



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

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 1716, H.D. 1, RELATING TO ELECTIONS.

**BEFORE THE:**

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**DATE:** Tuesday, March 17, 2026

**TIME:** 9:55 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 016

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Jung Min (Charles) Lee, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

This bill creates a new pathway for political parties to remain on the general election ballot by deeming any party that has been continuously qualified and listed on the general election ballot for eight consecutive years or more "continuously qualified" and exempt from further petition requirements. House Draft 1 made changes from the original bill. First, the qualifying threshold was reduced from twenty consecutive years to eight consecutive years. Second, the bill added a new condition for loss of continuously qualified status: a party that fails to have at least one candidate appear on the ballot for a statewide partisan office for two consecutive general elections would lose its exemption, in subsection (c)(4) of the new section added to chapter 11, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), on page 3, lines 7-10. Third, it removed the specific reference to the Green Party of Hawaii that appeared in section 1 of the original bill.

This bill continues to raise a constitutional concern under the Equal Protection Clause. By exempting parties that meet the eight-year threshold from requalification requirements on an ongoing basis while continuing to apply petition and performance rules to all other parties, the bill creates a two-tier system for ballot access. Even if the purpose is to reduce administrative burden, selectively lifting requirements for one class of parties may invite challenge if the distinction is not supported by a clear, generally

applicable governmental rationale. Although the reduction from twenty years to eight years and the removal of the named-party reference broaden the classification and reduce the appearance of tailoring, the fundamental structure of the two-tier system remains.

The bill also continues to raise practical concerns about ensuring that ballot access reflects ongoing voter support. Under subsection (c) of the proposed new section, a continuously qualified party would retain its status until it "[d]issolves," "[v]oluntarily withdraws from participation in the election ballot," "[f]ails to comply with applicable organizational, reporting, or filing requirements," or "[f]ails to have at least one candidate appear on the ballot for a partisan office in which the candidate elected is determined solely by the voters of the State for two consecutive general elections." Page 3, lines 1-10. While the new candidacy requirement in subsection (c)(4) adds a minimal participation check that was absent from the original bill, it does not require any minimum level of voter support. A party could satisfy this condition with a single candidacy in a single statewide partisan race every two election cycles while receiving negligible votes. By contrast, section 11-61(b), HRS, requires all other parties to demonstrate specific vote thresholds, such as receiving at least ten percent of votes cast for statewide offices, or at least two percent of combined votes for state senate and state representative races, to avoid disqualification. Page 5, lines 3-18. The bill expressly exempts continuously qualified parties from these thresholds, providing that section 11-61(b) "shall not apply to any political party deemed continuously qualified." Page 5, lines 19-20. The gap between a candidacy-only standard for exempt parties and a vote-share standard for all others remains a significant asymmetry.

If the Committee wishes to proceed, the Department suggests the following amendments to address the concerns identified above. First, the bill could add a minimum vote-share requirement as a condition for retaining continuously qualified status. For example, subsection (c) of the proposed new section could include a provision that a continuously qualified party loses its status if it fails to receive at least two percent of all votes cast for all offices of state senate and state representative combined statewide, consistent with the lowest existing threshold in section 11-61(b)(5).

This would preserve the bill's goal of reducing petition burdens while maintaining a meaningful check on ongoing voter support. Second, rather than a full exemption from the section 11-61(b) disqualification standards, the bill could instead exempt continuously qualified parties only from the petition requirements under section 11-62, HRS, while leaving the vote-share standards in section 11-61(b) in place. This approach would eliminate the administrative burden of repeated petitioning without removing the periodic accountability mechanism tied to actual electoral performance. Either modification would narrow the gap between the standards applied to exempt and non-exempt parties and reduce the equal protection risk identified above.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 10:09:35 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelby Plkachu Billionaire	Testifying for Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands & Ohana Unity Party	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony in **\*\*OPPOSITION\*\*** to HB1716 HD1 Relating to Elections

Aloha Chair(s) and Members of the Committees,

My name is Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party, representing the Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands. As an advocate for genuine political sovereignty, grassroots empowerment, Native Hawaiian self-determination, and breaking free from systems that perpetuate colonial and establishment control, I submit this testimony in **\*\*STRONG OPPOSITION\*\*** to HB1716 HD1.

While the bill is marketed as promoting "fairness" and reducing burdens for political parties with eight or more consecutive years on the ballot, it functions as controlled opposition: a cosmetic tweak that entrenches long-standing parties (overwhelmingly the dominant Democratic machine and any co-opted entities) while offering little meaningful change for true independent or sovereignty movements. I

t creates an illusion of reform without challenging the structural barriers that suppress diverse voices in Hawai'i's elections. Here are key reasons this bill should be rejected:

1. **\*\*Entrenches the Status Quo and Rewards Long-Term Establishment Parties\*\*** Automatic continuous qualification after eight years primarily benefits parties that have already survived decades under the current system—often those aligned with or tolerated by the political establishment. Newer parties focused on Native Hawaiian sovereignty, cultural revitalization, environmental justice, or anti-colonial principles face the same onerous 0.1% signature petition hurdles every cycle, while "grandfathered" entities get a free pass. This is not equality; it's a rigged ladder where those already at the top pull it up behind them.
2. **\*\*Controlled Opposition Masquerading as Reform\*\*** The bill does nothing to address core inequities in Hawai'i's electoral system: one-party dominance, barriers to ballot access for truly oppositional voices, or the suppression of movements challenging U.S. occupation and statehood legitimacy. By offering minor relief to "stable" parties, it distracts from demands for real change—such as lowering signature thresholds across the board, public funding for independents, ranked-choice voting, or recognition of Native Hawaiian governance structures.

This is textbook controlled opposition: appear to loosen rules while preserving the power structure.

3. **\*\*Undermines Grassroots and Sovereign Movements\*\*** Parties like the Ohana Unity Party, dedicated to Hawaiian self-sovereignty and ohana-centered governance, must expend immense resources on repeated petitions to prove legitimacy. Meanwhile, establishment parties coast on historical inertia. This bill does not level the field—it cements advantages for those already embedded in the colonial framework, making it harder for authentic opposition to emerge and sustain itself.

4. **\*\*No Real Reduction in Barriers for True Diversity\*\*** The eight-year threshold is arbitrary and exclusionary. It ignores that sustained ballot presence often requires compromise with the system rather than bold challenge to it. True reform would include automatic qualification for parties meeting cultural or community-support criteria (e.g., endorsements from Native Hawaiian organizations) or drastic cuts to petition requirements for all. This bill fails to advance pono democracy or self-determination.

5. **\*\*Risk of Further Consolidation of Power\*\*** By exempting "continuous" parties from petitions and certain disqualification rules, the bill could enable entrenchment of parties that no longer reflect voter will but maintain ballot access through inertia. It provides no mechanism to revoke status for parties failing to represent evolving community needs, potentially locking in outdated or co-opted structures indefinitely. HB1716 HD1 is not progress—it's a veneer of fairness designed to placate calls for electoral reform while protecting the dominant political order.

Genuine change requires dismantling barriers for all challengers, especially those rooted in Hawaiian sovereignty and justice.

I urge the Committee to **\*\*reject HB1716 HD1\*\*** and instead pursue bold, inclusive reforms that honor the will of our lāhui and open the door to true self-governance. Mahalo nui loa for considering this testimony and for your role in protecting—or challenging—the integrity of our electoral processes.

Sincerely, Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM

Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Ohana Unity Party, Chairman



**Committee on Judiciary  
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports HB1716 HD1  
Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 9:55 AM | Conference Room 016 & Videoconference**

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

HAPA supports HB1716 HD1, which establishes a straightforward path to continuous ballot qualification for political parties that have demonstrated sustained, long-term voter support.

Under current law, political parties must repeatedly petition to retain ballot access, even after years of uninterrupted qualification and demonstrated organizational stability. That is an unnecessary burden, both on the parties themselves and on the Office of Elections, and it does not serve any meaningful purpose for election integrity or voter participation.

HB1716 HD1 fixes this by recognizing that eight consecutive years on the general election ballot is meaningful evidence of durability. A party that has met qualification standards for eight years running has already proven what the petition process is designed to test. Requiring them to keep petitioning is redundant.

Importantly, this bill does not hand parties a free pass. Continuous qualification status can be revoked if a party dissolves, voluntarily withdraws, fails to comply with applicable filing and reporting requirements, or fails to field at least one candidate for a statewide partisan office over two consecutive general elections. The Office of Elections retains full authority to enforce all other election laws. This is a targeted fix to a specific administrative inefficiency, nothing more.

A fair, predictable, and nondiscriminatory ballot access system serves everyone. HB1716 HD1 moves Hawai'i in that direction.

HAPA respectfully urges this committee to pass HB1716 HD1.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick'.

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

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2026 8:51:40 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan B Roberts Emery	Testifying for Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and honorable members of committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, and as Co Chair of the Green Party of Hawai'i, I write on behalf of our members in support of HB1716 have successfully been an active political party for 30 years and we act in good faith each and every year. This bill can save time and energy from the elections office if we do not have to petition every 2 years to maintain our ballot status.

We ask that you please pass HB1716 HD1.

Mahalo,

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauiilo

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 9:51:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dave Mulinix	Testifying for Our Revolution Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, & JDC Committee Members,

My name is Dave Mulinix, Co-Founder & Hawaii State Representative of Our Revolution Hawa. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters statewide we stand in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB1716 that Establishes a process by which any political party continuously listed on the general election ballot for twenty or more years shall be deemed continuously qualified for ballot placement.

The wording in this bill sums up our position, to note: The purpose of this Act is to promote fairness and equal treatment among political parties, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens on long-established political parties and the State, recognize sustained voter support and organizational stability, and ensure consistent, predictable, and nondiscriminatory ballot access in Hawaii elections.

Specifically, this Act establishes a process by which any political party continuously listed on the general election ballot for eight or more years shall be deemed continuously qualified for ballot placement.

To ensure a fair, equitable, open, and democratic election process please pass HB1716.

Mahalo

Dave Mulinix

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 8:53:06 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

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

Comments:

Hello Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee,

I'm submitting testimony in support of HB1716 HD1.

It doesn't make sense to require political parties to repeatedly petition for ballot access when they've already demonstrated eight or more consecutive years of voter support and compliance with election law. That's a redundant process that costs everyone time and money without making our elections any fairer or more secure.

HB1716 HD1 creates a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it, while still holding them accountable to all other election laws and requiring them to keep fielding candidates. That's a reasonable, fair standard.

I urge the committee to pass HB1716 HD1.

Me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Sierra Club of Hawai'i Member

Hawai'i Workers Center Board Member

Clean Elections Hawai'i Member

Honolulu Tenants Union Member

350 Hawai'i Member

Carbon Cashback Hawai'i Member

Hawai'i Tax Fairness Coalition Member

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 3:17:47 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cristina Holt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the committee.

My name is Cristina Holt. I am a resident of Hilo, Hawaii Island, and I support HB 1716 HD1.

It does not make sense to require political parties to keep petitioning for ballot access when they have already demonstrated eight or more consecutive years of voter support and compliance with election law. The petition process exists to test whether a party has earned a place on the ballot. Eight years of continuous qualification is proof they have. Making them prove it again and again is redundant, costs everyone time and money, and does nothing to make our elections more secure or fair.

This bill creates a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it while keeping real accountability in place. A party can still lose that status if it dissolves, stops fielding candidates, or fails to meet filing and reporting requirements. The Office of Elections retains full enforcement authority. This is a targeted fix to an unnecessary administrative burden, nothing more.

A fair and predictable ballot access system serves everyone. Please pass HB 1716 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Cristina Holt Hilo, Hawaii Island

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 2:37:37 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Greg Kahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee members,

I am writing in support of HB1716 HD1.

I believe that political parties that have maintained ballot access for extended consecutive years have already demonstrated sustained voter support and compliance with election laws. This bill will create a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it.

This bill also strengthens the democratic process by easing restrictions on ballot access for candidates and increasing candidate and party choices for voters.

HB1716 HD1 promises fairness and consistency while preserving and improving election integrity. I urge the committee to pass this bill.

Mahalo,

Greg Kahn

Molokai

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 3:11:34 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in support of HB1716 HD1.

It doesn't make sense to require political parties to repeatedly petition for ballot access when they've already demonstrated eight or more consecutive years of voter support and compliance with election law. That's a redundant process that costs everyone time and money without making our elections any fairer or more secure.

HB1716 HD1 creates a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it, while still holding them accountable to all other election laws and requiring them to keep fielding candidates. That's a reasonable, fair standard.

I urge the committee to pass HB1716 HD1.

MMahalo,

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 3:25:10 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in favor of HB1716. I believe it streamlines the qualification process and creates fairness in the political elections system. Mahalo for your consideration.

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 9:55 am  
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1716, HD 1 - RELATING TO ELECTIONS.**

Aloha Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, Senator Hashimoto for my district, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews. I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui and an attorney licensed in Hawaii for over 25 years. I write to you today in **support of HB 1716, HD1**, Relating to Elections, which establishes a process by which any political party continuously listed on the general election ballot for eight or more years shall be deemed continuously qualified for ballot placement.

I respectfully request that you vote in support of HB 1716, HD1.

Mahalo,

Christine Andrews, JD  
Wailuku, Maui

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 5:35:54 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing to ask that you support of HB1716 HD1 which would create a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it, while still holding them accountable to all other election laws and requiring them to keep fielding candidates.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 5:59:00 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in support of HB1716 HD1.

It doesn't make sense to require political parties to repeatedly petition for ballot access when they've already demonstrated eight or more consecutive years of voter support and compliance with election law. That's a redundant process that costs everyone time and money without making our elections any fairer or more secure.

HB1716 HD1 creates a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it, while still holding them accountable to all other election laws and requiring them to keep fielding candidates. That's a reasonable, fair standard.

I urge the committee to pass HB1716 HD1.

--Shay Chan Hodges, Maui, Hawaii

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 9:41:48 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sherry Pollack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill is needed as it promote fairness and equal treatment among political parties, reduces unnecessary administrative burdens for long-established political parties and the State, recognizes sustained voter support and organizational stability, and ensures consistent, predictable, and nondiscriminatory ballot access in Hawaii elections. Please pass.

**Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair, Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair, Members**

**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

**LATE**

**HB 1716 HD1**

**Tuesday, 17 March 2026**

**09:55 a.m.**

**CR 016 & Videoconference**

Aloha kākou,

I submit testimony in support of HB1716 HD1. The current redundant protocol is costly and adds unnecessary pressure to meet deadlines to gain ballot access. The current system requires an on-going accountability protocol as well.

Mahalo a nui loa,

Robert Nawahine Mansfield, Jr.  
Moilili

**LATE**

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 11:26:26 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

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

Comments:

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

*I'm submitting testimony in support of HB1716 HD1.*

*It doesn't make sense to require political parties to repeatedly petition for ballot access when they've already demonstrated eight or more consecutive years of voter support and compliance with election law. That's a redundant process that costs everyone time and money without making our elections any fairer or more secure.*

*HB1716 HD1 creates a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it, while still holding them accountable to all other election laws and requiring them to keep fielding candidates. That's a reasonable, fair standard.*

*I urge the committee to pass HB1716 HD1.*

*Mahalo,*

*ANN V SAFFERY*

*HONOLULU, HI*

**LATE**

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 12:53:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ruta Jordans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It doesn't make sense to require political parties to repeatedly petition for ballot access when they've already demonstrated eight or more consecutive years of voter support and compliance with election law. That's a redundant process that costs everyone time and money without making our elections any fairer or more secure.

HB1716 HD1 creates a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it, while still holding them accountable to all other election laws and requiring them to keep fielding candidates. That's a reasonable, fair standard.

I urge the committee to pass HB1716 HD1.

**LATE**

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 1:18:47 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Pamela Elders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I'm submitting testimony in support of HB1716 HD1.

It doesn't make sense to require political parties to repeatedly petition for ballot access when they've already demonstrated eight or more consecutive years of voter support and compliance with election law. That's a redundant process that costs everyone time and money without making our elections any fairer or more secure.

HB1716 HD1 creates a continuous qualification pathway for parties that have earned it, while still holding them accountable to all other election laws and requiring them to keep fielding candidates. That's a reasonable, fair standard.

I urge the committee to pass HB1716 HD1.

Mahalo,

Pam Elders

Laupahoehoe, HI

**LATE**

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 4:49:28 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Von Kaanaana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a constituent of the committee I urge the committee to support HB1710. Income inequality should not be a barrier to one's pursuit to office. Especially if they represent the most vulnerable communities because of their ability to fundraise within their community is limited to their economic status. We should support champions of the people.

**LATE**

**HB-1716-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 8:24:25 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/17/2026 9:55:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anthony Perez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee members,

I would like to express my support for HB1716 HD1.

The process for smaller parties to repeatedly petition to remain on the ballot is a tremendous burden that would be alleviated through this measure. This bill would streamline the electoral process while recognizing the presence of political parties that have followed important steps that keep them accountable and relevant: fielding candidates in elections, and meeting filing and reporting requirements.

Mahalo for this opportunity,

Anthony Perez