



**STATE OF HAWAI'I  
OFFICE OF PLANNING  
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Statement of  
**MARY ALICE EVANS**  
**Director**

before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

Wednesday, February 18, 2026  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

in consideration of  
**HB 2473, HD1,**  
**RELATING TO THE RECOGNITION OF A HAWAIIAN SENSE OF PLACE.**

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) would like to offer the following **comments with a concern** on HB 2473, HD1, which defines a “Hawaiian sense of place” in HRS Chapter 226 and establishes supporting implementation mechanisms to perpetuate these values.

Hawai'i's sense of place is integral to community well-being and cultural identity. This measure seeks to formally recognize and codify these principles across and throughout the work of state agencies.

While OPSD supports the intent of this measure, **OPSD is concerned** that it may be redundant with current efforts to comprehensively review and propose updates to the Hawai'i State Planning Act pursuant to Act 36, SLH 2024. Through this ongoing process, the State Planning Act Task Force is conducting a holistic review of the Plan, including its framework, objectives, policies, definitions, and coordination and implementation mechanisms. This ongoing work provides an opportunity for concepts such as those presented in HB 2473, HD 1—supported by additional research and stakeholder engagement—to be considered in a coordinated manner and integrated into a broader set of recommended updates to the State Planning Act, which will be submitted in a final report to the Legislature ahead of the 2027 Legislative Session.

OPSD further notes that implementation of the educational and outreach activities required by this measure would necessitate additional funding and subject-matter expertise beyond the office's current capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**Hawai'i State House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs**

HB2473, HD1 – Relating to the recognition of a Hawaiian Sense of Place

RE: Strong Support for HB2473, HD1

February 18, 2026

Hawaiian Council expresses its **strong support for HB2473, HD1**, the Hawaiian Sense of Place Act. Every place in Hawai'i is a deep well of history and significance that should be acknowledged and represented accurately. By formally defining the parameters of a "Hawaiian Sense of Place" and developing programs grounded in its principles, HB2473, HD1 works toward ensuring the Hawai'i of today stays connected to its roots.

How do we keep Hawai'i, Hawai'i? Defining and recognizing a Hawaiian sense of place protects the cultural, spiritual, and community relationships Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i residents maintain with 'āina, helping ensure development does not erode these connections. In promoting our relationships to the land and centering 'ōiwi-guided design choices, we can create a diverse and tangible experience for everyone. Although the concept is widely referenced, the lack of a clear definition has led to inconsistent application across state agencies; HB2473, HD1 establishes shared standards and accountability in planning and construction decisions.

This measure prioritizes education and understanding for residents, visitors, and public employees through meaningful programs and principles. Such parameters ensure that the public does not only see a Hawaiian sense of place but understands it as well. The recognition of Hawai'i's culture is a step toward achieving broader goals of respect, preservation, and authentic representation. By requiring meaningful engagement with Native Hawaiian practitioners, cultural experts, and affected communities, the bill supports more culturally grounded, sustainable, and community-informed development outcomes.

I ka wā ma mua, i ka wā ma hope—the future is in the past. Hawaiian Council strongly urges the committee to **PASS HB2473, HD1**. Mahalo for your support in ensuring Hawai'i remains progressive in embracing, representing, and acknowledging its culture.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Madelyn McKeague  
Advocacy Director, Hawaiian Council

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Committee: House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs  
Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 2:00 PM  
Place: Conference Room 325 or Videoconference  
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of HB2473, HD1: Relating to the Recognition of a Hawaiian Sense of Place**

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The ACLU of Hawai'i ("ACLU-HI") **supports HB2473, HD1**, which requires the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to develop educational and outreach programs to promote understanding of the Hawaiian sense of place. It also requires state agencies to incorporate Hawaiian sense of place principles into land planning, management, and state construction projects.

ACLU-HI recognizes Kānaka ʻŌiwi as a unique Indigenous people who have been stewards of the ʻāina of Hawai'i for thousands of years. We also recognize that the State of Hawai'i has constitutional obligations to protect the traditional and customary rights of Native Hawaiians, including cultural and spiritual practices, as well as preserving a healthy environment.

Through this measure, Hawai'i will be able to integrate and protect the cultural, spiritual, and environmental relationships that Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i residents have with ʻāina by establishing a clear definition that can shape planning and development decisions. We further support that community input, cultural consultation, and meaningful engagement with Native Hawaiian practitioners, cultural experts, and affected communities are necessary to ensure that public education and outreach is culturally rooted and properly represents Hawai'i's unique culture and history.

We urge you to support HB2473 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
*Donavan Kamakani Albano*  
Donavan Kamakani Albano  
Policy Fellow  
ACLU of Hawai'i

*With more than 4,000 Hawaii-based members, the mission of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the United States and Hawai'i State Constitutions through legislative, litigation, and public education work. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving our communities in Hawai'i for over 60 years.*

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**HB-2473-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 8:55:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L Perry, Support

2473 HB RELATING TO THE RECOGNITION OF A HAWAIIAN SENSE OF PLACE.

**HB-2473-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:11:59 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this bill. It seems to me that everything mentioned in the bill would already be something understood but unfortunately this needs to be put into legislation for recognition and application. Although I support this bill as a means to start the process, it is a little concerning that the definition of “Hawaiian sense of place” does not specify who will be qualified to design and implement this very important work.

I think there needs to be a clear definition of who will be consulted, what will the guidelines be to determine their qualifications, and how much input will the community and consultants actually have in the process. It would be a great disservice to the community to hold meetings and ask for input, only for their voices to go unheard.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

**HB-2473-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 12:37:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/18/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2473 HD1.

Gregory Misakian