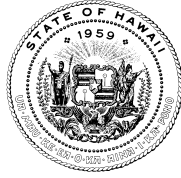


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina
'o Hawai'i*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRPERSON, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. LAMBERT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIR
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawai'i

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON FEBRUARY 26, 2026 AT 2:00PM IN CR 308

HB2309, HD1, RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION ACT, 1920

February 26, 2026

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

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this bill which amends the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, as amended, to include sibling's children as qualifying relatives of lessees for the purposes of lease transfer and lease successorship, in the same manner currently allowed for spouses, children, grandchildren, and siblings.

Sections 208 and 209 of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, as amended, specifies only certain relatives may qualify for lease successorship or transfer including:

- (1) Your spouse, children, grandchildren, brother or sister provided the person or persons designated have at least 25 percent Hawaiian blood;
- (2) Father and mother, the widows or widowers of your children, widows or widowers of your brothers and sisters, or your nieces and nephews, provided that person or persons designated have at least 50 percent Hawaiian blood.

The law was changed effective October 27, 1986 by lowering the Hawaiian blood requirement to 25 percent in the case of spouse and children, effective June 27, 1997 in the case of grandchildren, and effective April 20, 2005 in the case of brothers or sisters.

This legislative proposal was approved by the Hawaiian Homes Commission and included in the Governor's Administrative Package. Certain lessee beneficiaries do not have a qualifying Native Hawaiian spouse, child, grandchild or sibling to succeed or transfer their lease. Certain lessee beneficiaries have also indicated a desire to transfer or succeed their lease to their Native Hawaiian niece or nephew. This bill will

allow lessee beneficiaries to transfer or succeed a lease to a one-quarter Native Hawaiian niece or nephew of the lessee as a qualifying relative. Nieces and nephews would be considered qualifying relatives of the lessee that would have priority before surviving spouses of the children, and surviving spouses of the siblings.

This bill does not change the blood quantum requirement to qualify for application to the DHHL Waiting List, nor does it change the blood quantum requirement for lease successorship or transfer. This measure simply allows for an expanded opportunity to maintain beneficiary leases within beneficiary families. Lastly, proposed amendments to the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, requires review and approval by the U.S. Department of the Interior as well as Congressional review and consideration.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

HB-2309-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:53:16 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Kealii Pang, a resident of Kaimukī, O‘ahu. I write in ****strong support** of H.B. No. 2309**, which adds nieces and nephews as qualified successors to Hawaiian Home Lands leases.

This bill follows the vision of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole, who drafted the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act to restore our people to the land across generations. In Hawaiian ‘ohana, nieces and nephews often serve as caregivers and household anchors. Current law does not recognize these relationships, risking lease cancellation and loss of family homes built over generations.

H.B. 2309 corrects this by adding sibling's children to the list of qualified relatives, promoting housing stability and protecting generational wealth. It maintains federal mortgage compatibility and preserves important loan fund protections.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to pass H.B. 2309.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kealii Pang, Ph.D.
Kaimukī, O‘ahu

HB-2309-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 11:59:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2309 HB RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION ACT, 1920.