

I am honored to be considered for appointment to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. My work has centered on arts, culture, and community across public service, education, and creative practice. I've worked within government, alongside community, and within the creative economy, and that has shaped how I understand the responsibility of this role.

Arts and culture are not extra—they are part of how we function as a society. They shape how people understand place, identity, and their responsibility to one another. In Hawai'i, that connection is inseparable from 'āina. Culture is not separate from governance; it is embedded in how we care for land, resources, and community.

The role of a state arts agency, as I see it, is stewardship. That means supporting artists and cultural practitioners, protecting knowledge systems, and ensuring that public investment reaches communities in meaningful ways. It also means being clear about how arts and culture connect to broader systems. Culture provides the grounding. When done thoughtfully, it can also support economic viability for artists and communities—but that must remain accountable to place.

I'm interested in strengthening alignment across these systems in a way that makes sense for Hawai'i. Not collapsing them, but being more intentional about how they work together. We've seen the consequences when culture is disconnected from community. At the same time, we know there is real opportunity when it is approached with care and accountability. The balance is critical.

I also want to acknowledge that my company previously held a contract with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, which concluded in 2024. That work is complete, and I understand the importance of maintaining a clear boundary between that experience and the responsibilities of public service.

At this stage in my career, I am focused on how systems operate and how they can better serve our communities. I bring both a practitioner's perspective and a systems-level view, and I take seriously the responsibility of serving in this capacity.

My goals are straightforward:

- Strengthen support for artists and cultural practitioners across the state
- Ensure public funding is transparent, equitable, and grounded in community need
- Improve alignment between arts, culture, and systems that support long-term sustainability, including economic pathways for practitioners
- Support initiatives that deepen public understanding of Hawai'i's history, language, and cultural practices
- Contribute to a statewide approach where arts and culture reinforce both community well-being and responsible economic stability



HAWAI'I
STATE FOUNDATION on
CULTURE and the ARTS

No. 1 Capitol District Building
250 South Hotel Street
Second Floor
Honolulu, HI 96813

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Josh Green, M.D.

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

**Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026 Conference Room 225 at 1:00 PM**

GM 770

**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the State Foundation on
Culture and the Arts, Gubernatorial Nominee, C. MAKANANI SALA, for a term
to expire 06-30-2030**

Dear Chair Lee and members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of the confirmation of Dr. Makanani Salā to serve as a Commissioner for the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

Dr. Salā brings a thoughtful, community-centered approach to arts and culture that aligns deeply with the Foundation's mission to promote, perpetuate, and preserve culture and the arts throughout our state. Her background reflects not only professional excellence, but also a genuine commitment to ensuring that the arts remain accessible, relevant, and reflective of the diverse communities they serve.

Dr. Salā played a key role in the organization of the Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture in Hawai'i, an internationally significant event that convenes artists, cultural practitioners, and communities from across Oceania. This experience demonstrates her capacity to manage complex, large-scale cultural initiatives while honoring the traditions, protocols, and relationships that are essential to such gatherings. Her work on this festival reflects both organizational skill and deep cultural knowledge—qualities that are invaluable for service on the Commission.

I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Salā during her tenure as Executive Director for the Mayor's Office on Culture and the Arts. Her openness to collaboration and her commitment to providing high-quality opportunities and programming for all constituents were greatly appreciated.

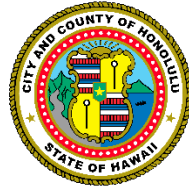
I am confident that Makanani will make meaningful contributions to the Commission's work, helping to strengthen its programs and guide the SFCA toward a dynamic and promising future.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and for your continued support of the arts in our state.

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
KE KE'ENA O KA MEIA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

530 SOUTH KING STREET, ROOM 300 • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
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MAYOR
MEIA



MICHAEL D. FORMBY
MANAGING DIRECTOR
PO'O HO'OKELE

KRISHNA F. JAYARAM
DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O HO'OKELE

April 22, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am pleased to offer my strong support for the confirmation of Dr. Makanani Salā to serve on the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

I had the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Salā during her time as Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts for the City and County of Honolulu, and I saw firsthand the leadership, thoughtfulness, and professionalism she brings to her work. She has a clear ability to navigate complex cultural issues with both sensitivity and focus, always keeping the broader community in mind.

Makanani brings a strong background in cultural leadership, public art, and policy, but what stands out most is how she approaches the work. She listens, respects the community, and understands how important culture is to Hawai'i. She leads with humility, builds consensus, and earns trust while moving important work forward. She understands that culture is not just something we preserve, but something we live, support, and invest in every day.

On a personal level, she is someone of real character. She cares about the work and the people behind it, and she shows up every day ready to contribute. Makanani builds strong relationships, treats people with respect, and brings a calm, steady presence to the table. Those qualities matter and are a big part of why she has earned the trust of so many in the community.

The Foundation will be better with her on it. I strongly and respectfully urge your favorable consideration of her confirmation.

Sincerely,
Scott Humber
Communications Director, Office of the Mayor
City and County of Honolulu

LATE



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April 22, 2026

To: Hon. Chris Lee, Chair, Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts (WLA)
Hon. Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair, WLA
Hon. Stanley Chang
Hon. Samantha DeCorte
Hon. Rachele Lamasao

Subject: Testimony in SUPPORT of GM 770: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Gubernatorial Nominee, C. MAKANANI SALĀ, for a term to expire 06-30-2030

Aloha Kākou,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of the consideration and confirmation of C. Makanani Salā, PhD, to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts as the gubernatorial nominee.

I have known Dr. Salā for many years, both personally and professionally, and have had the privilege of collaborating with her on a range of arts and cultural initiatives. Most recently, I worked alongside her during the 2024 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC), where she served as Director of Operations. In that role, she successfully orchestrated a complex, multinational event with a relatively small team, supported by subcontractors, while maintaining active coordination with governmental and intergovernmental partners across the Pacific and the continental United States. Her approach is marked by meticulous organization, clarity of expectations, strategic redundancies to ensure continuity, and a steady commitment to both excellence and aloha.

Over the years, I have witnessed Dr. Salā's remarkable evolution: from an accomplished high school dancer to a scholar and educator in higher education; from a dedicated practitioner of hula to a formally recognized kumu hula; from a student of history to a respected subject matter expert; and, most recently, in her leadership role as former Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts for the City and County of Honolulu.

Dr. Salā's lifelong engagement with the arts is neither incidental nor superficial—it is foundational. When I first met her in high school, she had already distinguished herself as a dancer of notable skill. Introduced to hula at a young age, she pursued it with discipline and passion, achieving early excellence. Her athleticism and participation in organized sports further



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reveal a competitive spirit that permeates all facets of her life. She meets challenges with uncommon drive, tenacity, and resolve.

Her professional and personal journey has been deeply interwoven with the arts. Among her many accomplishments, her graduation as a kumu hula, achieved through rigorous adherence to traditional protocols, stands as a profound milestone. Her broader contributions to arts advocacy and program development are further evidenced by her service with Creative West (formerly WESTAF).

Should the committee seek an individual who will bring intellectual rigor, fresh perspective, dynamic energy, and a spirit of joy to the Foundation, Dr. Salā is an exemplary choice. In other words, look no further.

Me Ke Aloha Pumehana,

Monte M. McComber II, Cultural Director

LATE

April 23, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Hawai'i Pacific Foundation, I am writing in strong support of the nomination of C. Makanani Sala to serve on the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for a term to expire June 30, 2030.

At the Hawai'i Pacific Foundation, our work is rooted in a deep awareness of what we are entrusted to carry forward, and culture sits at the center of that responsibility. It shapes identity, preserves knowledge, and connects generations, while also guiding how communities grow, adapt, and remain grounded in times of both challenge and opportunity.

Makanani Sala brings a thoughtful and grounded perspective that reflects the weight of this responsibility. She understands that cultural stewardship requires both care and discernment, and that the systems surrounding culture must be navigated with intention to ensure that access, representation, and resources are aligned with the communities they are meant to serve. Her ability to hold both community and system in view is what makes her particularly well suited for this role.

In positions such as this, leadership is defined not only by experience, but by the way decisions are approached and carried through. It requires someone who listens carefully, considers long-term impact, and moves with a clear sense of purpose and respect. I am confident that Makanani will bring this level of thoughtfulness and integrity to her service.

Appointments to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts carry significance beyond governance, as they help shape how culture and the arts are supported, protected, and advanced across our state. Makanani Sala's nomination reflects the kind of leadership that will contribute meaningfully to that work.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this nomination, and for your continued commitment to serving our communities.

With respect,



Jeanine DeFries
President & CEO
The Hawai'i Pacific Foundation



LATE

April 23, 2026

TESTIMONY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUBS
To the Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the State Foundation on
Culture and the Arts, Gubernatorial Nominee, C. MAKANANI SALA,
for a term to expire 06-30-2030.**

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

The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs testifies in strong **SUPPORT** of GM 770 which confirms Dr. C. Makanani Sala to serve on the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

Dr. Sala is a member of the Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu, one of our member clubs. We support the confirmation of qualified Native Hawaiians to government appointments and boards and commissions to ensure our state government reflects the communities it serves.

With her many years of experience leading culture and Pacific-focused initiatives and events and as a culture practitioner, Dr. Sala is a solid choice for this board. She is a collaborative leader who has unmatched expertise in cultural protocols and will be an invaluable asset to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. We are honored to support this appointment.

Founded by Prince Kūhiō in 1918, the Hawaiian Civic Club movement is the oldest Native Hawaiian community-based advocacy movement. The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs is a not-for-profit organization that is a confederation of 60 individual and autonomous Hawaiian Civic Clubs and 3,500 members located across Hawai‘i and across the continental United States.

We appreciate your favorable consideration of our support for C. Makanani Sala.

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/20/2026 2:54:21 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Walt Kaneakua	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I heartily support Dr. Makanani Sala for the Foundation! She's a bright and shining star!! She serves on our Hawaii Pacific Foundation, bringing innovative solutions to building our Native Hawaiian communities. Her academic credentials speak for themselves, and as a practitioner we are blessed to benefit from her many talents!! Please confirm her so our state becomes stronger through her future work!!

Walt Kaneakua, Chairman, Hawaii Pacific Foundation; Commissioner, Hawaiian Homes Commission.

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/20/2026 3:16:17 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I have known C. Makaanani Sala since my time as her student at Windward Community College, where she served as both my professor and Kumu Hula. From the very beginning, she modeled what it means to lead with purpose, cultural integrity, and a deep commitment to community.

Throughout her career, Dr. Salā has consistently advanced the interests of both the lāhui and the arts. In her role as Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office of Culture and the Arts, she elevated the importance of cultural values within government spaces, ensuring that arts and culture were not treated as secondary but as essential to the identity and well-being of our communities. Her leadership in co-organizing the Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture demonstrated her ability to operate at the highest level, bringing together nations, cultures, and practitioners in a way that honored the Pacific and Hawai‘i’s role within it.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, what sets Dr. Salā apart is her unwavering commitment to people. She is a trusted leader, a mentor, and a guide to the next generation, someone who leads not just through position, but through relationships, ‘ike, and action. No matter the space she is in, she continues to advocate for arts and culture in meaningful, inclusive, and grounded ways.

For these reasons, I strongly support her nomination and believe she will serve with the same dedication, vision, and integrity that she has demonstrated throughout her life’s work.

Jayne-Lee Mokulehua

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/20/2026 9:00:12 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Konrad Ng	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of GM770 – Makaanani Sala

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

I write in support of the nomination of Makaanani Sala to serve on the Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) Commission.

As Chair of the SFCA Commission, I see the importance of thoughtful, community-minded leadership. Ms. Sala brings a strong commitment to community and a grounded understanding of the importance of access to arts and culture across Hawai‘i.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support her confirmation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

Konrad Ng, Ph.D.

Chair, Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts Commission

Keoni Souza
Trusteesouza@oha.org
808-265-3381

April 21, 2026

Chair Chris Lee

Water, Land, Culture, and Arts Committee
Hawai'i State Senate
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

RE: GM 770 – Appointment of Dr. C. Makanani Sala to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

Dear Chair Lee and Vice Chair Inouye,

I am writing in my individual capacity to express my strong support for the appointment of Dr. C. Makanani Sala to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for a term to expire June 30, 2030.

I have had the privilege of knowing Dr. Sala and can attest to her integrity, leadership, and deep commitment to Hawai'i's cultural communities. Her experience as Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts, along with her service in regional arts governance, demonstrates a strong understanding of public arts policy, funding, and cultural stewardship.

Dr. Sala brings a unique ability to bridge 'ike Hawai'i with public service. She is thoughtful, collaborative, and well-prepared to contribute meaningfully to the work of the Foundation.

I respectfully urge the Senate to confirm her appointment.

Sincerely,



Keoni Souza

Keith Amemiya
P.O. Box 3590
Honolulu, HI 96811

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Thursday, April 23, 2026, 1:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

In consideration of

GM 770

State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Gubernatorial Nominee,

C. Makanani Sala

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

I'm Keith Amemiya, Senior Vice President at Central Pacific Bank, and I strongly support GM 770, which submits for consideration and confirmation to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Gubernatorial Nominee, C. Makanani Sala.

Nani's background, knowledge, and experience speak for itself, most notably her successful tenure as the Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts and as one of the driving forces behind the highly successful Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC) in 2024.

Nani is passionate about culture and the arts, and her integrity and character are unquestioned.

Based upon the above, I humbly ask for your support and to advice and consent to Makaanani Sala's nomination.

Please let me know if you have any questions and mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

Sincerely,

Keith Y. Amemiya
Senior Vice President
Central Pacific Bank

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 10:12:23 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zachary Espino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of the nomination of Dr. Makanani Salā to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

I have had the privilege of working with Dr. Salā and have seen firsthand her leadership, cultural expertise, and deep commitment to Hawai‘i. She brings a thoughtful and grounded approach to her work, informed by both her academic background and her lived experience as a cultural practitioner.

Dr. Salā has a unique ability to bridge communities, disciplines, and perspectives. Her experience leading major cultural initiatives and programs, along with her work in education and public service, reflects a deep understanding of the importance of culture and the arts in shaping identity, strengthening community, and advancing Hawai‘i’s global connections.

What stands out most is her authenticity and integrity. She leads with purpose and intention, and she is deeply committed to ensuring that Native Hawaiian culture and values are respected and elevated in meaningful ways. Her ability to navigate both institutional and community spaces makes her especially well-suited for this role.

Based on my experience working with her, I am confident that Dr. Salā will be a strong and thoughtful voice on the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. I respectfully urge the Committee to confirm her nomination.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 10:29:00 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support Makanani Sala's nomination to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts as it reflects a deep and sustained commitment to advancing Hawai'i's cultural vitality and creative economy. With a strong record of leadership at the intersection of arts, community engagement, and public service, Makanani brings both strategic vision and practical experience in elevating local artists and cultural practitioners. Her work has consistently demonstrated an ability to build meaningful partnerships across sectors, support diverse artistic voices, and ensure that culture remains a central pillar of Hawai'i's identity and economic resilience.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Makanani is widely respected for her collaborative approach and her dedication to stewardship of Hawai'i's cultural heritage. She understands the critical role the Foundation plays in preserving, promoting, and investing in the arts statewide, and she is well-positioned to contribute thoughtfully to its mission and governance. Her perspective will strengthen the Foundation's ability to serve communities across the islands while fostering innovation and expanding opportunities for artists and cultural organizations.

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 11:21:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jon Nouchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strongest and most unwavering support for the nomination of Dr. Makanani Salā to the Board of Commissioners for the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA). Having collaborated extensively with Dr. Salā during her tenure as the Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office on Culture and the Arts (MOCA) for the City and County of Honolulu, I can attest without reservation to her exceptional leadership, her profound cultural grounding, and her impeccable moral character.

During our time working together in City leadership, I witnessed firsthand how Dr. Salā navigates the intersection of public policy and cultural preservation. Her commitment to Hawaiian and local traditions is deeply rooted and authentic. She brings a level of cultural authority and sensitivity with exceptional humility that is vital for the SFCA. She does not merely "represent" culture; she lives it, ensuring that every project, from public art installations to community celebration, is executed with a rigorous adherence to the values and customs of our islands. On a global scale, she represented Hawai‘i as the recent host of the 2024 triennial Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture, an international convening of Pacific Island nations where the importance of diplomatic leadership and fluid cultural protocols were the relational currency between diverse international delegations of our Pacific basin neighbors and ‘ohana.

Dr. Salā’s ethical and moral character is of the highest caliber. In our professional collaborations, she has consistently demonstrated a fierce sense of kuleana to the public and the practitioners she serves. She possesses the rare ability to manage complex governmental processes while maintaining the warmth and humility that define local leadership. Her academic background, including her doctorate in History, provides her with the critical lens necessary to evaluate the long-term impact of the Foundation’s work on Hawai‘i’s cultural landscape.

Makanani Salā is an exemplary choice for this role. Her vision is one of inclusivity and excellence, and her dedication to the arts as a vehicle for community well-being is unmatched. I urge your committee to confirm her nomination, as I am confident that her contributions will elevate the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for years to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony in strong support.

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 11:33:31 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debbi Eleneki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of State Foundation on Culture and Arts Gubernatorial Nominee Makanai Sala. Only recently have I met and started working alongside Makanani, but through observations and interactions, I believe that her recipe for success can be found in six (6) key ingredients: Her Culture, Character, Communication Skills, Competency, Commitment, & Courage.

We who recognize distinguished individuals, such as Makanani, need to rally behind them and support their efforts to influence positive change and effect impact. Our future generations depend on them to move the needle in our collective transition from a surviving to a thriving society and we need to help amplify their good work.

It has been a privilege to experience hope in the flesh and to share space with this passionate individual who has the potential to achieve, quantitatively and qualitatively, more great things in the future. I stand in full support of Makanani's efforts and I appreciate the opportunity to share my support.

(My apologies if this is a duplicate submittal; I experienced connectivity issues)

GM-770

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 12:59:51 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dominic Milles	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom it Concerns,

Although, I serve as the Director of the Department of Design and Construction for the City and County of Honolulu, I am submitting this testimony as an individual in strong support of confirmation of C. Makanani Salā to serve in this capacity with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

-Dominic (Haku) Milles



Sarah
Tamashiro
Kuaiwa

April 22, 2026

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to voice my strong support for Dr. C. Makanani Sala as Gubernational Nominee to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for a term to expire 06-30-2030. Dr. Sala is a multi-faceted academic and cultural practioner with experience with organizational management. I believe she will bring confidence and vision to the SFCA.

Dr. Sala has promoted arts access in significant ways for the people of Hawai'i over the past decade. As Executive Director of the City and County of Honolulu's Office of Culture and the Arts, she produced meaningful programs for the City and County while also spearheading new programs aimed at uplifting the voices of underrepresented communities and artists and their work and stories. As CEO of Gravitas Pasifika, she oversaw the organization of the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts. FestPac was a massive undertaking, involving government logistics, architectural planning, and performance and ceremonial organizing and production. She handled this with compassion, strength, and creativity.

As a scholar and teacher, Dr. Sala has prioritized examining the histories and artistry of Native Hawaiian people. Her perspective in understanding traditional modes of education and educational systems established during Hawai'i's colonial period will be invaluable to the SFCA.

Dr. Sala's tenacity of spirit and collaborative nature will help bring capacity to the SFCA to continue to support the mission of the organization. For these reasons, I strongly support Dr. Sala's nomination and respectfully recommend that the committee approve her nomination.

Mahalo piha,
Sarah Kuaiwa, Ph.D.
Curator of Hawai'i and Pacific Cultural Resources
Bishop Museum