

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

**Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2026 Conference Room 211 at 10:02 AM**

**HOUSE BILL 1815_HD1, SD1
RELATING TO
THE STATE FOUNDATION ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz 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 strongly **SUPPORTS** H.B. 1815_HD1,SD1 which explicitly applies existing grant standards to Performing Arts Grants Program grants under the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

Chapter 9 Hawaii Revised Statutes provides the statutory authority and structure for the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) grants program. It establishes eligibility standards for applicants, sets conditions that grant recipients must follow, and requires that all grant proposals be formally reviewed based on factors such as community need, program quality, and the applicant's ability to carry out the project. The chapter also governs how grant funds are allocated, requires grants to be issued through written contracts, and mandates ongoing monitoring and annual evaluation of funded projects. Additionally, it requires recipients to maintain compliance with eligibility requirements in order to remain qualified for future funding. Together, these provisions ensure that SFCA grant funds are administered responsibly, transparently, and in alignment with the foundation's public purpose. In order to administer the funds appropriated for the Performing Arts Grants Program in a timely manner, it would be appropriate to ensure this program is written in Chapter 9, HRS.

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



HAWAII
STATE FOUNDATION on
CULTURE and the ARTS

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07 April 2026

Senate Committee on Ways & Means (WAM)
Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

*Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of
HB 1815 HD1 SD1 – Relating to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts*

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

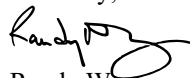
As an organization dedicated to fostering youth development and artistic appreciation through music, **Hawai'i Youth Symphony stands in strong support of HB1815 HD1 SD1** and the vital role that public arts funding plays in expanding access to high-quality arts education and experiences for young people across our islands. The Performing Arts Grants Program under the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts is an important resource for public/community benefit, by scaffolding programs that nurture creativity, discipline, and lifelong engagement with the performing arts.

These grants are particularly important for youth-focused organizations like HYS, which operate with limited resources but have a profound impact on participants and communities.

Thank you for helping to foster a more vibrant, inclusive arts ecosystem.

For youth in Hawai'i, equitable access to music, dance, theatre, and other Performing Arts are not only a matter of artistic enrichment, but also contribute to lifelong achievement, social-emotional growth, and a strong sense of belonging.

Sincerely,



Randy Wong
President & CEO, Hawai'i Youth Symphony

HB-1815-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 8:14:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/8/2026 10:02:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Vicki Boswell | Testifying for Hokulani Children's Theatre of Molokai | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1815 Hōkūlani Children’s Theatre of Moloka‘i (CTOM)
April 7, 2026 Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee, Hōkūlani Children’s Theatre of Moloka‘i (CTOM) strongly supports HB1815, which ensures that the Performing Arts Grant Program is governed under the established standards outlined in Chapter 9, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes. As a rural, island-based nonprofit providing free access to performing arts education for youth ages 4–18, CTOM relies on public funding that is both transparent and accountable. The framework established in Chapter 9 HRS provides critical structure—ensuring that grants are awarded based on community need, program quality, and the capacity of organizations to deliver meaningful outcomes. For organizations like ours, these standards are not barriers—they are essential safeguards. They ensure that limited public funds are distributed fairly, monitored responsibly, and aligned with the broader goal of strengthening Hawai‘i’s arts and culture ecosystem. Importantly, HB1815 brings consistency across all SFCA grant programs. By formally including the Performing Arts Grant Program within Chapter 9 HRS, the Legislature reinforces a system that values accountability, equity, and impact—particularly for underserved communities like Moloka‘i, where access to arts education and workforce pathways is limited. Through these grants, CTOM has been able to: • Provide free performing arts programming to hundreds of local youth • Expand into film and creative media workforce development pathways • Build partnerships across Maui County that expose students to broader opportunities • Engage multi-generational participants, including kupuna, in community-based arts experiences HB1815 helps ensure that programs like ours can continue to operate with integrity while delivering measurable benefits to our communities. We respectfully urge your support of this measure. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. Sincerely, Vicki Boswell Founder, President & Acting Executive Director Hōkūlani Children’s Theatre of Moloka‘i

HB-1815-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 7:28:38 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/8/2026 10:02:00 AM

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

Comments:

Thank you for moving this important bill forward. Last year the legislature recognized the importance of supporting the performing arts as part of public art by establishing the Performing Arts Grant Program. In order to administer the funds appropriated in a timely manner, it is necessary to ensure the program in written in Chapter 9, HRS.

Mahalo,

Susan Browne