



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 2603, RELATING TO THE HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

DATE: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 **TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 224

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Ian Robertson, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Lee and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments regarding this bill.

The stated purposes of this bill are to (1) designate the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra (HSO) the "Hawaii State Symphony Orchestra"; (2) exempt the HSO from the qualifying standards in chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS); (3) establish reporting requirements for the HSO on its use of state funds; and (4) appropriate general revenues to the HSO for its operating costs for fiscal year 2026-2027.

A Statement Declaring the Public Purpose of the HSO Should be Added to Section 1 of the Bill

Article VII, section 4, of the Hawaii Constitution provides in part: "No tax shall be levied or appropriation of public money or property made, nor shall the public credit be used, directly or indirectly, except for a public purpose."

Accordingly, to clarify the Legislature's determination that this bill is for a public purpose, we respectfully suggest that an explicit statement of public purpose be inserted in section 1. The Committee may wish to consider the following wording, which was previously used in S.B. No. 441, S.D. 1, H.D. 1:

The legislature finds that the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra has served and continues to serve a public purpose through free performances at parks and outdoor community centers, education concerts, showcasing young musicians, and performing side-by-side with the Hawaii Youth Symphony, as well as providing free admission for public school faculty, staff, and students to attend

shows through department of education programs. These community program initiatives exemplify the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra's service and dedication to the public. The legislature concludes that exempting appropriations of state general revenues to the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra from the requirements of chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes, complies with the public purpose requirement of article VII, section 4, of the Hawaii State Constitution.

We further note that the Legislature in Act 382, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 1987, established the Honolulu Symphony Endowment Fund to provide financial support to the Honolulu Symphony. The legislative history of Act 382 stated that the "Honolulu Symphony is a major cultural resource of Hawaii and is deserving of the support provided in this bill." Senate Standing Committee Report No. 802 (1987).

In Act 258, SLH 1988, the name of the Honolulu Symphony Endowment Fund was changed to the State of Hawaii Endowment Fund. Subsequently, in Act 175, SLH 1995, the Legislature, in section 1 of the Act, noted that the purpose of the Act "is to clarify the legislative intent that the income and capital gains of the State of Hawaii endowment fund are to be used for the production of music by an Oahu-based symphony orchestra." We understand that such moneys have been transferred to the HSO "for the production of music by an Oahu-based symphony orchestra."

Also, we note that the legislative history of Act 175 states that "the legislative intent to establish the endowment was to support a live symphonic orchestra for the residents in Hawaii." Conference Committee Report No. 103 (1995). Consequently, we believe that the HSO serves a public purpose.

To facilitate the public's understanding of the Legislature's intent, we respectfully suggest that language be inserted into section 1 of the bill describing the historical support that the HSO has received from the State of Hawaii Endowment Fund, and the public benefits that have accrued from its existence.

Chapter 42F, HRS, Exemptions for Nonprofits Other than the HSO are Constitutionally Problematic

We note that granting chapter 42F, HRS, exemptions to nonprofits other than the HSO is likely to violate article VII, section 4, of the Hawaii Constitution, which provides in part: "No grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law." This is because such nonprofits do not share the same

State-established heritage as the HSO. The HSO's unique historical connection to the State gives it a special status that other organizations cannot claim, making exemptions for those other entities constitutionally problematic.

We respectfully ask the Committee to consider our comments.



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Honolulu, HI 96813

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Keith A. Regan

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**Testimony of KAREN EWALD, Executive Director
State Foundation on Culture and the Arts**

**Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026
Conference Room 224 at 1:00PM**

**SENATE BILL 2603
RELATING TO
THE HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Dear Chair Lee and members of the Committee,

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA), is dedicated to the promotion, perpetuation, and preservation of culture and the arts in Hawai'i.

SFCA SUPPORTS S.B. 2603 which Designates the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra. Requires annual reports to the Legislature. Appropriates moneys.

Public funding plays a crucial role in sustaining and enriching music performances, especially in ways that the private market alone often cannot.

Public investment also has clear economic and social benefits. Music performances generate local employment, attract tourism, and contribute to lively public spaces. Beyond economics, they foster social cohesion by bringing people together, encouraging shared experiences, and strengthening community identity.

Grants and subsidies provide reliable support that helps artists and venues survive fluctuations in ticket sales, sponsorships, or economic downturns, ensuring long-term sustainability.

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts encourages funding for arts and culture organizations throughout the state, including the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



TESTIMONY OF DAVE ERDMAN, PRESIDENT & CEO
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
FEBRUARY 2, 2026
IN SUPPORT OF SB 2603 - RELATING TO THE HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

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

My name is Dave Erdman, and I am the Interim President and CEO of Retail Merchants of Hawai'i (RMH), a statewide nonprofit trade association representing retailers, shopping centers, and allied businesses across the islands.

Retail Merchants of Hawai'i respectfully submits testimony in **support of SB 2603**, which designates the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the Official State Symphony.

Many states formally recognize an official state symphony as an important cultural and economic asset. States such as California, New York, Illinois, and Minnesota have long acknowledged that a world-class orchestra strengthens civic identity, supports arts education, and enhances tourism appeal. Hawai'i should be no different.

Designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the Official State Symphony provides meaningful visibility and recognition for an institution that already performs at a world-class level. This designation elevates Hawai'i's cultural identity and helps communicate, locally and globally, that Hawai'i offers exceptional artistic experiences in addition to its natural beauty.

From a retail and tourism perspective, this designation is important. Hawai'i's visitor economy continues to evolve toward destination travel drivers that encourage visitors to choose Hawai'i, stay longer, and engage more deeply with the community. Music and the performing arts are proven destination drivers. Highlighting Hawai'i's symphony gives visitors another reason to attend performances, dine locally, visit retailers, and extend their stay.

This designation also strengthens Hawai'i's ability to attract and retain world-class musicians, conductors, and guest performers, further enhancing the quality of performances available to residents and visitors alike. Longer-stay visitors, repeat visitors, and seasonal residents are especially likely to seek out and support symphonic performances during their time in Hawai'i.

Finally, formal state recognition sends an important message that the arts matter in Hawai'i. It supports arts education, cultural pride, and community well-being while contributing to a more diverse and resilient visitor economy.

For these reasons, **Retail Merchants of Hawai'i supports SB 2603 and respectfully urges the Committee to pass this measure.**

Mahalo, for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued support of Hawai'i's cultural and economic vitality.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Erdman
Interim President and CEO
Retail Merchants of Hawai'i



2 February 2026

Testimony in Strong Support of SB2603 – Relating to the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra

Dear Chair Lee, and Members of the WLA Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **in strong support of SB 2603**, which designates the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra. This recognition affirms the role symphony orchestras can play as models for **positive community change**; not only through outreach and education, but through artistic excellence itself.

Music has value **for its own sake**. The high artistic standards upheld by HSO's professional musicians, its President/CEO, Music Director, and staff matter deeply. I think it important to note that artistic excellence is not incidental to community engagement, but rather, it is the engine that drives it! When performances are compelling, thoughtful, and musically rigorous, audiences show up. If the artistic product were poor, no amount of outreach alone would sustain public interest or trust. We can't take for granted the HSO's artistic excellence, or the inspiration they bring to our keiki and communities.

In addition, in the 21st century, Orchestras are not merely presentational, but are now **participatory** institutions that invite audiences and partners to shape programming that reflects shared values and local priorities.

The HSO exemplifies the balance between artistic integrity and civic purpose. Recent projects such as *Symphony of the Hawaiian Birds*, followed by *Hawai'i Forests* and *Hawai'i Seas*, demonstrated how high-level musicianship paired with place-based storytelling can galvanize extraordinary collaboration. Similarly, **Side-by-Side concerts with Hawai'i Youth Symphony and the Pacific Music Institute** show how professional excellence provides the fuel that allows young musicians and community partners to rise to the occasion. Each time the HSO undertakes a major educational or collaborative endeavor, the community responds wholeheartedly, something not every professional orchestra achieves.

As this designation moves forward, I respectfully encourage the continued prioritization of the HSO's **educational programs for youth and families**, which are the lifeblood of its community connectivity and a natural extension of its artistic mission.

Finally, Hawai'i is fortunate to have a rich ecosystem of collegiate, community, regional, and youth orchestras across the islands. As SB 2603 elevates the HSO, I hope it also creates space to acknowledge and celebrate the broader orchestral landscape—strengthening the stature and impact of *all* symphony orchestras statewide.

Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Wong".

Randy Wong
President & CEO, Hawai'i Youth Symphony
Musician, Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra



HAWAI'I
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

DANE LAM | MUSIC AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawai'i
Regular Session of 2026
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Testimony by Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra
February 4, 2026

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2603
– RELATING TO THE HAWAI'I SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Aloha Chair Chris Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

As Music and Artistic Director and President and CEO, respectively, of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra, and we request your support of **SB2603**, which would designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra. This designation would ensure **equal access to world-class symphonic music for all residents, regardless of where they live.**

Music is not only entertainment; it helps mental health, physical health, brain development, and socialization. It teaches concentration, perseverance, listening, and working together. Music brings people together and uplifts our communities, and HSO is a community service provider.

Providing State designation is important for both HSO and our state for a number of reasons:

1. HSO Provides Significant Public Service to the State

HSO delivers meaningful public service through cultural, educational, and artistic programming. It enhances access to high-quality music and promotes cultural engagement across Hawai'i. We are proud of all we offer at HSO, such as:

- More than 40 diverse concerts annually
- Free community concerts
- Free education concerts including Symphony of the Hawai'i Seas
- Our Na Hoku Opio - Young Stars competition that showcases the talented young Hawai'i students
- Side-by-side projects with Hawai'i Youth Symphony
- A Masterworks Series that brings the world's best music and greatest artists to Hawai'i

Our HapaSymphony concerts that combine the talents of Hawai'i's most revered musicians including Keola Beamer, Jake Shimabukuro, and Raiatea Helm with the power of a full symphony orchestra

- Commissioning new works by living composers from around our Pacific region, embracing our geography as a Pacific orchestra
- Uniting the state's most important arts organizations under one umbrella in our groundbreaking Beethoven Festival and this year's Sounds of Shakespeare Festival
- The musicians are our greatest asset: We employ some of the United States' finest musicians to play in the HSO. They don't only play in the orchestra, though; they also play the vital role of educating our children
- Sharing live symphonic music that has been linked in numerous studies with vastly improved academic performance, better outcomes for young people, and increased social cohesion

2. HSO Has Deep Historical Roots in Hawai'i

HSO (formerly the Honolulu Symphony) was founded in **1902**, making it one of the oldest orchestras in the United States west of the Rockies. Its longevity reflects a century-long bond with Hawai'i's communities and cultural heritage. This long history includes surviving world wars, the Great Depression, and major financial crises — demonstrating resilience that mirrors the perseverance of Hawai'i itself.

3. HSO is a Vital Cultural Institution Delivering Essential Public Service

The orchestra's educational initiatives support thousands of children, addressing unequal distribution of arts education and improving academic and social outcomes through exposure to music.

4. It Reflects and Elevates Hawai'i's Cultural Identity

HSO works with both world-renowned guest artists and local musicians, promoting Hawai'i-based talent and fostering cultural collaborations that reflect Hawai'i's unique heritage. Our programming includes classical masterworks, film concerts, pops performances, Hawaiian collaborations, and more, showcasing the cultural diversity of the islands and enriching local artistic life – for residents and visitors alike.

5. It Supports Local Musicians and Strengthens Hawai'i's Creative Economy

HSO employs **85 professional musicians** and regularly commissions or collaborates with top-tier artists. This contributes to Hawai'i's creative economy and provides stable professional opportunities within the arts sector.

In Summary

Designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the official State Orchestra of Hawai'i is supported by strong evidence that HSO:

- Serves the public good statewide
- Preserves and elevates Hawai'i's cultural identity
- Expands arts access and education
- Supports local professionals and the arts economy
- Has a 125-year historical legacy worth honoring

A **designated State Orchestra** would be a **cultural and economic asset**, supporting local jobs, driving tourism, and strengthening our communities through music.

We urge you to **pass SB2603** and help make symphonic music a lasting and meaningful part of life for all Hawai'i residents.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dane Lam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dane" being more prominent than the last name "Lam".

Dane Lam
Music and Artistic Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Iwano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amy" being more prominent than the last name "Iwano".

Amy Iwano
President and CEO

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:44:58 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Moffitt	Testifying for Musicians' Association of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

I am writting in strong support of SB2603.

As President of the Musicians' Association of Hawaii, I have experineced firsthand the important value of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra. I have witneesed the profound impact the HSO has on people of all ages throughout our State. This bill would help ensure that the impact of this world class symphonic music will continue enriching lives for genrations to come.

Thank you for your support.

James Moffitt

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:16:16 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Williams	Testifying for Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Michael Williams, and I am on the Board of Directors of the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association (HSGA). On behalf of HSGA, I am writing to express our strong support for SB2603, which designates the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra and provides necessary funding to sustain its operations.

HSGA's mission is to promote and perpetuate traditional Hawaiian music, including the unique “signature sound” of the Hawaiian steel guitar. We are dedicated to developing a global network of players and lovers of traditional Hawaiian music. Designating HSO as the state's official symphony would elevate symphonic music in Hawai'i, creating opportunities for cultural integration and collaboration. For instance, HSO could incorporate Hawaiian musical elements, such as steel guitar arrangements, into their repertoire, enriching performances and exposing audiences worldwide to our islands' musical heritage. This recognition and funding would ensure that world-class symphonic music thrives, benefiting our community and aligning with HSGA's goals of musical preservation and education.

We urge the committee to pass SB2603 to secure a vibrant future for symphonic music in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration.



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Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senator Lorraine Inouye, Vice Chair
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

RE: **SB 2603 - Relating to the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra – In Support**
Wednesday, February 4, 2026; 1:00 PM
Conference room 224

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and members of the committee:

As a Board of Director of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra (HSO) and on-behalf of Servco Pacific, Inc., **I am writing in strong support of SB 2603**, which designates the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra.

Founded in 1900, the HSO has become an integral part of our community, not only by hosting diverse concerts and programs featuring international performing artists but also by promoting local talent within Hawaii through its outreach and educational opportunities such as the Hapa Concert Series and No Hoku Opio youth competition. HSO also provides free concerts in parks, public spaces, and live streams to ensure access to all of Hawaii's residents.

By designating Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the "State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra," SB 2603 will enable HSO to obtain state funds and continue to deliver accessible and meaningful programs that benefits Hawaii's families, students, and communities.

We respectfully urge the Committee to **pass SB 2603**. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure.

Peter Dames
President & CEO



**Hawai'i Alliance
for Arts
Education
dba Hawai'i Arts
Alliance**

February 3, 2026

**Testimony in Support of SB2603
Relating to the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra**

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gaye Humphrey, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Arts Alliance in support of SB2603.

SB2603 formally recognizes the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra for the significant public service it provides to our state and designates it as the *State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra*. The Symphony has served Hawai'i's communities for well over a century, contributing to cultural life, arts education, and opportunities for both local and visiting musicians.

We appreciate that this bill balances recognition with accountability. It preserves the Symphony's artistic independence while establishing clear reporting requirements and appropriate oversight of state funds. Just as importantly, it supports educational access—particularly for public school students and educators—while strengthening the State's cultural infrastructure.

SB2603 affirms the value of a world-class symphony as a public good and reflects Hawai'i's commitment to arts, culture, and education. We respectfully urge your support of this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kind regards,

**Gaye Humphrey
Executive Director
Hawai'i Arts Alliance**

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February 3, 2026

SB2603 – Relating to the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra

LATE

Chair Lee, Chris
Vice Chair Inouye, Lorraine R.
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

My name is **Paul Kosasa**, and I am the **President and Chief Executive Officer of ABC Stores**, a locally owned business that has served Hawai‘i’s communities for more than seven decades. In addition, I am currently serving as Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Honolulu Symphony for 15 years. I write to express **strong support for SB2603**, relating to the Music Accessibility Pilot Program.

I am writing in **strong support of SB2603**, which would designate the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the **State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra** and formally recognize its longstanding contributions to our community, culture, and education.

The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra has been an integral part of Hawaii’s cultural fabric for over a century, providing world-class performances, educational outreach, and opportunities that enrich both residents and visitors alike. Its role in nurturing local talent, supporting arts education, and enhancing Hawaii’s reputation as a vibrant cultural destination cannot be overstated.

As a business that depends on a strong visitor industry and a thriving local community, ABC Stores understands the importance of investing in institutions that elevate Hawaii’s quality of life. Cultural organizations like the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra help distinguish Hawaii as a unique and meaningful place to live, work, and visit - benefiting our economy, workforce, and communities statewide.

SB2603 appropriately acknowledges the public service provided by the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra and establishes a framework that allows the organization to better sustain its operations while maintaining its independence and accountability. This recognition is a prudent investment in Hawaii’s cultural legacy and future generations. For these reasons, **I respectfully urge your support of SB2603**. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your continued commitment to preserving and strengthening Hawaii’s arts and culture.

Mahalo,

Paul Kosasa

President & Chief Executive Officer
ABC Stores

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 9:45:28 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raimar Bylaardt II	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HSO

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 6:57:09 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Poranee Sponsel	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is important that Hawaii Symphony Orchestra receives the full financial support from the state of Hawaii to maintain its status as the world-class symphonic music. We need HSO to continue to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for generations to come.

Thank you

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 9:47:27 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cassidy Condit	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a constituent and resident of Oahu and I am writing in support of SB2603 to designate Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official state symphony. This recognition would help ensure that world-class symphonic music continues to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for generations to come.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Cassidy Condit

99-581 Honohina St

Aiea, HI 96701

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 9:52:26 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katherine Calabro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support **SB2603** — the bill to designate the **Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra (HSO)** as the **official state symphony**

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 9:58:17 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
SUHYUN YEON	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This recognition would help ensure that world-class symphonic music continues to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for generations to come.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:07:54 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Takehara Strand	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is remarkable that a state as small in population as Hawaii can have such an outstanding world class symphony orchestra that takes advantage of our island location to showcase music from the Pacific Rim. We should be tremendously proud of this and strive to keep the symphony orchestra as a showcase for our state. Please pass this bill.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:12:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Blasdel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

After some years of uncertainty, the Hawaiian Symphony Orchestra (HSO) has succeeded, over the last decade, in transforming itself into a truly World-class musical organization. This transformation has unfolded due to the inspiration and hard work of musical director Dane Lam, but also through the dedicated efforts of the orchestra's highly talented performers, its dedicated staff, support groups and audiences. It is a great source of pride for us, the residents of Hawai'i, that we can support and enjoy HSO's superb musical offerings.

Along with its fine programs of classical music, HSO also puts considerable effort into making orchestral music appealing to a wide audience base, so that all residents of Hawai'i can enjoy symphonic music. For example, HSO presents concerts focusing on Hawaiian, world music, popular and movie soundtracks, thus bringing music to an audience that normally may not be able to experience the special joy of live music.

I strongly urge the State Legislature to pass bill SB2603 with full support. It is a small gesture that would reap many fruitful benefits, both tangible and intangible, well into the future.

Mahalo

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:12:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anton Anderssen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2603**Relating to the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra**

To the Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Anton Anderssen, and I respectfully submit this testimony **in strong support of SB2603**, which would designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the official State Symphony Orchestra.

I am a former performing pianist who studied and performed at the Indiana University School of Music. During my university years, I appeared regularly in public performances as part of the school's concert programs. Music was not an avocation for me—it was a disciplined, professional practice.

I no longer perform. I live with muscular dystrophy and now use a wheelchair. While my physical ability to play has ended, my musical training, literacy, and capacity to experience music at a high level remain intact.

Because of that background, I can state plainly that **live symphonic music matters in ways that recordings cannot replace**, particularly for individuals whose physical worlds have narrowed due to disability or age. For many of us, attending a live orchestral performance is one of the few remaining experiences that fully engages the intellect, memory, and emotions at once.

Institutions like the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra do more than present concerts. They preserve artistic standards, provide continuity across generations, and ensure that people who can no longer produce art are not excluded from meaningful participation in cultural life. That public value increases—not decreases—when audiences include elders, people with disabilities, and those whose lives are no longer centered on productivity.

Designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State Symphony affirms that excellence in the arts is a public good worthy of stability and recognition. It signals that Hawai'i values cultural institutions that serve the entire community, including those of us whose circumstances have changed but whose inner lives remain rich and engaged.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **pass SB2603**.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Anton Anderssen

1778 Ala Moana Blvd, Apt 3506. Honolulu 96815

Cell 586 757 4177

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:12:18 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Manfred Steger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please make the HSO the official symphony of Hawai'i and support them to stay in the Blasidell Concert Hall. I strongly support this bill!

Mahalo nui,

Dr. Manfred B. Steger

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:52:39 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Music in a child's life and continued exposure to it through education and concerts is part of a balanced life that leads to a balanced young adult. I am a product of a government funded musical program in the 1970s and have gone on to be a scientist as well as a lover of the arts. This language of music was only provided through my schooling and the exposure to music at a young age had tremendous impact as on my life. I 100% support HSO and pray you will too.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:53:57 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kerry Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra greatly benefits my quality of life, and that of the entire state. We regularly attend the classical and film concerts, which are consistently very high quality performances. The orchestra also presents concerts of interest to locals, the series known as the Hapa concerts, and children's concerts. Please support them by passing this bill recognizing them as the official symphony orchestra of the state, a designation they highly deserve.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 11:02:38 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rie Schmidt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii Symphony orchestra is a world-class orchestra that deserves to be designated as the official state symphony orchestra. As a new resident to Honolulu I have been to many concerts and think they need to have this designation.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 11:27:09 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra is a standard bearer for musical culture in Hawai'i and deserves the whole hearted support of our State Government. Under the leadership of Maestro Dane Lam, the symphony has grown to be an international orchestra of the highest caliber. From renowned musicians like concert master Iggy Zhang and assistant concert master Nelly Kovalev to home grown talent like oboist Alex Hayashi, our orchestra has world class musicians who bring life to classical music as well as contemporary compositions. HSO deserves to be and should be the official symphony orchestra for Hawaii. I ask that all legislators vote in favor of SB 2603. Respectfully, Robert C. Kessner, Esq.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 11:29:54 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Richards Dona	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB2603, designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the official state symphony.

As a season ticket holder since 2021, I have seen firsthand how the HSO enriches our community. Their performances bring people together across generations and backgrounds, offering world-class music here at home while also reflecting the unique cultural richness of Hawai'i. The orchestra is not only an artistic treasure, but also an educational and community resource that helps inspire creativity, connection, and a sense of shared experience in our islands.

Official recognition of the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra would affirm the value of the arts in Hawai'i and help ensure that symphonic music continues to thrive for future generations. I respectfully urge you to support SB2603.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,
Angela Richards Dona
Honolulu, Hawai'i

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 11:40:37 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Egg Nog	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support **SB2603**

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 11:42:43 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patty Chang Pezzella	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill- **SB2603**.

Thank you- Patty Chang Pezzella

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 11:44:05 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samuel R Halm	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra has positively impacted our community by providing an affordable entertainment alternative that helps to improve mental and physical health, fosters social cohesion, drives economic growth, and promotes empathy. Active engagement in the arts reduces anxiety, depression, and stress while fostering emotional resilience and enhancing the quality of our lives. The world is experiencing complicated changes that are impacting daily lives in negative ways and have resulted in people being less caring, more apathetic towards one another. This is the antithesis of Aloha. However, my personal experience has revealed that active public engagement in orchestral symphony performances has the effect of reducing anxiety, depression, and stress while fostering emotional resilience. We cannot expect to collectively benefit from this if the symphony orchestra ceases to exist. If not for any other reason, we must do everything possible to support this symphony to help perpetuate it and the Aloha spirit in our great State of Hawai'i. Please do the right thing and designate the **Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official state symphony** to help ensure that world-class symphonic music continues to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for generations to come.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 12:01:42 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Penelope Hazzard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii orchestra is vitally needed during this time of civil unrest. Music provides with relaxation and transports us to other worlds, out of today's clamor. So necessary to provide peace of mine And nothing like sharing the space with othhers transported to a better world if only for several hours.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 12:02:48 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Lei Perron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

When I moved to Honolulu in 2011, I was shocked and dismayed that a city this size/Capital City did not have a Symphony! When they were able to raise necessary funds to resume, I worked with other school librarians to coordinate opportunities to help students gain access to practice sessions and performances. Now I manage Public Libraries and often host Chamber Music and Youth Symphonic performances in the library. Our patrons are always grateful and delighted by these programs. I beg you, on behalf of all the inhabitants of our state to ensure that world-class symphonic music continues to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for generations to come. Mahalo

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 12:15:05 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Girish Varma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There is no question in my mind that a society that creates and supports programs and places for multicultural arts and art education is a society that is better equipped to face the challenges of political, racial, ethnic, and cultural division and disagreements, and that the people of such a society are better equipped to act with understanding and respect for each other, and therefore better able to preserve their collective history and legacy with truth and integrity. The State of Hawai'i must prioritize its arts and music organizations and support them with funding and resources, because once the availability of observance of art and music is gone, those means of connecting with history are gone, and the people of Hawai'i will lose that important part of their heritage. The HSO is one of the pillars of Hawai'i arts and culture, and should be recognized as such for the betterment of the people of Hawai'i and its future generations. In recognizing it as the 50th State's Official Symphony Orchestra, please give it the lasting financial fortitude to survive for every generation yet to come.

Girish Varma

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 12:15:46 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maureen Buckley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In reference to SB 2603, a bill designating the HSO as the official state symphony, I urge passage of this bill. The HSO is a beacon of culture, enrichment and brings people of all ages, backgrounds and beliefs together for the purpose of enjoying the uplifting live performances offered. In a time such as we live in currently, it is essential that this source of light and joy remain in place. Please support this bill for our Lahui Hawai'i. Mahalo Nui Loa,

Maureen Buckley

Retired D.O.E Teacher and proud supporter of the HSO

RE: SB2603 Measure Title: RELATING TO THE HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

I support this Bill. If we are to retain Hawaiian knowledge workers, or attract new ones, we must have a vibrant cultural scene. This has been documented clearly by Richard Florida. A successful state and community supported symphony is a common denominator in successful creative class cities. If Hawaii is to successfully navigate the next 100 years, we can't rely on just tourism, and many low paying hospitality/retail jobs - we need to be more like a Denmark in the Pacific. A small state that punches above its weight in culture, industry, tech, cuisine, and tourism branding (beyond beaches). The symphony, and the musicians, as educators also lift up the culture as an industry. I've always thought Hawaii needs more creative entrepreneurship - we need more Bruno Mars's, but contributing back into Hawaii like Bad Bunny does for Puerto Rico. I think this Bill and future support of creative entrepreneurship (at UH?) can drive this transition.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 12:37:48 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberley Dixon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am here to testify to the impact that HSO has in our community and in my personal life. When considering what state/CITY we should retire to my husband and I placed a high priority on whether or not we would be able to attend a symphony on a regular basis. Honolulu was the winner in our case. We enjoy attending the symphony and bringing along guests and friends who have never experienced it. Please consider making this wonderful symphony the official symphony for this great city and state.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 12:45:12 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Colin Moore	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support S.B. 2603, which designates the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra and provides modest operating support in recognition of its public service role.

This bill reflects a reasonable and well-structured exchange: public recognition and stable support in return for clearly defined public benefits. The reporting and audit provisions ensure accountability, while the explicit protection of the Symphony’s autonomy avoids inappropriate state control over artistic or organizational decisions.

The proposed appropriation is modest, particularly given the statewide benefits the Symphony provides and the financial challenges facing arts institutions in Hawai‘i. Stable operating support will allow the organization to sustain its educational mission and continue offering high-quality, accessible programming.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support S.B. 2603.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 1:04:11 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am writing to support SB2603. This recognition would help ensure that world-class symphonic music continues to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for generations to come. It will be particularly helpful for those who live on neighbor islands.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 1:08:09 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marvin W Acklin PhD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Marvin and Denise Acklin in support of SB2603. Submitted on 31 January 2026

Hello,

We are registered voters and strong supporters of the world class Hawaii Symphony Orchestra (HSO). We support the designation as state symphony, and that the symphony be situated and funded to extend its reach into all of the communities of Hawaii. We are honored to have a beautiful state symphony that is supported by the public and the legislature and the infrastructure that produces musicians and the wonderful programming. We strongly support the passage of this bill.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Marvin and Denise Acklin

Kaneohe, Hawaii

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 2:56:42 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this bill to recognize the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the state orchestra. At no cost to taxpayers, this outstanding ensemble will benefit from this designation to recruit support in the community and across the Pacific where it easily ranks with the best national symphony orchestras in Japan and South Korea. Thank you. Martha Nakajima, Honolulu.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 3:27:57 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting testimony in strong support of the measure to designate the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra and providing operational funding in recognition of the public service it provides.

For more than a century the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra has been a cornerstone to arts and culture in Hawaii. Its performances, education programs and community outreach contribute directly to arts education, creative expression, and the quality of life across the state. The Symphony services residents, students, educators, and visitors alike, while elevating Hawaii's standing as a place that values artistic excellence.

Formal designation as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra appropriately acknowledges this long-standing public role and creates a clear, transparent framework for state support. Importantly, the bill balances public accountability with organizational autonomy by preserving the Symphony's independence while requiring annual reporting on the use of state funds. This approach ensures stewardship of public resources without imposing undue state control over artistic or operational decisions.

The appropriation proposed in this measure supports essential operating costs and enables the Symphony to expand access, particularly through educational programming and opportunities for public school faculty and students. These benefits align directly with the State's broader goals around education, community enrichment, and cultural preservation.

Investing in the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra is not simply an investment in performances; it is an investment in arts education, local talent, cultural identity, and the creative economy. This bill provides a thoughtful and responsible mechanism to sustain those benefits for future generations.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

Bill Weeshoff

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 3:46:00 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Midkiff Fiedler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the Honolulu Symphony and thank you for this bill, which designates it as the official state symphony. I have been attending its concerts or listening to the Honolulu Symphony on the radio for over 50 years.

Long live world-class music!

Aloha, Mary M. Fiedler

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:03:53 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beppie Shapiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We are lucky that generous donors and eager listeners have kept our Symphony alive and bringing good music to all of us. Recognition if due and this bill will ensure it.

Please pass SB2603

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:07:00 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is great. To finally have an official state orchestra. Since its formation several years ago the Hawai'i Symphony has travelled statewide and in addition to performing paid concerts also provides free concerts in the community. Please move this bill forward.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 5:16:34 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ana Trovinger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra's journey to becoming the official state symphony. Their dedication to providing opportunities for families to connect with classical music has enriched our lives, making them a cherished part of our seasonal celebrations over the past couple of years. We believe they deserve the official state symphony title.

Endorsement of SB2603

Designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra

In troubled times, a society must decide what it will protect.

Roads can be rebuilt.

Buildings can be repaired.

But when the spirit of a people is neglected, something far more precious is lost.

SB2603 is not a luxury bill. It is a legacy bill.

For over a century, the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra has stood as a living voice of beauty, discipline, and shared identity. Founded in 1900, it has weathered wars, economic collapse, pandemics, and cultural change—yet still it gathers people across age, income, and background into one listening heart.

To designate it as the State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra is not political.

It is moral.

It is cultural.

It is generational.

This act recognizes that the arts are not ornaments of prosperity—they are the anchors of resilience.

This Bill Matters Now

When fear and division grow, people need places where they can breathe together again.

Music does that.

It softens what has hardened.

It reminds us who we are.

Queen Lili'uokalani—herself a composer—once expressed the enduring truth that music is the language of the heart, and the heart of a people is known by the songs they sing. Through Aloha 'Oe, she gave the world a living prayer that still carries the breath of Hawai'i across generations.

In that same spirit, we offer this blessing over SB2603:

E ola ka leo, e ola ka lāhui.

May the music live, and may the people live.

E ulu ka mele i loko o nā hale, i loko o nā keiki, i loko o nā kūpuna.

May song grow in our halls, in our children, and in our elders.

E ho'opili i nā pu'uwai like 'ole i ho'okahi hanu.

May many hearts be bound together in one breath.

E mālama 'ia ka mo'omeheu, e hānau 'ia ka wā e hiki mai ana.

May our heritage be protected, and may the future be born in harmony.

A e ho'omau ke kani o ke aloha ma Hawai'i nei.

And may the sound of aloha continue to rise in Hawai'i.

Factors for Approval

Cultural Preservation

Protects Hawai'i's musical legacy while commissioning new works that reflect our diverse heritage.

Educational Impact

Free access for public school teachers and students nurtures creativity, discipline, and lifelong learning.

Community Healing

Live music reduces isolation, restores joy, and strengthens social bonds.

Economic Benefit

Supports tourism, local jobs, and the creative economy.

Global Representation

Elevates Hawai'i's standing as a center of cultural excellence.

Support for Local Talent

Provides stable opportunities for musicians who call Hawai'i home.

Accountability & Transparency

Annual reports and audits ensure responsible stewardship of public funds.

Modest Cost, Lasting Return

A small investment yields generational value.

If This Bill Is Not Passed

Loss of cultural heritage

Reduced access to the arts for youth and kūpuna

Departure of local talent

Fewer educational partnerships

Weakened community connection

A silence where music once lived

Closing

A symphony is many voices becoming one.

So is a state.

SB2603 does not merely fund an institution—it affirms a belief:

That beauty matters.

That culture endures.

That Hawai'i deserves not just survival, but inspiration.

Pass SB2603. Let the music continue.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 5:21:04 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I'm writing in support of this bill and HSO.

Thanks,

Ashley de Coligny

Kaneohe, HI

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 6:02:17 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zane Mallett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra is essential public infrastructure for culture, education, and identity. It represents the highest level of artistic excellence in the state while affirming that cultural expression, and the representation of Hawai‘i artists, matter.

A symphony orchestra is one of the few institutions capable of sustaining large-scale artistic achievement across generations, and it cannot survive without public investment. The HSO actively shapes the future of music by commissioning and premiering new works, including those by living Kānaka Maoli artists. These endeavors are not symbolic; they are acts of cultural preservation and truth-telling, ensuring Indigenous voices are heard powerfully and publicly.

The orchestra is also a cornerstone of Hawai‘i’s music education ecosystem. Students learn what excellence looks like in practice and see a viable future for themselves. Remove public funding, and you don’t just weaken an orchestra—you fracture an educational and cultural pipeline.

To not get behind the HSO is to accept cultural decline. To fund it is to invest in artistry, education, representation, and the long-term cultural health of Hawai‘i.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 6:05:35 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Cha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the honorable members of the Senate Committee,

I submit this testimony in support of this bill, and ask you to favorably recommend it out of your committee's hearing.

Thank you for your time.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 6:35:58 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lawrence Shaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii Symphony Orchestra (HSO) is a tremendous asset to the State of Hawaii and should be designated as the official state symphony. The high caliber of HSO's performances is inspiring and its broad repertory of classical and popular music serves the interests of the entire community. HSO's educational outreach programs increases the awareness of the art form to the younger segment of the population which provides a rewarding experience of the richness of orchestral music. We feel very gratified that this ensemble is part of Hawaii's performing arts landscape and look forward to every concert..

L.Shaw

SB-2603

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 8:32:43 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marsha Nager	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As residents of Kaua'i and former residents of Nashville, we have had the privilege of experiencing wonderful orchestral music. However, we have found that the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra has truly surpassed our previous experiences.

We are proud supporters of the HSO and attend as many concerts as possible. The caliber of the musicians is exceptional, particularly under the direction of conductor Dane Lam. Music is a vital component of any city, and we believe the HSO should be revered and appreciated for the excellence they bring to our community.

I am writing to urge you to please support the HSO and help ensure their continued success.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:07:07 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maureen Copeskey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is **Maureen Copeskey** and I am writing as a resident of **Honolulu** to urge your support for **SB6203**. This bill represents a historic opportunity to formally recognize the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the "State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra." By doing so, we are not just conferring a title; we are ensuring the sustainability of a 125-year-old institution that serves as the heartbeat of our state's cultural and educational community.

Historical and Cultural Significance Founded in 1900, the HSO is one of the oldest and most respected performing arts organizations in the United States. It provides a world-class platform for both international masters and home-grown local talent. Designating it as the State Orchestra honors this legacy and reaffirms Hawai'i's commitment to high-level artistry. The HSO is unique in its ability to bridge the gap between Western classical traditions and the rich, diverse musical heritage of Hawai'i, frequently collaborating with local Kumu Hula and musicians to tell our islands' stories.

Educational Impact and Public Service The HSO's impact extends far beyond the concert hall. Through its educational programming, the orchestra provides:

- **Keiki Concerts:** Introducing thousands of public and charter school students to live orchestral music annually.
- **Community Access:** Offering free performances in public parks and outdoor centers, ensuring that the arts are accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status.
- **Professional Mentorship:** Providing "side-by-side" performance opportunities for the Hawai'i Youth Symphony, directly mentoring the next generation of local musicians. SB6203's provision for free admission for Department of Education faculty, staff, and students is a game-changer that will deepen the connection between our schools and the arts.

Economic and Administrative Necessity The proposed \$500,000 appropriation for the 2026-2027 fiscal year is a vital investment in our "creative economy." A professional symphony orchestra attracts tourism, supports downtown revitalization, and provides stable employment for highly skilled professionals.

Furthermore, I strongly support the provision in SB6203 that exempts the HSO from certain Chapter 42F funding requirements. This change acknowledges that a state-designated institution

requires a more streamlined, reliable funding model to maintain long-term operations, while still ensuring accountability through annual reports to the Legislature and audits by the Comptroller.

The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra is a public asset that enriches the lives of residents across all islands. Formal state designation provides the HSO with the prestige and foundational support it needs to thrive for another century. I respectfully ask your committee to pass **SB6203** to secure the future of symphonic music in Hawai'i.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 10:12:57 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anita Trubitt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a strong supporter of the Hawaiiia Symphony and a strong supporter of this bill.

Anita Trubitt

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 10:37:49 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thalia L Woodward	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Music is integral to a community - as an expression of our world and as a way to share an experience. Especially during this devastating and scary time for our nation, it's even more urgent that we protect and support the arts. Please pass this bill!

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 11:02:19 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carlynn M Wolfe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is mark us as a true Arts state.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 11:57:29 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline Beckman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of **SB2603** — a bill to designate the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official state symphony. This recognition would help ensure that world-class symphonic music continues to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for generations to come. My family attends the symphony as often as our schedule allows us to and we enjoy the present conductor, Dan Lam. He is so innovative and encourages diversity in the current symphony.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 11:36:24 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miguel Nunes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of the proposed bill relating to the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra, which seeks to designate the organization as the “State of Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra” and to provide stable operating support in recognition of its public service to the State.

I offer this testimony not only as a member of the Hawai‘i community, but also as a violinist and as someone who comes from a family that plays and deeply values music. Music has been a central part of our lives—educationally, culturally, and personally—and through that lens, we recognize the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra as an invaluable institution for our state.

For more than a century, the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra has played a vital role in enriching the cultural life of Hawai‘i. Through performances, educational outreach, and community engagement, the orchestra advances artistic excellence while expanding access to music education for residents and visitors across the islands. Its longstanding commitment to nurturing local talent alongside internationally recognized artists reflects the diversity, creativity, and global reach of Hawai‘i’s cultural identity.

The proposed appropriation will help ensure the orchestra’s continued ability to deliver high-quality performances and educational services, including meaningful opportunities for musicians, young and old. These programs are especially important for inspiring the next generation of musicians and for ensuring that access to high-quality musical experiences is available to all communities in Hawai‘i.

From both a personal and public perspective, the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra is a cultural cornerstone of our state. This bill represents a thoughtful and forward-looking investment in education, cultural vitality, and community well-being. I respectfully urge your support for this measure and for the continued success of the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra as a statewide cultural institution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Miguel A. Nunes

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE

ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

The Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2026

Hearing Date and Time: February 4, 2026 at 1 PM

Re: **SB 2603 RELATING TO THE HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Written Testimony Only (In Support)

CHAIR LEE, VICE CHAIR INOUE, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

My name is Lloyd Lim and I am testifying in my individual capacity in strong support of SB 2603 designating the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the Hawaii State orchestra and providing partial funding. The current HSO is a vastly superior orchestra to the HSO of 20 to 50 years ago. This is an excellent orchestra on the upswing with great future potential for Hawaii. The string section sound would surprise anyone. I have heard live performances by the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony and the St. Louis Symphony. I feel as if I have a basis for comparison. Recently, the HSO put on the Mozart Oboe Concerto and the Mahler 9 (a complex piece). I had a surreal feeling as I came out of the hall—could this fine a concert really be done in Hawaii, and with that big an audience turnout? Yes!

Many of the orchestra musicians are also music teachers in our community helping to raise our kids. Music education isn't just about making kids happy or helping them to fit into more rarefied workplaces; it is about brain development, giving kids a head start, a competitive advantage.

But you don't have to take my word for it. *Columbia Magazine* (Spring/Summer 2015) noted that Columbia Medical School considers a music background in admissions because it can assist both diagnosis skills and the motor control needed for surgery. Also, *The Great Courses* class Music and the Brain taught by Professor Anniruddh D. Patel noted that music training also has a significant overlapping effect on the development of verbal skills.

I have gone to many HSO concerts and have been using social media to talk about HSO in the hopes that the word will get out to folks with an interest in classical music who might use it as an excuse to visit Hawaii. I interact with classical music buffs in the US mainland, Japan, Hong Kong, England, Germany and Italy. We live in a troubled world, but because most orchestral music is without words, it can form a basis for relationships that avoids contentious political issues.

As a kid growing up in Honolulu, I took a risk being a classical music buff. It made me suspect. I'd like to see that viewpoint change. Not everyone likes classical music, but that is often because they had a bad initial exposure to it. There is material for pretty much everyone in classical music, and over time you can climb into more of it as you like. The HSO has worked hard to become an orchestra that can appeal far beyond Hawaii. It would be a shame not to support it when it could do so much for us.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, and for your favorable consideration.

Lloyd Lim 1525 Wilder Ave #1008, Honolulu, HI 96822

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 1:02:32 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
carol bodnar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly urge you to designate the **Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO)** as the official state symphony. We have a world class symphony in Hawaii which enriches and enables our community to thrive. Music is a huge part of the Hawaiian heritage and the continuation of the music of the Symphony needs to be protected as an asset.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 6:08:43 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terrina Wong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Designating the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the state of Hawaii's symphony orchestra will ensure our entire statewide community has access to music; provides for cultural infrastructure; instills a sense of local pride; and ensures the well-being of our state because the arts will remain a vibrant part of our lives. The symphony provides jobs to our musicians -- these are the music educators of our keiki who, through music, are given another meaningful pathway toward academic, social, cognitive and emotional growth. Mahalo.

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawaii Symphony
2 Orchestra provides a significant public service to the State of
3 Hawaii and makes significant musical contributions to the
4 artistic and cultural education of the community through its
5 performances.

6 The legislature further finds that the Hawaii Symphony
7 Orchestra was founded in 1900 to establish and operate a
8 professional symphony orchestra in Hawaii. The symphony hosts
9 shows and programs featuring musicians and performing artists
10 from around the world, in addition to promoting local talent
11 within Hawaii.

12 The legislature recognizes that the State has a certain
13 responsibility to the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra for the public
14 services it provides. The legislature notes that designating
15 the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the "State of Hawaii Symphony
16 Orchestra" will enable the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra to
17 regularly obtain state funds to help cover its general operating



1 costs in exchange for other services to the State, to be
2 mutually negotiated.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to designate the
4 Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the "State of Hawaii Symphony
5 Orchestra".

6 SECTION 2. Chapter 9, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
7 by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately designated
8 and to read as follows:

9 **"§9- Hawaii Symphony Orchestra; designation; funding.**

10 (a) The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra shall be designated the State
11 of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra.

12 (b) The qualifying standards and conditions related to the
13 receipt of funds contained in chapter 42F shall not apply to
14 funds received by the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra;
15 provided that if the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra, in
16 turn, contracts with a recipient or provider, then the
17 qualifying standards, conditions, and other provisions of
18 chapter 42F shall apply to the recipient or provider and the
19 contract.

20 (c) The designation of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as
21 the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra shall not impinge on the



1 autonomy of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra, nor imply state
2 control over its programs or policies, except as specifically
3 provided in this section.

4 (d) The comptroller and the legislative auditor may
5 examine the use of any state funds appropriated pursuant to this
6 section and shall report any findings to the legislature.

7 (e) The president and chief executive officer of the State
8 of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra shall provide a report to the
9 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
10 each regular session. At a minimum, the annual report shall
11 include an explanation of the operations, maintenance, and other
12 functions accomplished using state fund expenditures in the
13 previous fiscal year."

14 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$500,000 or so much
16 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the
17 general operating costs of the State of Hawaii Symphony
18 Orchestra, including:

19 (1) Operations and maintenance; and

20 (2) Any advice, consultations, or services provided free

21 of charge to state agencies, including:



(A) Free admission for public school faculty, staff,
and students who attend shows through department
of education programs; and

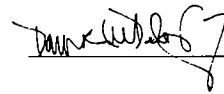
(B) Consultants for purposes of setting standards in
the symphony's educational programming and public
activities.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the state
foundation on culture and the arts for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

INTRODUCED BY:





S.B. NO. 2603

Report Title:

Hawaii Symphony Orchestra; State Foundation on Culture and the Arts; State of Hawaii; Designation; Funding; Appropriation

Description:

Designates the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra. Requires annual reports to the Legislature. Appropriates moneys.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.



SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:02:58 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Wallace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully and wholeheartedly support making our Hawaii Symphony Orchestra the official state symphony.

The symphony is so important for our state to have, and this will help to ensure its position.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:03:14 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tom Wallace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support our symphony

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:22:46 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
George I. Nagao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My wife and I are avid supporters of our Hawaii Symphony Orchestra and all of its educational programs, outreach initiatives and support of our professional musicians who have worked multiple positions in support of music in our community. So far much of the support has come from the private sector. Permanently making the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra our state orchestra will insure continued music excellence and Hawaii's reputation for artistic support.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 6:48:45 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPPORT this bill.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:46:04 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ilana Nimz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the recognition of the HSO as the official State symphony, to ensure the world-class performances continue in our islands. We love attending the symphony, and really appreciate their ability to provide us with the classics, but also modern and Hawaiian interpretations of symphonic music.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 9:14:01 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Koshi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill No. SB2603, which seeks to officially designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the official State Symphony Orchestra.

As a **resident, teacher, musician, and arts patron** of **Honolulu** for **over 55** years, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact the **Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra** has on our community. I have served as conductor emeritus of Hawai'i Youth Opera Chorus, choral director/music educator at St. Andrew's Priory School, and Mid-Pacific Institute. I currently serve as the Director of Music Ministries for the United Church of Christ-Judd Street and Pali Preschool, and as the Artistic Director of La Sorellanza. I perform with Hawai'i Opera Theater's Opera Chorus, O'ahu Choral Society, and Kawaiolaonāpūkanileo. My music career may have direct links to being exposed to the symphony through school fieldtrips, and my high school band director taking selected students to concerts.

This designation is not merely symbolic; it is a recognition of the vital cultural and educational services the orchestra provides to the state.

Why the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra Deserves This Designation:

- **Educational Outreach:** The orchestra provides essential music education programs to schools throughout the state, often reaching underserved communities.
- **Cultural Preservation & Access:** They promote local talent while bringing world-class performances to our community, fostering a vibrant arts landscape.
- **Economic Impact:** A thriving state orchestra attracts tourism, supports local venues, and contributes to the overall quality of life that makes our state a wonderful place to live.
- **Long-Term Stability:** This designation will help ensure that the **Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra** can continue to thrive for future generations.

The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra has a long-standing history of commitment to our state. Formally recognizing the orchestra as our state's representative in symphonic music is a fitting tribute to their contributions.

I respectfully urge this committee to pass **Bill No. SB2603** and support the ongoing, essential work of the **Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra**.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the arts in our state.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 9:55:23 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barrie Kealoha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HSO has long been the gold standard of symphonic orchestra n Hawai'i and deserves to be
acknowledged as such.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:29:55 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vicky Cayetano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and Committee Members,

I am writing in proud and grateful support of SB2603 to designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official state symphony. Thank you Chair Lee and Vice Chair Inouye for your consideration of this bill to further ensure that our world class musicians will continue to thrive in our islands teaching generations of keiki and providing music enriching our community - our Hawai'i nei.

Very respectfully,

Vicky Cayetano

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:47:02 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Rich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB2603 recognizing the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the official State Orchestra.

Linda Rich

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:16:21 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
susan hogan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for our symphony, and making them officially recognized as representing our state is crucial to support active appreciation and participation in the art and culture of Hawaii.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:23:11 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Molly Mamaril	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of SB2603 which would designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official state symphony. This recognition would help ensure that world-class symphonic music continues to thrive in our islands, enriching our community for future generations.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Molly Mamaril

Kaimuki, O'ahu

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:21:49 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie D Hoe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I highly recommend the HI Symphony orchestra being designated as the State of Hawaii Symphony orchestra. I have attended concerts since I was a young child growing up in Hawaii and have had season tickets for many years. i truly enjoy symphonic music, as many people do, and it is scientifically proven that music helps children learn STEM and also to calm down. I now sing with the Oahu Choral Society which collaborates the the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra and puts on fabulous concerts together. We will be performing a locally composed piece this spring to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the sailing of Hokule'a.

Please desgnate the HI Symphony as our state orchestra. Mahalo.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:42:38 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

My adult son with autism has a few options for community outings. Concerts are the joy of his life! Thank you for making the arts accessible to everyone! Mahalo Nui Lia for your time and attention to this important matter for society.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:50:03 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wailani Kontic	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2603 and designating the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the official state symphony, because not only does HSO provide great music, but HSO is a pillar for the arts, and a home for an all-inclusive community here in Hawaii. HSO brings high quality performances, internationally renowned musicians & artists, and important cultural vitality to Hawaii, and provides incredible music to people of all ages and backgrounds.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:40:50 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Autumn Woods	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair Senator Lorraine Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of SB2603, which would designate the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official State Symphon. As both a longtime patron and a proud member of the HSO staff, I’ve seen the extraordinary reach of this orchestra, from the concert hall to classrooms, neighborhood parks, and public spaces across O‘ahu.

My family first connected with the HSO during the pandemic, streaming concerts from home. That experience moved us to become subscribers and has deeply shaped my daughter’s journey as a young musician. Thanks to HSO, she’s conducted the orchestra at the Waikīkī Shell, interned with staff, and volunteered after graduation. Today, she’s pursuing music in college, proof of the orchestra’s lasting impact. Since joining the HSO team a year ago, I’ve seen just how embedded this organization is in our community. Our musicians are not only world-class performers, but educators and mentors who inspire students, support teachers, and bring music to places where it’s often least expected and most needed.

The HSO is a vital part of Hawai‘i’s cultural and educational landscape. I respectfully urge your support for SB2603 to ensure this beloved institution continues to uplift, educate, and unite our community for generations to come.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Autumn Woods

Director of Advancement

Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:41:43 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ARNOLD A. ALCONCEL	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony for SB2603

Hearing: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 1:00 p.m.

Subject: In Strong Support of SB2603 - Designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the Official State Symphony

Dear Chairperson, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of SB2603, a bill to designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official state symphony of Hawai'i. I write today as a lifelong resident, concerned constituent and music educator for the past 34 years who recognizes the vital role that a world-class symphony plays in the cultural, educational, and economic life of our island 'ohana.

The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra: A Cultural and Economic Asset

Founded as the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra in 1900, then rebranded as the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra in 2011, the HSO is Hawaii's only professional orchestra and a cornerstone of our performing arts community. Beyond presenting concerts, the HSO offers artistic leadership, outreach, and educational programs that engage audiences of all ages and backgrounds. As documented by multiple economic impact studies, each dollar invested in symphonic music generates a multiplier effect in the community—supporting jobs, local businesses, and tourism while enhancing quality of life. Approximately 50+ direct jobs plus more than 100 contract workers are supported annually through HSO operations, contributing an estimated \$4 million in total economic impact, with additional earnings when families dine, shop, and stay after performances.

In Hawaii's broader arts and cultural economy, the sector contributes billions of dollars to the state's GDP and supports nearly 20,000 workers, reflecting how deeply the arts drive community vitality. More than 36 percent of Hawai'i adults attend live music, dance, or theater performances, underscoring public engagement and the desire and strong interest for live arts experiences.

Formal Recognition Will Strengthen Sustainability

Designating HSO as the official state symphony is not merely symbolic. It affirms that symphonic music is an essential public service worthy of legislative support. This recognition:

- Enhances the orchestra's ability to secure partnerships, sponsorships, and future funding to expand free and affordable concerts statewide.
- Bolsters community outreach to underserved areas, including neighbor islands where access to music and the arts is limited.
- Reinforces HSO's role in youth and adult music education, connecting professional musicians with schools and community programs.

The orchestra has a budget derived from ticket sales and donors, yet the financial landscape for arts organizations remains challenging. Legislative support can create stability and expand engagement across all of Hawai'i.

Enriching Our Communities for Future Generations

Symphonic music enriches our cultural fabric, enhances educational outcomes, and nurtures the creative economy. Designating the HSO as the official state symphony recognizes the intrinsic value of the arts and ensures Hawai'i remains a place where world-class music thrives. It signals to residents and visitors alike that Hawai'i values the arts not as an optional luxury, but as an essential expression of our shared humanity for all to experience and possibly pursue. For example and on a personal note, I am recently especially grateful for the opportunity that the HSO gave my former student, Cayne Hiraoka, to be a featured soloist for the Symphony In The Park Nā Hōkū 'Ōpio Young Stars Concert on July 24, 2024 at Kailua District Park. This annual concert is a favorite and very well attended concert for the Windward Community of Oahu.

<https://youtu.be/221O-kZZLHQ?si=HbTUwvE6ZxYO2XTb>

Cayne is currently in his 2nd year at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa majoring in Music Education and is the university's principal student saxophonist.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass SB2603. Mahalo nui for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Arnold A. Alconcel

Band Director, James B. Castle High School (1996-2026)

General Music Teacher, Kalakaua Intermediate School (1993-1996)

Band Director, Kaimuki Intermediate School (1992-1993)

Band Director, (Aiea Intermediate School (1992)

Former President Oahu Band Directors Association

Former Chairperson Oahu Band Directors Association High School Select Band

Director, Hawai'i All State Marching Band 2024 Tournament of Roses Parade
Pasadena, California

<https://youtu.be/X4bTEBM3HdI?si=uJFOxgVLTOV1hAxV>

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:47:42 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Watanabe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT SB2603 and the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) because of the work they do for our community all over the state. HSO goes into our communities to do free public concerts, educational concerts for schools, and they have their musicians do community service by offering free coaching and help in music programs around the state. They represent the State of Hawai'i through their music and work with other local musicians. Through commissioned works by local composers to music that represents our culture and who we are, HSO works to ensure everyone has access to high quality music.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 1:19:39 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Sergent	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT SB2603 and the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra because our communities deserve to have access to world-class symphonic music. In addition to programming well-known masterworks, HSO makes it a point to appeal to those who are not necessarily classical music fans by putting on concerts that feature popular movie soundtracks/screenings and performing with local musicians.

HSO has also stepped up their efforts to provide more free community concerts and partner with schools/music ed. organizations to the benefit of our young student musicians. It would be wise to preserve and support the existence of this organization that brings such a wide variety of music and talent into our communities.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 1:59:20 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roza Rojdev	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Endorsement of SB2603 — Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra

We proudly support SB2603 and the designation of the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra as the official state symphony of Hawai‘i.

The HSO is far more than a performing arts organization. It is a living expression of our shared culture—bringing people together across generations, backgrounds, and communities through the universal language of music. Its performances enrich our cultural landscape, inspire creativity, and elevate the quality of life throughout our islands.

Just as important, the HSO fosters community engagement and a sense of unity. It creates moments of collective celebration, reflection, and pride—reminding us that excellence, discipline, and collaboration can produce something greater than the sum of its parts.

Recognizing the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra as the official state symphony affirms the value we place on artistic excellence, cultural vitality, and a future where the arts continue to strengthen the social and civic fabric of Hawai‘i.

We strongly urge support for SB2603 and for the continued flourishing of world-class symphonic music in our state.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 2:42:05 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Browne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawai'i deserves to have an official state symphony where every person has access to world-class symphonic music and the opportunity to learn to play an instrument in an orchestra. The Hawa'i Symphony is the perfect orchestra to fullfil this dream.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:59:08 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Margaret A. Perkinson, PhD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2603.

Margaret A. Perkinson, PhD

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:44:07 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Ito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee and members of the committee,

I strongly support officially designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai'i's Symphony Orchestra. Over the years, many local supporters have given their time, energy, and money to support this symphony.to become what it is today - a gem in the State of Hawaii. It is time for this gem to shine and be part of the state of Hawaii. Thank you for your consideration and support of the arts and the men and women of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra!

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 6:21:04 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB2603 - Official State Symphony Designation.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 6:53:50 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabrielle Igarta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of SB2603 and the Hawai'i Symphony Orchesrta because of its invaluable contributions to education, culture, and community. The symphony collaborates with both local and international artists to broaden the possibilities of music, demonstrating the utmost importance of music at the crossroads of the Pacific and bringing Hawai'i to the world stage. By designating the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the state symphony, we can show our appreciation for the many musicians who come together to unite us in the joy and wonder of music.

Dr. Jon Magnussen
Resident of 'Aiea, HI

Senator Chris Lee
Chair, Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 210
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

February 2, 2026

RE: SB2603–Support for Hawaii Symphony Orchestra (HSO) Designation as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra

Dear Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and members of the Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts:

I am writing in regards to SB 2603, to express my strong support for the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) and to advocate for its designation as the "State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra" with consistent, annual fiscal support from the State of Hawai'i for their impactful music education services on O'ahu and across our neighbor islands.

As a vital community asset, the HSO **fills critical gaps in public education**, particularly in underserved areas such as O'ahu's Leeward Coast and the neighbor islands, where access to arts education is sorely limited. I know this firsthand, having grown up on Kaua'i. I also know this as a longtime music educator at UH West O'ahu on the Leeward side of O'ahu, where many of my students, still in their 20s, have never experienced a live orchestral performance – 65+ people collaborating onstage, playing beautiful music. My students always find inspiration from class outings to hear the HSO in the Blaisdell Concert Hall, many for their first time. Consistent state funding for symphony music education services in underserved areas statewide would provide much-needed access to inspiration.

The HSO is also a cultural beacon in our community, expressing who we are as humans, in ways that can **help us better understand and navigate the uncertainties of the future and problems of the present**. Our HSO does this by programming excellent, impactful work of the past, and by working with living artists and composers to bring new work into existence. The new work reflects who we are, here, right now, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Without the HSO, we would be poorer, and our keiki would be less likely to develop skills of collaboration and problem-solving, and a strong work ethic necessary for a successful future.

In the past decade, the HSO has built an excellent model, with a team headed by the impactful Music & Artistic Director Dane Lam, President and CEO, Amy Iwano, Composer in Residence Michael Foumai, all supported by a strong Board of Directors chaired with a steady hand by Paul Kosasa (ABC Stores). An investment in the HSO would be a **wise investment into our statewide economy**. With its 50+ direct employees and over 100 contract workers, the HSO

directly contributes to our statewide economy, with **every \$1 invested in the arts often returning \$5-\$7 in economic activity**. (This figure is derived from long-term, large-scale studies on the nonprofit arts and culture sector's economic impact conducted by Americans for the Arts, released in October 2023.)

A robust HSO positively impacts our economy in the following ways:

- **Tourism and Hospitality:** The HSO acts as a premier cultural attraction, enhancing the visitor experience and offering an attractive and sophisticated alternative to typical tourist activities. The HSO helps attract visitors to our islands seeking culture, bringing revenue into the state, and especially Waikiki and the Honolulu area.
- **Transportation and Local Business:** Concert nights at the Blaisdell or Hawaii Theatre drive increased traffic for transportation services (taxis, rideshares, parking) and nearby restaurants, boosting local commerce. Approximately 50% of attendees dine or shop before or after HSO performances, directly benefiting downtown Honolulu and surrounding local businesses.
- **Cultural Identity and Innovation:** The HSO has quietly been creating a new body of Hawai'i-centered symphonic works to help audiences connect with our unique cultural heritage. This includes celebrating the history and incredible knowledge of our indigenous ancestors (*mai nā kūpuna mai*), alongside the stories of today, with works by local composers Michael Foumai, Herb Mahelona, Takuma Itoh, Byron Yasui, Takeo Kudo, Tom Osborne, Don Womack, and others, myself included. The HSO also blends traditional symphonic music with local culture, such as the HapaSymphony series, which features the best local artists and *mele* (songs) in *ʻōlelo Hawai'i* (Hawaiian language), bringing a unique, "only-in-Hawaii" experience to residents and visitors alike.
- **Education and Workforce Development:** To make a living, the musicians of the HSO not only work for the HSO; they also teach our island children. Without the HSO to anchor excellent musicians in our state, many of them would leave our community, find another orchestra, and leave a hole in our economy (teaching dollars are spent right back into our state economy.) Funding our HSO will help maintain a viable, stable cadre of teachers, and will allow an expansion of the HSO's educational programs, fostering creativity and discipline in our youth, while supporting education statewide.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to voice my support. I humbly and strongly urge you to designate the HSO as the "State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra", and to support annual state funding for the HSO to continue these vital services.

Mahalo nui,

Dr. Jon Magnussen
Resident of 'Aiea

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:51:34 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am in full support of this bill

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 9:28:14 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cameron Goya Lynde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2603**TO:** Members of the Hawaii State Senate**FROM:** Cameron Goya Lynde**RE:** SB2603 — Designation of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra

Aloha Chair and Members,

I write in strong support of SB2603.

The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra is not just a performing arts organization — it is a public institution in practice. For more than a century, it has brought world-class music to our islands while nurturing local talent and expanding access to arts education for students and families.

SB2603 recognizes this public service by formally designating the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra and providing stable operational support in return for educational programming and community benefits. This is a thoughtful partnership model: the State invests in a trusted cultural organization, and in return receives measurable public value through school access, consultation, and outreach.

This bill supports music education, strengthens Hawaii’s creative economy, and affirms that cultural life is part of our shared infrastructure — as essential as roads, libraries, and parks. It also helps ensure that students and educators can experience live symphonic music regardless of income.

At its core, SB2603 says that the arts matter, and that Hawaii is willing to stand behind institutions that serve the public good.

I respectfully urge your support for SB2603.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Cameron Goya Lynde

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:26:28 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ginny tiu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Thank you very much for your consideration to support SB2603. Designating our world class Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the state's orchestra would give Hawaii one more thing to be so proud of and call its own.

Mahalo,

Ginny Tiu

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 6:39:00 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am humbly asking for your support of SB2603 designating the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the state orchestra of Hawaii. I realize that at this time of economic uncertainty there are many needs.

Our community needs the Symphony Orchestra which has provided family concerts, brought in famous musicians, introduced the students to playing with the Symphony and endless other avenues.

Our grandson was among the many inspired by the Symphony, He received a Bachelor's and Master's degree in violin performance. Today he not only plays with the Symphony but teaches orchestra in the classroom.

Please support SB2603 and have Hawaii be the first to have the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra designated as the State Orchestra and have it recognized for the contributions to Music and the Arts and inspiring our students to love and preserve the art of music for years to come. Thank you!



2.3.26

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 2603

Designation of the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra

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

My name is Katie Pickman, and I am honored to serve as a board member of the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of S.B. 2603, which designates the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra.

Over the past several years, I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand the extraordinary commitment of the musicians, staff, and volunteer leadership who work every day to ensure this organization remains strong, relevant, and accessible to our community. The level of dedication, stewardship, and care behind the scenes is remarkable - and it is driven by a deep belief in the value of music for the people of Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra is far more than a collection of world-class musicians. It is a living cultural resource that brings people together across generations, backgrounds, and abilities. It creates moments of connection that are difficult to replicate anywhere else.

One moment in particular has stayed with me. At a Beyond the Music concert featuring Beethoven's symphonies, I sat near a mother and her young son who had limited verbal communication. As the orchestra began to play, his entire body responded to the music, his arms lifted, his movements followed the rhythm, and his face filled with joy. His mother watched quietly, visibly moved. In that moment, music became his language and his bridge to the world around him. This is the impact of the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra.

S.B. 2603 is important because it formally recognizes the public service role the Orchestra already plays throughout our state, through education programs, community performances, and access for students and educators. The designation also provides a responsible framework for public support, while preserving the organization's artistic and operational independence and maintaining appropriate accountability to the Legislature.

At a time when arts organizations across the country face significant financial challenges, this bill affirms that Hawai'i values cultural leadership, creative opportunity, and access to the arts for our residents and our keiki.

I respectfully urge your support of S.B. 2603 and your recognition of the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Pickman". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and titles.

Katie Pickman
Board Member, Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra
General Manager, Hawaii News Now

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:08:25 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Lee, Vice Chair Senator Inouye and Members of the Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts.

Please support SB 2603 which, I think, would be helpful to the people of Hawaii. Designating the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawaii Symphony Orchestra should make more of its glorious, uplifting music available to more people.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki and life long resident of Oahu

The Hawaii Symphony is an important cultural institution that should be shared with the entire state of Hawaii. Supporting HSO provides an opportunity to enrich the lives of everyone in Hawaii. The orchestra is made up of eighty exceptional musicians and is lead by a dynamic conductor and music director, Dan Lam. The orchestra is also most fortunate to have the talents and skills of its superb resident composer, Michael Thomas Foumai.

I discovered HSO four years ago when I moved to Honolulu. I was astonished to find out how exceptional this orchestra is. The fact that so many talented professional musicians are present here on Oahu in the middle of the Pacific Ocean is amazing. They play a wide variety of styles including classical, Hawaiian, movie scores, and jazz. The versatility is incredible.

HSO has certainly enhanced my life. The pre-concert talks are very informative where both the guest artist(s) and the conductor discuss the program providing background, history, and anecdotes about what we are about to see. My knowledge of classical music, as well as the music of Hawaii and the Pacific Rim has been expanded through HSO concerts. My first exposure to the Australian didgeridoo occurred at an HSO concert. My introduction to the Easter Island pianist, Mahani Teave, took place at an HSO concert. I've enjoyed concerts featuring local artists such as Jake Shimabukuro, Keola Beamer and the Oahu Choral Society. And, the orchestra also presents Keiki concerts such as Peter and the Wolf.

HSO is truly an Oahu treasure and it needs to be expanded to our neighboring islands. I urge you to pass SB2603.

Robin Ching

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:05:36 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Ing	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Richard Ing, a member of the Board of Directors of both the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra and the Hawaii Youth Symphony. I strongly support, and respectfully urge the Committee to pass and advance Senate Bill 2603.



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

Music Department
College of Arts, Languages & Letters

February 3, 2026

To whom It May Concern:

I am writing in strong support of SB2603.

The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra (HSO) is a world class institution that makes its home here in Honolulu, Hawaii. Each year, the organization performs and caters to thousands of music lovers old and new. Over the years, they have put forward a strong and admirable community-based model that reaches thousands of students in their education and community programs. Additionally, they frequently employ guest artists of the highest caliber; in short, the HSO is a real jewel of our community, of our state, that deserves state recognition and this designation.

This bill is an opportunity to make the arts a focus-point of our community. Each season, the HSO performs programs based on Hawaii and as such they are a musical ambassador of our state and our culture. The HSO is something to be extremely proud of and this designation has the potential to transform how we message Hawaii, our home, to the rest of the nation.

I strongly am in support of SB2603.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Stepec".

Joseph Stepec
Associate Professor of Music
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Symphony Program Director
Hawai'i Youth Symphony

Artistic Director
Pacific Music Institute

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:13:28 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiara Womack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB2603.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:23:00 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucy Goodell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My introduction to the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra was a free concert in the park in Kailua when I moved here three years ago. I'm hooked and have attended many concerts every year at the Waikiki Shell, the Hawaii Theater and Blaisdell Auditorium. I love the wide range of music and performers that the orchestra is able to feature and the energy and joy that Maestro Dane Lam brings to each performance.

Hawaii Symphony Orchestra deserves to be designated as the official state symphony. The world-class music they bring to the islands must thrive and continue to delight future generations.

With much appreciation,

Lucy Goodell

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:51:17 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gene Corpuz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm writing in support of SB 2603, which would designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official state symphony. HSO is part of the cultural fabric of Hawai'i, performing classical and popular concerts, as well as performing with the Hawaii Opera Theater and other projects. They work with youth orchestras training up and coming artists.

I sing with the Oahu Choral Society and had the privilege of performing with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra in 2025 in Beethoven's 9th Symphony. The Oahu Choral Society will be performing with the HSO in Raise Hawaiki, on April 19th. This will be the world premiere of a composition by Michael-Thomas Foumai, which is dedicated to Hokule'a and Eddie Aikau.

Because of HSO's contribution to the state's cultural, educational, and community, I urge you to vote YES on SB2603. Mahalo for your consideration.

Gene Corpuz

1624 Dole St., Apt 1503, Honolulu, HI 96822

808-779-1965

gcorpuz15@aol.com

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:00:10 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gena Whitten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra is an asset to the State. We have attended the symphony symphony and supported the for many years. The programs have been excellent! It is important that Hawaii maintain its cultural treasures. Please support our Hawaii Symphony Orchestra and designate them as our state Orchestra.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:03:27 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Mow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony IN SUPPORT of SB2603. The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra is a "keystone" organization in the Hawaii arts musical landscape; providing a "critical mass" of professional musicians in the islands who in turn provide musical education to the population, members for the Royal Hawaiian Band, musicians for-hire for various religious services and and private gigs/concerts of all genres of music. This provides economic and social benefit to the citizens of the State.

It is especially critical that the State of Hawaii support this organization now, with Federal Arts funding being withdrawn.

Testimony For Bill SB2603

Lilja Kikuhara-Talvala

February 1, 2026

My name is Lilja Kikuhara-Talvala and I am a 14 year old cellist playing with the Hawaii Youth Symphony. I am testifying in support of the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra becoming Hawaii State's official Symphony Orchestra. Hawaii Symphony Orchestra has significantly impacted the community by providing concerts that promote local musicians, bring in famous musicians from all around the globe, and movies in concerts to engage audiences of younger ages. For me personally, a concert I recently attended, How To Train Your Dragon in concert, was a fun experience because I could watch the movie while also watching how a professional orchestra plays. As I watched the concert, I was engaged and I learned more about music from each section of the orchestra. With the support the orchestra will receive from this bill, if passed, we can ensure that the orchestra will be here for generations to come and that our current keiki have a place to pursue the arts after they graduate out of the Hawaii Youth Symphony program. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Bill SB2603 to make Hawaii Symphony Orchestra the Hawaii official state orchestra.

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 3:58:58 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher LaDue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of SB2603

Relating to the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra

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

My name is Christopher LaDue, and I write in strong support of SB2603, which would designate the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra (HSO) as the official State of Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra and provide stable funding to expand its educational and community mission.

Music in Hawai‘i is not a luxury, it is part of how we learn to listen to one another and to the world around us. The HSO has grown into a cultural institution shaped by Hawai‘i and uniquely of Hawai‘i. Through initiatives such as the HapaSymphony Series, performances featuring traditional Hawaiian music, and commissions of local composers, the Orchestra brings a distinctly Pacific perspective to the symphonic tradition.

HSO’s programs increasingly weave together music, culture, and environment. Original works tell stories of our ocean, native species, and cultural values, while collaborations with the University of Hawai‘i, scientists, Kumu Hula, and cultural practitioners incorporate mele, hula, and visual arts alongside orchestral scores. Education efforts such as Nā Hōkū ‘Ōpio (Young Stars) and partnerships with UH place this living culture directly into the hands of students and communities.

I am especially encouraged that SB2603 links funding to free and accessible opportunities for students and educators. Many children would never encounter a live orchestra without this intentional outreach. Experiences with professional musicians nurture creativity, discipline, empathy, and a deeper relationship to place, qualities that serve Hawai‘i far beyond the concert hall.

The bill’s requirement for annual reporting and accountability ensures that public funds are used transparently and that benefits remain centered on schools, libraries, and underserved neighborhoods.

Recognizing the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as our State Symphony affirms that the arts are essential public infrastructure, as necessary to our collective health as parks, libraries, and schools. I respectfully urge you to pass SB2603 so that music, culture, and environmental awareness may continue to reach keiki and communities across our islands.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Christopher LaDue

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 4:17:26 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Winston R Welch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

A short, but emphatic yes, in my strong support for this SB2603.

Aloha, Winston Welch

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:53:28 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tony Santini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Hawai'i State Legislature,

I fully support this bill. The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra is an important asset to the state of Hawai'i as well as our community.

Mahalo,

Tony Santini

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:05:31 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brenner Danielson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra is a great organization, and we should be proud to have them in our state. I have attended many of their events and have enjoyed their performances.

However, it is irresponsible to fund the HSO with public money during a time of financial constraint for the state. The average taxpayer stands to lose hundreds of dollars in the first year alone if the tax cuts are repealed. That money could instead be used by local families to attend a performance by the HSO.

The right thing to do is to allow taxpayers to choose whether to support the HSO the same way many of us already do (with our own money), in exchange for quality entertainment and lasting memories, not through legislative mandate.

Mahalo for your time.

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:11:58 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support Maestro Lam's vision of expanding the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra to become truly a state orchestra supporting performances across all of the islands and, particularly, enhancing engagement with school music programs across the state.

We recently moved back to Hawaii from North Carolina. The North Carolina Symphony has developed a program such as I support across the state. The impact on smaller communities distant from Raleigh, the capitol, is tremendous in strengthening both financial and grassroots support for orchestra. Most exciting, though, is the impact on young students who may for the only time in their lives interact with professional musicians to develop an appreciation for types of music they may never have experienced and network with role models who will invariably positively impact their lives. Hawaii's music heritage is extremely rich in many different genres. Classical music exposure enhances them all.

Please support this bill. It will return financial and cultural dividends far into the future.

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:28:32 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Murakami Akatsuka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the passage of SB 2603 to designate the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as the State of Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra. This will enable its sustainability across all islands statewide going forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 2603.

LATE

SB-2603

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 5:17:48 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/4/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joanne Amberg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support the Hawai'i symphony Orchestra. The arts and music are vital to the health and well being of our community.

Mahalo,

Joanne Amberg