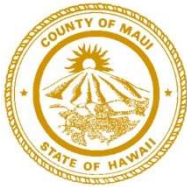


RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Meia o Ke Kalana o Maui

J. KAPONO‘AI MOLITAU
Po‘o o Ka ‘Oihana Kumuwaiwai ‘Ōiwi

KEKAI ROBINSON
Hope Po‘o o Ka ‘Oihana Kumuwaiwai ‘Ōiwi



KA ‘OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI ‘ŌIWI
DEPARTMENT OF ‘ŌIWI RESOURCES
KE KALANA O MAUI, COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAI‘I 96793
pūnaewele: www.mauicounty.gov leka uila: oiwi@co.maui.hi.us

TO: Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair
Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Mayor
John Kapono‘ai Molitau, Director of ‘Ōiwi Resources

DATE: March 19, 2026

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF HB2046 HD2
RELATING TO THE ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I COMMISSION

Aloha kākou:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure, which proposes the establishment of the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission within the Office of the Governor.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is not only an official language of the State of Hawai‘i, but the foundation of ‘ike Hawai‘i, cultural continuity, and community identity. At the county level, we see firsthand the growing demand for coordinated language access, technical guidance, and culturally grounded language planning across public agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations. HB2046 provides a thoughtful and much-needed framework to align these efforts statewide.
2. On Maui, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is increasingly integrated into county operations, stewardship of wahi pana, and public engagement at culturally significant places, including Lahaina and other historic complexes. As the County expands the meaningful use of ‘ōlelo across programs, signage, and community-facing services, there is growing expectation from practitioners, lineal descendants, and residents that government engagement reflect linguistic accuracy, cultural integrity, and respect for place-based knowledge. A statewide ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission would directly support counties like Maui by providing coordination, technical guidance, and contemporary language development that aligns local implementation with broader state policy. This partnership approach honors our intergenerational kuleana to ensure that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i remains a living, functional

language in governance and public life, not only for today's communities, but for those yet to come.

3. Cultural integrity is essential to the continued vitality of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. Language revitalization efforts must be guided by 'ike Hawai'i, traditional protocols, and intergenerational knowledge transmission to ensure that growth does not come at the expense of meaning or context. The establishment of the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission creates a formal mechanism to uphold these standards across public systems, providing culturally grounded guidance to agencies and organizations engaging in Hawaiian language use. By centering practitioners, educators, and 'ike holders in its work, the commission can help safeguard against misuse or superficial adoption while affirming 'Ōlelo Hawai'i as a language of depth, precision, and cultural responsibility.
4. 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is a living and evolving language that must respond to contemporary realities while remaining anchored in tradition. As communities navigate modern governance, technology, environmental stewardship, and social change, there is an increasing need for thoughtful and consistent language development that reflects these contexts. The commission's role in supporting research and developing new words will help ensure that 'Ōlelo Hawai'i continues to function as a language of daily life, public service, and innovation. This adaptive capacity will strengthen community use, empower new generations of speakers, and reinforce the relevance of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i not only as a symbol of identity, but as a dynamic and functional language for Hawai'i today and into the future.

We support HB2046 and the accompanying appropriation to ensure the commission is adequately resourced to fulfill its mission. This measure represents a meaningful investment in the long-term vitality of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i as a living, evolving language for future generations and reflects our shared kuleana to ensure that future generations inherit not only the language itself, but the systems and structures necessary for its continued use and growth.

Mahalo for your consideration.

County of Maui Testimony
HB2046



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs
March 24, 2026 at 2:05 p.m.

By

Bonnie Irwin

Chancellor

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

HB 2046 HD2 – RELATING TO THE 'ŌLELO HAWAII COMMISSION.

Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee:

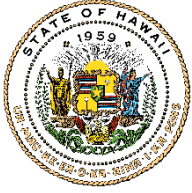
Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2046 HD2. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo supports HB 2046 HD2, which establishes the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission to coordinate and promote initiatives that support the use of 'ōlelo Hawai'i across the State. The commission structure outlined in this bill brings together key stakeholders to coordinate efforts across state agencies, educational institutions, and community organization—an essential approach, as effective language revitalization requires sustained coordination across multiple sectors.

UH Hilo is proud to house Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani, the College of Hawaiian Language, which is dedicated to Hawaiian language education and has worked alongside our community in language revitalization efforts for over four decades. This measure recognizes Ka Haka 'Ula as a key institutional partner represented on the commission alongside the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Department of Education, and Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language at UH Mānoa. The HD 2 amendment further strengthens this framework by adding a representative from the Hawaiian Language Lexicon Committee — a body convened through Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani — to the commission's membership. This inclusion ensures that the commission's work on contemporary terminology development is directly informed by the expertise of those already doing this work at UH Hilo.

The commission's proposed duties align with best practices in Indigenous language revitalization and advance Hawai'i's constitutional recognition of 'ōlelo Hawai'i as an official state language. Particularly valuable are the provisions for coordinating teaching and learning initiatives, conducting research to support revitalization, and ensuring 'ōlelo Hawai'i remains a living language through the development of contemporary terminology.

We wish to emphasize that adequate staffing and operational resources will be essential for the commission to effectively fulfill its mandate.

We respectfully support the passage of HB 2046 HD2. Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION **KOMIKINA PONO KĪWILA O HAWAI‘I**

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411, HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: (808) 586-8636 · FAX: (808) 586-8655 · TDD: (808) 586-8692

DATE: Tuesday, March 24, 2026
TIME: 2:05 PM
PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 224
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

To:

[COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS](#)

Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair

Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair

From: Alphonso Braggs, Chair

and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: HB 2046 HD2– RELATING TO THE ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I COMMISSION

Testimony in SUPPORT

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5. HCRC has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment (Chapter 378, Part I, HRS), housing (Chapter 515, HRS), public accommodations (Chapter 489, HRS), and access to state and state-funded services (HRS § 368-1.5).

HB2046 HD2 establishes an ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission in the Office of the Governor to coordinate and promote use of the Hawaiian language across Hawai‘i. The Commission would bring state agencies, counties and partners together to support

teaching and learning, public campaigns, organizational language plans, research and updated terminology so the language remains living and current.

This bill aligns with the mission of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission. Our mission is to eliminate discrimination by protecting civil rights and promoting diversity through enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and by education. We also work to ensure access to state and state-funded services. A statewide body that helps agencies use 'Ōlelo Hawai'i in everyday public service will reduce language barriers and help prevent unequal treatment.

Hawai'i's Constitution recognizes English and Hawaiian as the official languages of the State. Establishing the Commission is a practical way to carry that commitment into daily government operations and public life. Hawai'i has made important progress in revitalizing 'Ōlelo Hawai'i through immersion education, university programs and community work. A Commission will connect these strengths to the work of state agencies and counties so residents see accurate language on forms and signs, receive clear public information and interact with trained staff who understand proper usage.

HB2046 HD2 is a civil rights measure as well as a language measure. It strengthens statewide coordination, reduces barriers to government services and honors our constitutional and cultural foundations. The Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission respectfully asks the Committee to pass HB2046 HD2.



March 24, 2026

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

HB2046 HD2 – RELATING TO THE ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I COMMISSION

Aloha Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, and members of the Committee:

The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs **supports** HB2046 HD2 relating to the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission, which would establish a body to coordinate government efforts to promote the teaching and learning of our native language, encourage the speaking of our language, and ensure ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i thrives.

A key component of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs’ Strategic Plan is to “Amplify the Voice of the Lāhui” with an aim to preserve, revitalize, and promote normalization of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i in our homeland. We work to drive and inspire language growth to ensure a living language in Hawai‘i and beyond our islands. The establishment of this commission will without a doubt advance this effort. Further, at our annual convention last year, the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs adopted Resolution No. 2025-66 (attached) that calls for the very establishment of this commission.

Founded by Prince Kūhiō in 1918, the Hawaiian Civic Club movement is the oldest Native Hawaiian community-based advocacy movement. The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs is a not-for-profit organization that is a confederation of 61 individual and autonomous Hawaiian Civic Clubs and 3,500 members located across Hawai‘i and across the continental United States.

We appreciate your favorable consideration of this bill.

ASSOCIATION OF HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUBS

A RESOLUTION

NO. 2025 - 66

URGING THE STATE OF HAWAI‘I TO ESTABLISH AN ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I COMMISSION

WHEREAS, in the late 19th century, the Kingdom of Hawai‘i had one of the highest literacy rates in the world; and in 1896—three years after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy—‘ōlelo Hawai‘i was outlawed as a language of instruction as a tool to further suppress the Native Hawaiian people; and

WHEREAS, in response to the near extinction of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, the State Constitution was amended in 1978 to recognize Hawaiian as an official language and to require that Native Hawaiian culture, history, and language be taught in public schools; and

WHEREAS, that amendment spurred the development of groundbreaking programs such as Hālau o Hale‘iwa, the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo immersion preschools (Kula Kamali‘i), the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawaiian Language Immersion Program, and Hawaiian language initiatives within the University of Hawai‘i system; and

WHEREAS, at the national level, the Native American Languages Act of 1990 affirmed the right of Native Hawaiians to preserve and promote ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; this was followed by gubernatorial proclamations recognizing February as Hawaiian Language Month (1994, 1995) and declaring the Year of the Hawaiian Language (1996); and

WHEREAS, in 2007, the University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents established Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge; and in 2013, Act 28—the first bilingual law in 70 years—designated February as Mahina ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding these efforts, UNESCO continues to classify ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i as “critically endangered,” indicating perilously low numbers of native speakers; to revitalize and perpetuate Native Hawaiian culture for future generations, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i must not merely survive, but thrive—and more accessible spaces, programs, and innovation are essential; and

WHEREAS, the Kuini Pi‘olani Hawaiian Civic Club—a member of the Maui Council of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs—is a *thematic club* whose primary focus includes honoring the legacy of Her Majesty Queen Kapi‘olani and advancing the perpetuation of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; and

WHEREAS, the Honolulu City Council unanimously adopted Resolution 25-37 on May 14, 2025, urging the State of Hawai‘i to establish an ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission to coordinate statewide revitalization efforts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs at its 66th Annual Convention in Keauhou, Hawai‘i, in the malama of Welehu and the rising of Mōhala, this 1st day of November 2025, urging the State of Hawai‘i to establish an ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs urges the Hawai‘i State Legislature to include in its next biennium appropriations act or supplemental budget the necessary general and/or special funds to support the establishment, operations, and initiatives of the proposed ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission; and to ensure that such funding is sufficient to enable the Commission to fulfill its mandate—including coordination, programming, research, public outreach, vocabulary development, and capacity building—for the revitalization and flourishing of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i statewide.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the responsibilities of said Commission be to coordinate efforts among the State, Counties, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to sustain and promote ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i education and preservation; encourage broader public engagement with ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i through campaigns, cultural activities, and readily available learning resources; support private and public organizations in developing, implementing, and evaluating ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i plans; commission or conduct research to inform and guide revitalization strategies; and foster the creation of new ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i vocabulary and expressions to ensure the language remains dynamic and relevant in a modern world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission be comprised of members from the ‘Ahahui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language, the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo, Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge, and the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs supports the substance and intent of Honolulu City Council Resolution 25-37, FD 1, and stands ready to assist in legislative efforts to realize the establishment of the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this resolution be transmitted to: Councilwoman Andrea Tupola, author of City Council Resolution 25-37, FD 1, the ‘Ahahui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language, the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo, Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge as well as, the Governor of the State of Hawai‘i; the President of the Hawai‘i State Senate; the Speaker of the Hawai‘i State House of Representatives; the Chair of the Hawai‘i State Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs; the Chair of the Hawai‘i State House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs; the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.



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

DreanaLee Kalili

DreanaLee Kalili, President

TESTIMONY OF HAILAMA FARDEN

Pelekikena, Kuini Pi‘olani Hawaiian Civic Club

IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 2046, H.D. 2

RELATING TO THE ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I COMMISSION

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

My name is Hailama Farden, and I am the Pelekikena (President) of the Kuini Pi‘olani Hawaiian Civic Club, a member club of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs. I offer this testimony in strong support of H.B. 2046, H.D. 2, which seeks to establish and appropriately fund an ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission.

At the 66th Annual Convention of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs, a resolution was introduced by the Kuini Pi‘olani Hawaiian Civic Club and adopted by the full body of the Association urging the State of Hawai‘i to establish an ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission.

That resolution clearly called upon the Legislature not only to establish such a commission, but to ensure that sufficient funding be appropriated—whether through the biennium budget or supplemental appropriations—to support its work, including staffing, coordination, research, outreach, and statewide implementation.

Equally important, the resolution emphasized that the responsibility for funding this commission must rest with the State of Hawai‘i, and not be placed upon the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. This commission is intended to serve the entirety of Hawai‘i—both Native Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians—because ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is one of our State’s two official languages and a foundational element of our shared identity and history.

H.B. 2046, H.D. 2 aligns with this vision by establishing a commission to coordinate and promote initiatives supporting the use of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i across the state.

However, the success of this effort will depend on meaningful and sustained investment. Without adequate funding for key positions, operational capacity, and necessary travel to reach communities across our pae ‘āina, the commission will not be able to fulfill its mandate.

As Pelekikena of the Kuini Pi‘olani Hawaiian Civic Club, I respectfully urge this Legislature to:

First, pass H.B. 2046, H.D. 2 and formally establish the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission;

Second, ensure that the commission is fully funded through State resources, recognizing that this work benefits all of Hawai‘i and fulfills the State’s constitutional responsibility to promote Hawaiian language, culture, and history;

Third, provide for the inclusion of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs as a represented voice within the commission, consistent with the adopted resolution, recognizing the Association’s long-standing leadership and community reach in the perpetuation of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i.

The revitalization of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is one of the great successes of our generation—but it remains fragile. UNESCO continues to recognize it as critically endangered, and continued growth will require intentional coordination, policy support, and sustained investment.

This commission represents an opportunity for the State to move from support in principle to coordinated action in practice.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your commitment to the future of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

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

Hailama Farden

Pelekikena

Kuini Pi‘olani Hawaiian Civic Club



Malaki 24, 2026
2:05 PM

Committee on Hawaiian Affairs
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Re: HB2046 - RELATING TO THE 'ŌLELO HAWAI'I COMMISSION.

Aloha Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao and honorable members of the committee:

The Prince Kūhiō Hawaiian Civic Club (PKHCC) strongly **supports** HB2046 HD2, which establishes and appropriates funds for the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission to coordinate and promote initiatives that support the use of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

At its 66th Annual Convention, the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs adopted Resolution 2025-66 urging the State to establish an 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission. The Prince Kūhiō Hawaiian Civic Club endorses that resolution and asks the Legislature to both create the commission and provide adequate funding—through the biennium budget or supplemental appropriations—for staffing, coordination, research, outreach, and statewide implementation. The resolution emphasizes that funding must come from the State of Hawai'i, not the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The commission would serve all of Hawai'i—Native Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians alike—because 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is one of the State's two official languages and a central element of our shared identity and history.

Founded in 1964, the Prince Kūhiō Hawaiian Civic Club was established to promote the education and social welfare of people of Hawaiian ancestry. Its objectives include supporting high ethical standards in business, industry, and professional fields.

Mahalo for your consideration of our position.

Me ke aloha,

Shauna Kahiapo, Esq.
Pelekikena

president@pkhcc.org



SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

March 24, 2026

2:05 PM

Conference Room 224

In **SUPPORT** of **HB2046 HD2**: RELATING TO THE 'ŌLELO HAWAII' COMMISSION

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

On behalf of our more than 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **strongly SUPPORTS** HB2046 HD2. By establishing and funding an 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission, tasked with the revitalization and perpetuation of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i as a living language, this measure will help to preserve and expand a cultural foundation that is key to building a sustainable and truly hopeful future for all of Hawai'i nei.

As our islands reckon with the ever-growing impacts of climate destabilization, from extreme weather events and disasters, to supply chain disruptions and increasing instabilities in global food and energy production, to the national and global economic impacts associated with these phenomena, it is clear that we must prioritize self-sufficiency, sustainable water and land use practices, and community connections and cohesion, as paramount to the survival and well-being of our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

Fortunately, climate scientists and cultural experts agree that the key to building such future resilience can be found in the island-scale science, practices, and perspectives ingrained in Native Hawaiian culture and worldview. This cultural foundation, while impaired by generations of injustice and living historical traumas, continues to be kept alive in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, which continues to serve as a repository for, and foundation of, Hawaiian knowledge and understanding.

By establishing a new Commission to help coordinate the revitalization and normalization of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, this measure would in turn help to promote and advance the much-needed, widespread understanding of our collective relationships to 'āina, wai, and each other – consistent with Native Hawaiian science and worldview – that may be our best, last chance at creating a livable, hopeful future here in our islands.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club respectfully but strongly urges the Committee to **PASS** this measure. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony Before The
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs (HWN)
IN SUPPORT OF HB2046 HD2
March 24, 2026, 2:05 p.m., Room 224 & via Videoconference

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Kevin Chang, Kua'āina Advocate and Executive Director, respectively, testifying on behalf of [Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo \(or KUA\)](#). "Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo" stands for "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and our acronym "KUA" means "backbone." **Our mission is to connect and empower communities to improve their quality of life through the collective care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage, serving as a "backbone organization" that supports creative and community-driven solutions to problems stemming from environmental degradation.** Hawai'i's biocultural treasures continue to be negatively impacted by political, economic, and social changes, and the increasing dangers of climate change make fostering and empowering resilient communities acutely critical.

Currently KUA supports three major networks of: (1) over 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." **Our shared vision is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'ĀINA MOMONA – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.**

KUA strongly supports HB2046 HD2 as a step toward building back 'āina momona.

This measure reaffirms the state's constitutional obligations to protect Native Hawaiian rights including traditional and cultural practices, as well as promote the study of Native Hawaiian culture, history, and language (Art. XII § 7 and Art. X § 4). 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is also an official state language through Article XV § 4. HB2046 HD2 would create an 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission to better advance our home language as a living, breathing language and worldview in Hawai'i once again. Without 'Ōlelo Hawai'i and the 'ike kūpuna (generational knowledge) it holds, many of our Native Hawaiian practices and values would be lost, including valuable Indigenous Ecological Knowledge or 'ike mālama'āina (caring for "that which feeds") for our 'āina both mauka and makai.

The communities we work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural treasures that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe protecting our environment, the foundation of our very existence, is about sustained and long-term commitments toward achieving 'āina momona abundance once again.** To get there requires maintaining protections for mālama 'āina, including through this bill, to protect our 'ike kūpuna through 'Ōlelo Hawai'i and ensure the best

decisions are made regarding sustainable and informed management of our 'āina and all the life and practices that it sustains. Our decisions today will continue to shape the future that our keiki's keiki's keiki will one day inherit – we hope for a future of shared and harmonious abundance, and hope you do, too.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to submit testimony. Please **PASS** HB2046 HD2.

Aloha 'Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 4:54:35 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this bill and hope that this will lead to sincere progress when it comes to our ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i being used in all areas of the government, education system, and community at large.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 4:56:33 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealii Pang, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs:

My name is Dr. Kealii Pang, a Hawaiian language speaker and resident of Kaimukī, O‘āhu. I am writing in strong support of H.B. No. 2046, H.D. 2, which would establish the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission to coordinate efforts across the pae‘āina and cultivate further growth of our mother tongue.

As a speaker, I know that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is more than just words—it is the language of this ‘āina. It encodes our kuana‘ike Hawai‘i, a Hawaiian worldview that holds the knowledge of our kūpuna and guides us toward a balanced future. When we perpetuate the language, we perpetuate a way of knowing that has broad impacts in education, cultural preservation, and stewardship of our natural resources. As Article X, Section 4 of our State Constitution affirms, it is the kuleana of the state to "promote the study of Hawaiian culture, history, and language." Furthermore, Article XV, Section 4 establishes Hawaiian as an official language of the State. H.B. 2046 takes the necessary next step to operationalize that constitutional promise.

This Commission is needed to bring coordination to the vital work already underway. While organizations like OHA, the Department of Education, the University of Hawai‘i, and community groups have long carried the weight of language revitalization, there is currently no central body to align these efforts. This bill creates that structure. It brings key stakeholders to the same table—including native speakers of the Ni‘ihau dialect—to ensure that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i remains a living language for generations to come.

I am particularly encouraged by the Commission's mandate to develop new words that reflect contemporary life. Language must grow to live, and this work ensures that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i can be used in every context, from the courthouse to the classroom to the capitol.

This Senate committee is uniquely positioned to advance this kuleana. The Committee on Hawaiian Affairs has long been a guardian of the rights, culture, and language of the Hawaiian people, and passage of this bill would be a meaningful fulfillment of that mission.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge this committee to pass H.B. 2046. Let us ‘auamo kuleana together and ensure that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i lives.

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

Kealii Pang, Ph.D.

Kaimukī, O‘ahu

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 6:23:08 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Estigoy-Kahoonei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly urge our leaders to support this bill. As ‘ōlelo is the language of the land, it must be normalized and perpetuated in as many aspects of daily life. Be the leaders that takes ‘ōlelo to the next level within our beautiful Islands.

Julia Estigoy-Kaho‘onei

Moku o Keawe

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 10:18:19 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2046 HB RELATING TO THE 'ŌLELO HAWAI'I COMMISSION.

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 2:05:52 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am testifying in support of HB2046.

I appreciate a coordinated effort by the State to ensure that one of its official languages continues to grow and become more prevalent in the state.

One recommended amendmend would be to require that all members of the commission must be fluent in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. It is hard for someone to make decisions that guide the continued growth of the language if they aren’t fluent in the language and understand the true challenges of keeping this language alive today is. Thus, I recommend amending to insert the requirement that all members of the commission be fluent in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i.

I also disagree that a member from the lexicon committee be included in this. There is sufficient expertise in the current list of members, and a lexicon committee member would not be needed. Their purpose is to create words for new items today, while there the purpose of this bill is to keep the older olelo Hawaii alive. Thus, they are focused on new terms and is not needed for this commission.

Also, recommend clarifying the temporary nature of this commission. If it is to be temporary as stated in Section 2, what is the expected length of life of the commission, or when will it be evaluated and considered for permanence?

Mahalo for your consideration,
Keoni Shizuma

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 6:50:47 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this legislation.

David Ball

Waiialae-Kahala

Hawaii State Legislature
33rd Legislature, 2026

Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

March 17, 2026

Aloha mai Senators - Chair Richards III, Vice Chair Lamosao and Members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB2046 HD2.

I am writing in **SUPPORT** of [HB2046 HD2](#) - which seeks to establish and appropriate funds for the olelo Hawaii Commission to coordinate and promote initiatives that support the use of olelo Hawaii - with **AMENDMENTS**.

As a native speaker of the Hawaiian language - *those who come from an unbroken lineage of native speakers* - I am writing to urge this committee to **amend** HB2046 HD2 to include at least **two native speakers** from the **Niihau** community to serve as **members** of the olelo Hawaii commission as follows:

(3) A representative from Kawaihuelani center for Hawaiian language at the university of Hawaii at Manoa; ~~and~~

(4) A representative from the Ka Haka Ula o Keelikolani college of Hawaiian language at the university of Hawaii at Hilo;

(5) A Niihau native speaker representative from Ka Leo o na Kupa, County of Kauai; and

(6) A Niihau native speaker representative from the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa

(b) The following members shall be selected by the chair and invited to participate:

~~(1) A native speaker of the Niihau dialect;~~

The Niihau community is the only living community who has continuously utilized Hawaiian without interruption (Act 57, 1896) since time immemorial, a living testament to successful intergenerational language transfer and the ability to use and adapt language in every aspect throughout the existence of the language.

The inclusion of a fifth and sixth member from the Niihau community to the commission will provide a robust, unique perspective to a commission heavily constructed of second language learners of the language, who bring with them their own sets of experiences and expertise. This committee's primary duties could have a substantial effect on the language moving forward and it is important that guardrails are put into place to prevent significant and unnatural language drift from increasing. Thus the proposed **amendment** to include **two** Niihau native speaker representatives would be advantageous to the work of this commission and the larger efforts to increase the quality and use of Hawaiian across the Hawaiian islands.

E ao i ka naauao, a malama hoi i ka pono (Kamehameha III, 1825)

No ka pono o ka aina,
Kahea Faria

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 7:44:23 AM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

****Testimony in Strong Support of HB2046 HD2****

****Relating to the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission** **Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs****

Aloha Chair Senator Tim Richards, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs,

E komo mai, aloha nui loa.

My name is Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I., and I serve as Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party (www.Ohanaunityparty.com). As the ****number one testifier and supporter on the record**** for Native Hawaiian justice this session — from championing the Public Land Trust bills to every measure that protects our kuleana to ‘āina and culture — I rise today in ****strong, passionate support**** of ****HB2046 HD2****. Aloha especially to you, Chair Richards — mahalo piha for your steadfast leadership, including championing SB1249 last year (Duke Pia's Law) to protect our farmers and take a real bite out of rural crime, just like McGruff taught us: "Take a bite out of crime!" We can take that same determined bite out of cultural erosion this year — bite out of the fading use of our mother tongue, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, and ensure it thrives as a living, breathing language for generations to come.

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is the heartbeat of our lāhui — the living breath passed from kūpuna to keiki, carrying stories, values, and sovereignty in every word. Yet like a lei left too long in the sun, our language has been frayed by history, English dominance, and lost speakers. HB2046 HD2 mends that lei by establishing the ****‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission**** — a temporary, focused body within the Office of the Governor — to coordinate statewide revival efforts. Key strengths in black and white: - Brings together core experts: OHA leadership (as chair), DOE Hawaiian education,

UH Mānoa’s Kawaihuelani Center, UH Hilo’s Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College — plus invited voices like a Nī‘ihau dialect speaker and lexicon specialists. - Empowers real action: Coordinate teaching/learning promotion, run regular campaigns and activities to encourage everyday speaking, support orgs in creating their own language plans, conduct research for

revitalization, and develop new words so ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i evolves with modern life — keeping it vibrant, not frozen in the past.

- Requires accountability: Annual reports to the Legislature detailing activities and measurable impact on language use and growth. - Funds it modestly: Appropriates from general revenues for FY 2026-2027 to establish and operate the Commission. - Temporary by design: Sunsets December 2, 2030 — allowing evaluation of results before deciding permanence.

This is ponokea — righteous restoration. When we strengthen ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, we heal wounds from the overthrow, empower our keiki to speak their truth, and ensure cultural self-determination. No new bureaucracy — just smart coordination to make Hawaiian the everyday language it deserves to be. The Ohana Unity Party stands 100% behind HB2046 HD2.

I urge the Committee to pass it swiftly and strongly: fund the Commission, let it work, and watch our lāhui flourish as speakers, thinkers, and stewards of our ancestral tongue.

Mahalo nui loa for your kuleana to Hawaiian affairs and for hearing this testimony from your top advocate. I am ready for questions or oral testimony.

A hui hou, me ke aloha pumehana,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Chairman,
Ohana Unity Party www.Ohanaunityparty.com

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 2:30:03 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaipulaumakaniolono Keala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

I wholeheartedly endorse the need for a Hawaiian language commission and fully support HB2046. This bill will authorize a body of significant authority to broadly advocate at the state level for the needs of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i across the archipelago. I urge our policy leaders to see how this would not be something "nice" to have, but it is an urgent need to stanch the bleeding of our language.

HB2406 would immediately be equipped to deal with the severe shortage of immersion teachers which would improve the quality of education at the schools with less stress on each individual kumu. It would be able to conduct assessments of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i programs from pre-school to the university, allowing us to document successes and shortcomings. It may also be able to assist in aligning the state with its own constitution, creating pathways for businesses, official offices, hospitals, banks and every institution in the state to offer services in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. And, of course, I imagine it would be in a position to advocate for special projects or events aimed at promoting the vivacity of the language, demonstrating that it can live beyond the prism of the classroom.

If ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i is an official language of the state, it must be equitably accessible to all. This commission would be a great first step to creating the firm footing necessary to advocate for a host of pertinent issues. If I may offer a couple of suggestions in conclusion:

Please call the commission an ‘Ōlelo Kanaka Commission. The term ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i marginalizes the people of Ni‘ihau.

Do not grant the lexicon committee a seat on the commission, this commission should—as the bill suggests—usurp the place of the lexicon committee.

Please add a seat for an ‘Aha Kauleo representative to speak on behalf of people on the ground in Kaiapuni.

Mahalo piha

Kaipu

March 21, 2026

To: Members of the Hawaii State Legislature

Re: Strong Support for HB 2046 HD2 – ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission

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

My name is R. Kana‘iaupuni Gomes, and I am writing in strong support of HB 2046 HD2, relating to the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission. As a Kumu Hula and lifelong advocate for the perpetuation of our language and culture, I see this measure as a critical step in ensuring that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i remains a living, thriving language for generations to come.

Summary and significance of HB 2046 HD2

HB 2046 HD2 establishes a temporary ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission within the Office of the Governor for administrative and special purposes, and appropriates general funds for fiscal year 2026–2027 for its establishment and operation. The Commission is charged with coordinating efforts by the State, Office of the Governor, and counties to promote the teaching, learning, and everyday use of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i; encouraging the speaking of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i through campaigns and educational resources; supporting organizations in developing their own language plans; conducting and commissioning research; and ensuring that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i remains a living language by developing new words that reflect changing social and cultural norms and contemporary usage.

The Commission’s membership, including representation from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Office of Hawaiian Education in the Department of Education, Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo, a native speaker of the Ni‘ihau dialect, a representative from the Hawaiian Language Lexicon Committee, and other subject-matter stakeholders selected by the chair, ensures that expertise, community voice, and institutional knowledge are brought together in a single coordinating body. HB 2046 HD2 also requires the Commission to submit annual reports to the Legislature describing its activities and providing data on the impact of its work on the preservation and growth of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i usage, with the Act set to sunset on December 2, 2030.

From my perspective as a Kumu Hula, this bill recognizes that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is not only an official language of the State, but also the living foundation of our mo‘olelo, mele, hula, and identity. Hula cannot be separated from the language that carries its meanings, metaphors, and genealogies. By formalizing a statewide structure to coordinate language revitalization, HB 2046 HD2 uplifts the work already being done in immersion schools, universities, and community organizations and extends it into everyday government and community practice.

Weaknesses and areas for strengthening

While I strongly support HB 2046 HD2, I respectfully note several areas where the bill could be strengthened to ensure its success:

1. **Effective date drafting issue:** The bill currently lists an effective date of July 1, 3000, which is a common “placeholder” date used in the legislative process. As written, that date would delay implementation far beyond what is intended and could create confusion about when the Commission’s work should begin.
2. **Temporary status and sunset date:** The Commission is established only on a temporary basis and is repealed on December 2, 2030. True language revitalization and normalization require long-term, stable structures. A short sunset risks disrupting momentum, particularly when building multi-year campaigns, research projects, and community partnerships.
3. **Undefined funding level:** Section 2 appropriates “the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary” out of the general revenues. Without a clear minimum funding level or guidance on the scale of anticipated work, there is a risk that the Commission will be under-resourced and unable to carry out the robust statewide coordination envisioned in the bill.
4. **Limited explicit community representation:** The bill ensures representation from key institutions and a Ni‘ihau dialect speaker and lexicon representative, but it does not explicitly reserve seats for Kula Kaiapuni educators, community-based ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i programs, or cultural practitioners such as Kumu Hula beyond what the chair may decide. Over-reliance on appointment discretion may unintentionally narrow the range of community voices.
5. **General reporting requirements:** The annual report requirement references a description of activities and “any relevant data” about preservation and growth of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i usage. Without clearer benchmarks or metrics, it may be difficult for the Legislature and community to assess the Commission’s effectiveness.

Recommendations for improvement

In the spirit of supporting and strengthening HB 2046 HD2, I respectfully offer the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. Correct the effective date to ensure timely implementation. Replacing the July 1, 3000 placeholder with a realistic effective date (for example, July 1, 2026) would allow the Commission to begin its work promptly and align with the fiscal year.
2. Extend or reconsider the sunset provision. Either lengthening the sunset period or providing a clear pathway for the Commission to become permanent, subject to performance review, would affirm the State's long-term commitment to 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.
3. Establish a baseline appropriation amount. Including a specified minimum dollar amount, or at least a range informed by the scope of duties (statewide coordination, campaigns, research, and support for organizational language plans), would help ensure that the Commission can operationalize its mandate rather than existing only on paper.
4. Strengthen community representation language. You may wish to amend the membership section to explicitly include seats for Kula Kaiapuni educators, community-based 'Ōlelo Hawai'i organizations, and cultural practitioners such as Kumu Hula, in addition to the institutional representatives already named. This would ensure that decision-making reflects both academic and community expertise.
5. Clarify outcomes and metrics in the reporting requirement. Adding examples of measurable indicators – such as increases in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i use in public services, participation in language programs, or development and adoption of new lexical terms – would help guide the Commission's work and provide clearer accountability.
6. Encourage coordination with existing Hawaiian language initiatives. Explicitly directing the Commission to collaborate with existing Hawaiian language programs in education, higher education, and community organizations would reduce duplication, honor longstanding efforts, and maximize the impact of state resources.

Reasons for strong support

Even with these areas for improvement, HB 2046 HD2 is an important, forward-looking measure. It:

- Affirms ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as a living language, not just a symbol, by supporting vocabulary development that keeps pace with modern life.
- Creates a centralized body to coordinate efforts across state government, the Office of the Governor, and the counties, reducing fragmentation and elevating language planning to a high level of decision-making.
- Recognizes the expertise housed in OHA, the Department of Education, and the University of Hawai‘i system, while also making space for Ni‘ihau dialect and specialized lexicon work to inform statewide approaches.
- Requires annual reporting to the Legislature, which can be used to refine policy and ensure that the Commission’s efforts are achieving measurable results in the preservation and growth of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i usage.

For those of us who live our daily lives in relationship to ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i – whether through hula, chant, teaching, or community work – this bill represents more than an administrative structure. It is a statement that our State recognizes the deep kuleana to nurture the language that carries our ancestors’ wisdom and guides our future.

Mahalo piha for your consideration of my testimony. I respectfully urge you to pass HB 2046 HD2, with amendments as necessary to strengthen its implementation, funding, and community representation.

Me ke aloha,

R. Kana‘iaupuni Gomes
Kumu Hula

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 10:00:30 AM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ileana Ruelas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Ileana Haunani Ruelas, and I **strongly support** HB 2046.

The application and operationalization of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (‘ŌH) across the state of Hawai‘i has been uneven, suffered from a lack of coordination/management, and consistently underfunded.

The commission could help provide consistency to:

- Convene ‘ŌH voices - representative of diverse needs
- Regularly evaluate efforts to support ‘ŌH interdepartmentally/intradepartmentally/and interorganizationally, in order to provide recommendations and reports to the legislature
- These reports would inform key decision makers and stakeholders to make modifications to policies, practices, procedure, and processes - in a timely manner to adapt with emerging needs
- Regularly consider community voice - and promote equitable transparency, application, and access across the varied communities in Hawai‘i

Please vote YES to support the strengthening of

- community leadership
- Hawaiian language growth & vitality
- and community access to cultural/language connections that are protective factors in times of trauma (aligned with Trauma Informed Care & Cultural Resonance in Behavior Health & Well being) and help to provide social/environmental benefits that can far outweigh economic capital invested

mahalo for your consideration.

me ka ‘ōia‘i‘o,

Ileana Haunani Ruelas

TO: March 23, 2026 at 1:00 PM

FROM: Dr. Pililuaikekaiohilo Keala

SUBJECT: TESTIMONY

MEETING: **Committee on Hawaiian Affairs**

AGENDA ITEM: 2046 HB RELATING TO THE 'ŌLELO HAWAI'I COMMISSION

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS**

Aloha mai e Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, the Committee of Hawaiian Affairs a me nā hoa 'ē a'e o ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i,

My name is Dr. Pililuaikekaiohilo Keala an Assistant Professor of Hawaiian Language at Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language in Hawai'inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge at the University of Hawaiian at Mānoa, the Vice Chair of the 'Aha Ho'okō of the 'Aha Kauleo, Hawaiian language immersion advisory council, a previous Kaiapuni student and teacher, and a mother who has raised her children solely in the native language of this 'āina, ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i. I am testifying in **SUPPORT WITH COMMENTS of HB 2046** relating to the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission; which establishes and appropriates funds for the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission to coordinate and promote initiatives that support the use of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

As Ka Papahana Kaiapuni, the Hawaiian language immersion program, remains one of the main educational systems of 'ōlelo Hawai'i for students and their families in the elementary through secondary school levels, Ka Papahana Kaiapuni and its supporting organizations such as the 'Aha Kauleo and the Office of Hawaiian Education are integrally tied and aligned with the main objectives of the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission, especially objectives (1), (2), and (5) as follows:

- (1) Coordinate efforts by the state, office of the governor, and counties, to promote the teaching and learning of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i
- (2) Encourage the speaking of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i through regular campaigns, activities, and educational resources;
- (5) Ensure that 'Ōlelo Hawai'i remains a living language by developing new words that reflect changing social and cultural norms and contemporary language usage

In addition to the already named members of the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission, I would like to offer one additional membership to be allotted to a representative of the 'Aha Kauleo. The 'Aha Kauleo is a consortium of parent, teacher, and principal representatives from public Hawaiian

language schools including nā Kula Kaiapuni (Hawaiian language Immersion Schools), Hawaiian language charter schools and representatives from various appropriate Kaiapuni support organizations. Our group meets quarterly to address specific issues related to Hawaiian language schools. The ‘Aha Kauleo advises the Hawai‘i Department of Education through the Office of Hawaiian Education as outlined in the Board of Education Policy 105-8 on Kaiapuni Education. Our work includes advocacy in the Department of Education, Board of Education, legislature, schools and communities. Allocating membership for one representative from the ‘Aha Kauleo would provide insight and voice specifically from the network of Hawaiian language immersion schools that have shouldered the kuleana and Hawaiian language and cultural revitalization for almost forty years.

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration.

Na‘u nō me ka mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pililuaiekeakaiohilo Keala". The signature is fluid and cursive, with some overlapping letters.

Dr. Pililuaiekeakaiohilo Keala

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 1:49:03 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keao NeSmith	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I support this bill, especially as it pertains to the Niihau community and the independent identity of the community and uniqueness of the Niihau language. The community and their language must never be subsumed under any school or university faculty, as if outside entities determine the linguistic needs and rights of the community. The Niihau people can represent their own language and manage their it the way they determine, without external influences.

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 2:06:44 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Kaliko Baker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

23 March 2026

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE

H.B. NO. 2046, RELATING TO THE ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I COMMISSION

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

DATE: Thursday, March 24, 2026

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 308.

TESTIFIER(S): C. M. KALIKO BAKER, PhD

Associate Professor of Hawaiian

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Aloha pumehana e ka Luna Ho‘omalua Richards, kōna Hope Luna Ho‘omalua Lamosao, a me nā lālā o ke kōmike:

I am writing today in support of HB2046.

Although I've provided my professional associations above, I write today as an individual and am not speaking for or on behalf of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. My thoughts and opinions are my own. I have provided my professional titles to give context to where my position comes from.

This commission is long overdue. The 2026 legislature ought to be commended for bringing this measure forth.

I would like to share a few amendments that I believe will strengthen this measure and the commission.

- 1. There is no budget attached to this measure. This will cripple the commission before it gets established. There must be a fiscal commitment made to this commission to ensure that what the commissioners work on—on a voluntary basis—will be met with a team of paid staff who will see the initiatives through. Moreover, the Governor's office should not expect any commission members who volunteer their time to organize any sort of annual reporting without the support of a qualified staff.**
- 2. Membership. As a former two-term commissioner on the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission, seven member commissions are effective while mitigating the level of coordination challenges. Currently, the commission is proposed to be comprised of the following membership:**
 - 1. OHA Chair or designee**
 - 2. Office of Hawaiian Education (DOE)**
 - 3. Kawaihuealni Center for Hawaiian Language, UH Mānoa**
 - 4. Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani, UH Hilo**
 - 5. Native Speaker of Ni'ihau**
 - 6. Hawaiian Language Lexicon Committee**
 - 7. Other subject matter stakeholders as determined by the Chair**

My position is to replace the Hawaiian Language Lexicon Committee with the 'Aha Kauleo, which is an organized body of Hawaiian immersion teachers and allies that advise the Office of Hawaiian Education in matters connected to the successes and needs of Hawaiian immersion schools across the archipelago. To my knowledge, the Hawaiian Language Lexicon Committee is not a public or open door membership organization. This in itself is cause for concern when creating law and mandating that such organizations be

guaranteed a seat on this commission. ‘Aha Kauleo, on the other hand, requires broad representation from across the archipelago and has a body of leadership that is selected by its constituents.

In connection with (2.7) above, I would expect that the OHA Chair or designee would choose, for example, perhaps a member of the ‘Ahahui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, a long standing Hawaiian language 501(c)3, or a member of one of the two ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i focused Civic Organizations, or another member of another ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i organization, such as perhaps, the Hawaiian Lexcon Committee or some other organization.

Mahalo for your consideration of my testimony. I would gladly make myself available for consultation.

Me ka ‘oia‘i‘o,

C.M. Kaliko Baker, PhD.



‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 2046 HD2
RELATING TO THE ‘ŌLELO HAWAI‘I COMMISSION

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Kuleana Hawai‘i
(Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 24, 2026

2:05PM

Lumi 224

Aloha e Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Senate Members of the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB2046 HD2 which would create the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission to coordinate efforts across the pae‘āina (state) and cultivate further growth of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i.

OHA’s Constitutional Mandate to Protect Native Hawaiian Rights & the State’s Kuleana to Promote the Study of Hawaiian Culture, History, and Language

Established pursuant to the terms of Section 5 of the Admissions Act and the Hawai‘i State Constitution, Article XII, sections 4, 5, and 6, OHA serves as a semi-autonomous agency and trust vehicle for the betterment of the conditions Native Hawaiians. Under Article X, section 4, it is the kuleana of the state to “promote the study of Hawaiian culture, history, and language.” Further, Article XV, section 4 of the constitution establishes Hawaiian as an official state language.

Consistent with these legal mandates, OHA actively engages with various state agencies, Native Hawaiian organizations, and Native Hawaiian and ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i educators to normalize and revitalize ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. OHA has a strong interest in ensuring that state agencies, offices, and counties are equipped with the expertise, cultural competency, foundational understandings of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i to perpetuate our mother tongue.

E Ola Mau Ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i: the Hawaiian Language Lives

This bill will create the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Commission with the goal of perpetuating ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as a living language. ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, the language of this ‘āina, encodes our kuana‘ike Hawai‘i (a Hawaiian worldview). When unveiled and brought to life, perpetuation of this kuana‘ike has broad ranging impacts in education, tourism and economic development, and in preservation of our most precious cultural and natural resources¹ that make Hawai‘i so unique and beloved by all. As an official state language, this Commission is needed to operationalize ways that the state can collectively ‘auamo kuleana (assume the responsibility) to ensure ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i lives for generations to come.

Building Upon OHA’s Investments in Furtherance of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i

Since time immemorial, and even more recently since the beginning of OHA’s existence, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i has been acknowledged as foundational to our culture and identity as kānaka (Hawaiian people). Accordingly, OHA has invested its own resources into various Native Hawaiian organizations perpetuating ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i through grants and programs. With regards to Hawaiian medium education, OHA has invested \$6.88 million into Hawaiian-focused charter schools that has shored-up funding inequities.² OHA participates with other Native Hawaiian-serving organizations and institutions with the ‘Imi Pono Well Being survey³ that continues to collect and analyze data on ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i specifically and its impacts on well-being. The creation of this Commission is appropriately welcomed, and OHA humbly accepts the kuleana (responsibility) as the chair of this Commission.

As a technical amendment, OHA recommends the representative from OHA be the Chair, or the chair’s designee. To accomplish this, the following language would be amended as follows:

¹ The legislature adopted a resolution that speaks to the importance of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i and integrating indigenous knowledge into policy and decision-making for our just climate future. See Senate Concurrent Resolution 93 (2025 session).

² Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2025 Annual Report, https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2025annualreport_WEB.pdf (last accessed on 2/10/2026).

³ ‘Imi Pono Hawai‘i Wellbeing Study, <https://www.ksbe.edu/research/imi-pono-hawaii-wellbeing-survey> (last accessed on 2/10/2026).

Amending the language starting at page 2 line 1 to read:

"(1) The [~~chief executive officer~~] chair of the office of Hawaiian affairs, or [~~the officer's~~] the chair's designee, who shall serve as chair of the commission;"

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS HB2046 HD2.**

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2046-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 9:55:45 PM

Testimony for HWN on 3/24/2026 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Harley Miner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Richards, Vice-Chair Lamosao, and members of the Committee,

My name is Harley Broyles Miner. I am an environmental and Native Hawaiian Law attorney, and a māmā to two keiki 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. I strongly support this bill.

An 'Ōlelo Hawai'i Commission is long overdue. Hawaiian language is on the rise. There are more and more speakers every year, and more families are choosing a kula kaiapuni education for their keiki. This is so much so that schools have had to waitlist families. Supply cannot keep up with demand. Last year, the waitlisting issue was so severe at some schools that this year, the Department of Education and Office of Hawaiian Education created a new and entirely separate process for DOE kaiapuni enrollment. I've also met numerous families that have abandoned their dreams of a kaiapuni education for their keiki because of this very access issue just last year. And this is an issue families have been dealing with this for decades.

It should not be this hard to 'Ōlelo Hawai'i ma Hawai'i. I believe this Commission will be one (of many) vehicles for improving access to a Hawaiian language education and language resources. As our communities continue to be inspired to learn and be committed to 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, so too should our government.

E ola ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i.

Me ka mahalo a me ke aloha.