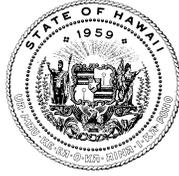


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

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
JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
ON FEBRUARY 12, 2026 AT 2:00PM IN CR 325

HB2309, RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION ACT, 1920

February 12, 2026

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this bill which amends sections 208 and 209(a) of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, to include nieces and nephews who are at least one-quarter Native Hawaiian as qualifying relatives of lessees for the purposes of lease transfer and lease successorship.

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 widows or widowers of children, and widows or widowers of the brothers and sisters.

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.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 2309

RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN HOMES
COMMISSION ACT, 1920, AS AMENDED

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Ho‘okolokolo a me ke Kuleana Hawai‘i
(House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs)

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

Pepeluali 12, 2026

2:00PM

Lumi 325

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs:

The leadership of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB2309, which amends Sections 208 and 209 of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), 1920 related to successorship.

This measure expands the categories of qualified relatives eligible to receive or succeed to a Hawaiian Home Lands lease by adding nieces and nephews at the one-quarter Hawaiian blood quantum threshold. It further clarifies sibling transfer provisions and aligns succession language with the pathway established under Act 80, which provides for a 1/32 blood quantum threshold for certain successors pending Congressional consent. In addition, the bill maintains federal mortgage compatibility under Section 247 loan authority, preserves existing Hawaiian Home Loan Fund and Hawaiian Home General Loan Fund protections, and recognizes that certain provisions remain subject to federal review under 43 C.F.R. Part 48. This ensures continued compliance with federal oversight requirements applicable to amendments to the HHCA while promoting generational stability within Native Hawaiian ‘ohana.

OHA’s constitutional and statutory responsibilities include advocating for the betterment of Native Hawaiians and supporting public policies that promote stable housing, community well-being, and the responsible stewardship of land. **OHA supports this measure because it expands eligible successorship and reflects the lived reality of**

Hawaiian ‘ohana structures, where extended family members often serve as caregivers and household anchors. Allowing nieces and nephews to succeed to leases reduces lease cancellations due to technical heir limitations, preserves improvements built over generations, advances the rehabilitative purpose of the HHCA of 1920. The HHCA was enacted as a rehabilitative trust to restore Native Hawaiians to the land and promote self-sufficiency. Ensuring generational continuity of homestead leases is central to that purpose. The bill also supports long term demographic realities.

Native Hawaiians continue to experience housing insecurity, overcrowding, and displacement. Strengthening succession rights under the HHCA promotes housing stability, protects generational wealth-building opportunities, and reduces the risk of trust land reverting due to narrow successor eligibility rules.

For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs urges the committee to **PASS** HB2309 this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. Please note this testimony represents a recommendation by OHA leadership that is subject to full Board approval.

HO`OMANA PONO, LLC
Mamua Kānaka

ATTENTION:

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair,
Rep. Member of the Committee

February 10, 2026

Re: **HB2309 HD1 RELATING TO DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs!

We **STAND IN STRONG SUPPORT** of this Bill.

Please pass this Bill. Aloha!

De Mont Kalai Manaole

De MONT Kalai Manaole, Co-Manager
Ho`omana Pono, LLC
86-044 Hoaha St.
Wai`anae, HI 96792
Phone: (808) 726-5753
Email: hoomanaponollc96792@gmail.com

HB-2309

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:48:36 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

HB2309 - Relating to the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920

SUPPORT

Aloha,I support HB2309, amending HHCA §§208/209(a) to include 1/4+ Native Hawaiian nieces/nephews as qualifying for lease transfers/successorship.This expands access, reduces the 29,000+ waitlist, and honors multi-generational ties. It promotes family continuity on homelands.Approve for equity and lāhui continuity.

Mahalo Nui Loa,
Pikachu Shelby Billionaire

HB-2309

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 3:59:56 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	CARES	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support.

HB-2309

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:30:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Moses Ramos-Kia Tupua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is **Moses Ramos-Kia Tupua**, and I am writing in **strong support of HB2309/SB3128**.

This legislation is vital for the stability of our community. I am personally witnessing the looming displacement of several neighbors who are facing the loss of their homes. Under the current regulations, these individuals are set to lose their leases simply because their relatives do not meet the narrow qualifications to succeed them, or because they lack additional qualifying relatives to carry the lease forward.

When we allow these leases to terminate due to rigid succession rules, we aren't just moving numbers on a spreadsheet; we are uprooting families and dismantling the social fabric of our neighborhoods. No one should face the fear of losing their home because of the specific structure of their family tree.

HB2309/SB3128 provides a compassionate and necessary solution to ensure that residents can remain in their homes and maintain the stability of our local community.

I respectfully urge the committee to **pass this measure**.

Mahalo for your time and for the opportunity to testify.