the Hawai‘i State Legislature, as well as the Governor of the State of Hawai‘i, President of the State Senate, Speaker of the State House of Representatives, Chair of the State Senate subject matter committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair of the State House subject matter committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and all County Mayors.



The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted in the malama of Welehu and the rising of Mōhalu, on the 1st day of November 2025, at the 66th Annual Convention of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs in Keauhou, Hawai'i.

DreanaLee Kalili

DreanaLee Kalili, President



**Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports SB2528 SD1
Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 2:00 PM | Conference Room 325 & Videoconference**

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

HAPA supports SB2528 SD1, which updates and strengthens Hawai'i's partial public financing program for elections.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program allows candidates who agree to limit their campaign spending to receive matching public funds when they raise a qualifying threshold of small donations from individual residents. It is one of the most important tools we have for keeping our elections accessible to candidates who aren't backed by wealthy donors or special interests. The problem is that the program hasn't been meaningfully updated since 1995. In the thirty years since, the cost of running a campaign has grown substantially while the program's funding levels have stayed flat. SB2528 SD1 brings the program into the present.

The bill increases expenditure limits across all offices to reflect inflation, raises the maximum amount of public funds available to candidates, and significantly strengthens the matching fund payment from \$1 for every \$1 of excess qualifying contributions to \$4 for every \$1. That last change is particularly meaningful. A 4-to-1 match makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive with large-donor fundraising in a way the current 1-to-1 match simply cannot.

The bill also adjusts minimum qualifying contribution thresholds for certain offices, making it somewhat easier for candidates in smaller districts and races to qualify for the program.

Public financing programs work. They help candidates who are accountable to their communities rather than their donors. They lower the barrier to entry for people who want to serve but can't compete in a big-money fundraising environment. And they give voters more confidence that their elected officials are working for them.

SB2528 SD1 makes Hawai'i's program meaningful again. HAPA respectfully urges this committee to pass it.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is positioned above the typed name.

Anne Frederick, Executive Director
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:16:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, as Co chair of the Green Party of Hawai'i, and on behalf of our members, we are in Very Strong Support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Green Party of Hawai'i urges you to pass SB2528 SD1.

Mahalo,

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauilo

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:52:43 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

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. Increasing public financing can help restore public trust in our political system.

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

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

I am in strong support of SB2528.

This measure reflects the economic realities of today and encourages more candidates to participate in the program. It is important to increase the expenditure cap and adjusting matching funds.

Public financing encourages candidates without established backing, and allows campaigns to focus on reaching out to voters instead of donors.

Mahalo,

Keith Neal
Waimea

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 10:56:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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 writing in **support of SB2528**, which makes important incremental improvements to Hawai‘i's partial public financing program by increasing expenditure limits, adjusting qualifying contribution requirements, and increasing matching fund payments. However, I want to be clear that **I strongly prefer SB2313**, which establishes a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking state and county offices, to begin with the 2028 general election.

The Current System Is Failing—SB2528 Offers Modest But Necessary Fixes

The state Campaign Spending Commission has documented a troubling trend: candidates are requesting public funding at record-low levels. In the 2024 election cycle, the commission distributed just over \$52,000 to only 10 candidates, compared to nearly \$146,000 in 2012 and \$202,000 in 2016. Tony Baldomero, the commission's associate director, has acknowledged that candidates report the current funding is "too little" and the expenditure limits are "too low."

SB2528 directly addresses these concerns by:

- Increasing partial public financing amounts for all elective offices.
- Adjusting qualifying contribution requirements to make the program more accessible.
- Increasing matching fund payments for excess qualifying contributions.
- Appropriating funds to support the program.

These are necessary and worthwhile improvements. The commission currently has just over \$2 million available for the 2026 election and is requesting a match from the Legislature. SB2528 would help ensure that funds are available and that the program is structured in a way that actually incentivizes participation.

Incremental Reform Is Not Enough—We Need Comprehensive Public Financing

While SB2528 addresses the symptoms of a broken system, **SB2313 addresses the cause**. The partial public financing model has been available since 1980, distributing roughly \$5 million to candidates over four decades. Yet participation remains abysmally low because the program is voluntary, underfunded, and structurally incapable of competing with private money in campaigns.

SB2313 would establish a **comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates** seeking election to state and county public offices in Hawai‘i, beginning with the 2028 general election. This is the kind of transformative reform that would actually reduce the influence of wealthy donors and special interests in our elections.

Unlike the current partial system, a comprehensive model would:

- Provide meaningful public funding sufficient to run competitive campaigns.
- Allow candidates to focus on voters rather than fundraisers.
- Reduce the perception—and reality—that elected officials are beholden to large donors.
- Encourage broader civic participation by democratizing access to the electoral process.

Comprehensive Public Financing Is the Gold Standard

States and localities that have adopted comprehensive public financing models have seen demonstrable improvements in the diversity of candidates running for office, the amount of time elected officials spend with constituents rather than donors, and public confidence in government.

By beginning with the 2028 general election, SB2313 provides ample time for the Campaign Spending Commission to develop rules, for candidates to understand the new system, and for the Legislature to appropriate necessary funds. The reporting requirements ensure transparency and accountability throughout implementation.

Both Bills Move Us Forward, But One Moves Us Much Further

I support SB2528 because it improves a program that, despite its flaws, has helped some candidates run for office without relying entirely on private money. The seven successful candidates who used public funding in 2024 would likely attest that the program "is working for me." But we should not settle for a program that works for only a handful of candidates each cycle.

SB2313 represents the kind of bold, structural reform that Hawai‘i needs to restore trust in our democratic processes. It recognizes that the problem is not just the *amount* of public funding available, but the entire *structure* of a system that forces candidates to choose between fundraising viability and public service.

Conclusion

I respectfully urge this Committee to **pass SB2528** as an immediate step toward improving candidate access to public funding. But I ask you to also **advance SB2313** as the more comprehensive, transformative solution that Hawai‘i voters deserve. Our democracy should not depend on the willingness of candidates to navigate an underfunded, underutilized partial financing system. It should be built on a foundation that ensures all qualified candidates can run for office based on their ideas and their connection to constituents—not their access to wealth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 12:06:08 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Justice, M.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representative Tarnas, Chair, Representative Poepoe, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

I am a resident of Kapolei and a member of the Invisible Hawai'i Statewide Network. I am writing to provide testimony in strong support of SB2528. The Bill aims to increase public funds that are available to candidates, increase the amount the state matches donations from 1:1 match to 2:1 match, and increase the expenditure limit for campaigns.

The bill is important because funding amounts and expenditure limits have remained unchanged since 1995. In that time, Hawai'i's cost of living has grown faster than the national average, impacting the true value of campaign funds. Increasing the match and updating the limits helps campaigns keep pace with rising expenses, such as printing, venue rentals, and advertising.

This bill is a significant step toward enabling more candidates to utilize this program and reducing the influence of big money in our elections.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Robert L. Justice, M.D.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 12:40:19 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brodie Lockard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 12:58:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aimee E McCullough	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am in strong support of SB2528.

By increasing the expenditure cap and adjusting matching funds to 2:1, this measure reflects the economic realities of today and encourages more candidates to participate in the program.

Public financing levels the playing field for candidates without establishment backing and allows campaigns to focus on reaching voters instead of donors.

This bill is a significant step toward enabling more candidates to utilize this program and reducing the influence of big money in our elections.

Thank you,

Aimee M

Indivisible Hawaii

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 5:16:00 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support public financing of campaign expenses.

I'm a member of Indivisible Hawaii.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 6:42:16 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeannine Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB2528.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 7:10:06 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee,

As the former chair of the Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct (CISC), I submit this testimony in support of SB2528 RELATING TO PARTIAL PUBLIC FUNDING OF ELECTIONS.

The CISC found "that public funded elections can 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SB 2528, SD1 - RELATING TO PARTIAL PUBLIC FINANCING OF ELECTIONS.

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, Rep. Cochran of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews. I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui and an attorney licensed for over 25 years. I write to you today in **strong support of SB 2528, SD1**, Relating to Partial Public Financing of Elections, which increases the expenditure limit and the amount of partial public campaign financing available for all elective offices, adjusts the minimum amount of qualifying contributions certain candidates must receive to participate in the program, increases the matching fund payments for excess qualifying contributions, and appropriates funds for the program.

As a resident of Maui, I believe it is time to get money out of our politics. Here on Maui, large global corporations and outside investors and developers have influenced our policies in a way that harms our environment, our communities, and our sense of trust in government. Methods of financing political campaigns should enable candidates to compete equitably for public office and ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public.

Comprehensive public funding programs, such as proposed by SB2313, SD1, are the best way to meet these goals, but the enhancement to Hawaii's Partial Public Funding Program (PPFP) proposed by SB 2528, SD1 is an important step toward those goals. The money available to candidates through the PPFP has not changed in over twenty years. Over that time, increases in media prices, postage, and labor costs have made the current amounts inadequate, far below amounts spent by privately funded candidates who won election to the same office. As a result of the disparity, the number of candidates using PPFP continues to decrease. The increases proposed in SB 2528, SD1 are an improvement and SB 2528, SD1 also cuts the number of qualifying contributions required to access public funding for several offices, making the program easier to access.

Senate Bill 2528, SD1 also provides for increased funding for Hawaii election campaign fund (HECF). This is important because under the definition of the PPFP, if the HECF runs out of money before all qualified candidates have received anticipated payments, the program will stop making payments. This erodes candidates' trust in and their willingness to use the program. It is time to help level the playing field so that the candidate best qualified to serve their constituents, not just the one most able to fundraise from wealthy donors, are able to be elected to office. **I respectfully request your vote in support of SB 2528, SD1.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony,

Christine Andrews, JD

Wailuku, Maui

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:11:45 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Thank you for accepting my testimony in support of partial public financing of elections as delineated in SB2528.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:14:11 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 11:41:28 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

I am in strong support of SB2471. This bill clarifies that the powers granted to artificial persons do not include spending money or anything of value to influence elections or ballot measures. This bill does not restrict any individual's right to speak, organize, or participate in democracy. It simply defines the limits of what state-created entities may do as entities.

Money has had a corrosive effect on our politics and our democracy. Despite the ludicrous assertions of *Citizens United*, corporations are--by definition--NOT people. The concept of corporations (separating business entities from the people who found them) has been a critical factor in promoting entrepreneurship by reducing personal liability risk. Giving that business entity a political voice perverts the entire premise of corporations and skews the power base of our democracy away from the people and toward the monied interests. And let's be clear-eyed--that was the entire point.

Let's fix this perversion of our democracy. SB2471 helps restore clarity, accountability, and confidence in our democratic system.

Mahalo,

Michael Collat, Honolulu

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 12:58:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

I am in strong support of SB2528.

By increasing the expenditure cap and adjusting matching funds to 2:1, this measure reflects the economic realities of today and encourages more candidates to participate in the program.

Public financing levels the playing field for candidates without establishment backing and allows campaigns to focus on reaching voters instead of donors.

This bill is a significant step toward enabling more candidates to utilize this program and reducing the influence of big money in our elections.

Mahalo,

Gail Morrison

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 1:45:03 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, I am testifying in support of SB2528. I believe we should do what we can to support public financing of our elections. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 2:08:12 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kehaulani Coleman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 3:15:03 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lindsay Roth	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai‘i’s partial public financing program is a strong idea that has simply not kept pace with the realities of modern campaigns. While the cost of running for office has increased significantly over the past three decades, the program’s funding levels have remained largely unchanged since the mid-1990s. As a result, the program has become far less effective for the candidates it was intended to support.

SB2528 SD1 modernizes the program by updating expenditure limits, increasing the amount of available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. Increasing the matching rate is particularly important because it strengthens the impact of small-dollar donations. When candidates can rely on broad community support rather than large donors to run competitive campaigns, it helps create a more accessible and representative democratic process.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB2528 SD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Lindsay Roth, LCSW
Kailua-Kona, HI

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 3:25:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pamela Elders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1.

Mahalo,

Pamela Elders

Laupahoehoe HI 96764

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 6:30:43 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee,

I urge you to support SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1 to boost the democratic process.

Thank you

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SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 7:22:01 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1.

Mahalo,

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:54:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nathaniel Ulm	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of SB2528. Public financing of campaigns is a proven way to level the playing field for people who would not otherwise be able to run for office due to money constraints. Qualified candidates who do not come from wealthy connections or seeking large donors should be able to participate more easily in getting their platform and candidacy in front of voters. Those matching funds should be increased.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:16:55 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Lu Kelley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in strong support of SB2528 SD1.

The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly. Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea but stuck for the past thirty years. That means this program becomes less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

This bill makes important corrections.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1.

Thank you.

Mary Lu Kelley, Koloa

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:20:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. We have to get money out of the equation! However, all costs have gone up significantly so that the public funding is negligible.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. **When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.**

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:27:47 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse Hutchison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you!

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:56:40 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1.

Mahalo,

kimdonghyeon

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 12:25:44 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm submitting testimony in support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1.

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 3:56:20 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing to ask that you support SB2528 SD1 which updates expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. This would make small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 4:22:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danelle Guion	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1.

Mahalo!

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 8:12:04 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Galloway	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support those with community support instead of big-donor backing!

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 9:19:13 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hello Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee,

I'm submitting testimony in support of SB2528 SD1.

Hawai'i's partial public financing program is a good idea that has been stuck in 1995 for thirty years. The cost of running a campaign has gone up significantly while the program's funding levels haven't kept pace. That means it's become less and less useful for the candidates it was designed to help.

SB2528 SD1 fixes that by updating expenditure limits, increasing available public funds, and raising the matching rate to 4-to-1. That last change especially makes small-dollar fundraising genuinely competitive. When candidates can win with community support instead of big-donor backing, everyone benefits.

Please pass SB2528 SD1.

Me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Sierra Club of Hawai'i Member

Hawai'i Workers Center Board Member

Clean Elections Hawai'i Member

Honolulu Tenants Union Member

350 Hawai'i Member

Carbon Cashback Hawai'i Member

Hawai'i Tax Fairness Coalition Member

SB-2528-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 12:00:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aria Juliet Castillo	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

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

I care deeply about public financing because I’ve seen firsthand how difficult it can be for candidates to run viable campaigns without access to wealthy networks—especially those who have committed to not participating in Hawai‘i’s pay-to-play culture and say no to corporate money.

Hawai‘i’s partial public financing program is one of the most important tools we have to make our elections more accessible, ensure that everyday people can run and win, and keep elected officials accountable to the public—not a small group of wealthy donors.

SB2528 SD1 is a long-overdue update to this program. The cost of running a campaign has increased significantly, while the structure of the program has remained largely unchanged.

Increasing expenditure limits, raising the amount of public funds available, and moving to a 4-to-1 matching system are all critical improvements. That 4-to-1 match, in particular, has the potential to make small-dollar fundraising truly competitive with large-donor fundraising.

I also want to respectfully suggest an amendment to improve how the program functions in practice.

Currently, candidates receive separate spending limits for the primary and the general election. But many candidates only face one truly competitive race—either in the primary or the general. Allowing candidates the option to allocate up to 75% of their total allocation and spending limit to either election would better reflect that reality.

Importantly, this change does not increase the total amount of public funding a candidate can receive or increase overall program costs. It simply provides flexibility so candidates can use funds where they are most needed, depending on when their competitive race occurs.

This adjustment would make the program more practical and usable—supporting candidates at the moment it matters most.

Public financing works. It lowers barriers, reduces reliance on large donors, and helps rebuild trust in our democracy. SB2528 SD1 is a major step forward, and with this amendment, it can be even more effective.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify, and I respectfully urge your support.

Aria Juliet Castillo

HD51