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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL
DESIGNATING HAWAII AS A PURPLE HEART STATE
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND ARTS

BY

JOHN P. ALAMODIN
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Aloha Chair Kapela, Vice-Chair Kong, and members of the committee:

I am John P. Alamodin, Director, Office of Veterans Services, State of Hawaii, Department of Defense.

The Office of Veterans Services (OVS) provides written testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB 9, HD1.

This measure seeks to designate Hawaii as a Purple Heart State.

The award known as the Purple Heart has a history that reaches back to the waning days of the American Revolution. The Continental Congress had forbidden General George Washington from granting commissions and promotions in rank to recognize merit, but Washington wanted to honor merit, particularly among the enlisted soldiers. On August 7, 1782, his general orders established the Badge of Military Merit. Washington stated that the award was to be a permanent one, but once the Revolution ended, the Badge of Military Merit was forgotten until the 20th century.

General John J. "*Blackjack*" Pershing suggested a need for an award for merit in 1918, but it was not until 1932 that the modern Purple Heart was created in recognition of Washington's ideals and for the bicentennial of his birth. General Order #3 announced the establishment of the award.

Citing the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, since the award was established in 1932 it estimated that there may have been 1.8 million Purple Hearts awarded. The award was first retroactive to those who received "wound chevrons" and "certificates of merit" during World War I as well as to those from earlier wars who chose to apply for the award. (From 1932-1942 recipients had to be living veterans or military personnel). The earliest conflict for which there are known recipients is the American Civil War. The 100th Infantry Battalion from Hawaii, earned the nickname "Purple Heart Battalion" during World War II. While 248 are currently recognized as living in the state, the historic 100th Infantry Battalion alone received 1,705 Purple Hearts.

A "Purple Heart State" is an official designation given to a state by its governor or legislature to honor and recognize military members wounded or killed in action. This designation is often linked to the National Purple Heart Trail a symbolic system of roads and monuments across all 50 states. Hawaii would be joining other states such as California, Washington, New York, and Virginia to honor military personnel wounded or killed in combat.

Hawaii becoming a Purple Heart State would formally honor and recognize the service, sacrifices, and courage of military members wounded or killed in combat. This designation would demonstrate gratitude, support our Veteran community and their families, and ensures their sacrifices are not forgotten. Summarily, we support efforts to honor those who sacrificed and served to defend and to protect our country and allies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

John P. Alamodin, john.p.alamodin@hawaii.gov



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 9 HD1
DESIGNATING HAWAII AS A PURPLE HEART STATE**

Committee on Culture & Arts
Rep. Jeanne Kapela, Chair
Rep. Sam Satoru Kong, Vice Chair

Friday, February 20, 2026 at 11:00 AM
Conference Room 309 or via Videoconference

Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Kong, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Military Affairs Council ("MAC") supports HB 9 HD1.

The MAC was established in 1985 when the Chamber was appointed by the State to serve as the liaison to the military. The MAC advocates on behalf of Hawaii's military, and is comprised of business leaders, academic institutions, State and County officials, members of the CODEL, community leaders, labor unions and organizations and retired U.S. flag and general officers. The MAC works to support Hawaii's location as a strategic U.S. headquarters in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region which is crucial for U.S. national and homeland security.

Designating the State of Hawaii as a Purple Heart State is a meaningful way to honor and express our deepest gratitude to the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces who have been wounded or killed in the line of duty. The Purple Heart is among our nation's most revered military decorations, awarded to those injured or killed in combat by enemy action. By officially recognizing Hawaii as a Purple Heart State, we affirm our collective respect for the sacrifices made by these heroes and their families.

HB 9 HD1 complements House Concurrent Resolution 94, adopted in 2025, which requested that August 7, 2025, be proclaimed as Purple Heart Day to honor the courageous service of the United States Armed Forces. Among these heroes are the distinguished Purple Heart recipients whose valor, resilience, and dedication to duty embody the highest ideals of service. Their sacrifices merit our lasting respect and gratitude.

Becoming a Purple Heart State places Hawaii among a network of communities across the nation that are dedicated to honoring veterans. This national recognition would bring positive attention to Honolulu and its commitment to supporting those who have served. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support.

Good morning Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Kong, and Members of the committee.

I am writing in strong support of HB-9

Before I testify, I would like to introduce myself. I am not a recipient of this prestigious award, nor am I submitting testimony for my own personal benefit. I am, however, a proud United States Army active-duty veteran. I served for 5 years, have been overseas once, and I had a CONUS assignment. My MOS was a 13F, but my MOS code was 13F30L7. I was a Fire Support Specialist, as well as a Forward Observer. I worked with Field Artillery and was attached to the able to be attached to both light and heavy combat teams. I was the person with the radio that performed reconnaissance, intel, and provided artillery fire, but I was also able to work with the infantry mortar platoons, the air force's fighters, and the navy's ships.

First presented by George Washington, the Purple Heart, formally known as the Badge of Military Merit, was the very first award that is still given and worn to this day. I believe the designation of Hawaii as a Purple Heart State would let veterans, especially recipients of the incredibly honorable award be recognized. This will not only raise awareness for our veterans but also preserving and educating our future generations. Given Hawaii's deep military history and the many veterans that live amongst us on this island, we should honor and recognize those who have made and are currently making the selfless decision to risk and sacrifice their lives for the safeguard of our nation. Not only the individuals but as well as the history they fought and fight for. Without our Armed Forces, we may not be living the lives we are living today. Hawaii's involvement with the military first started when it was seen as a strategic location in the Pacific. Following this initial event, the naval base known as Pearl Harbor was secured under the Bayonet Constitution. The very well-known tragedy that took place on December 7th, 1941, known as the "Attack on Pearl Harbor" was a major turning point for the World War, drawing the United States in, and making Pearl Harbor a major military command center and staging area. Now, Hawaii is home to the U.S. Indopacific Command (INDOPACOM) which is the largest unified combatant command, housing major bases across the State.

My name is Takumi Abe, and I am a proud Purple Heart recipient and an active member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Rainbow Chapter #483, Hawai'i. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of the bill to designate the State of Hawai'i as a Purple Heart State.

I have been a serious advocate for ensuring that Purple Heart recipients here in Hawai'i are properly acknowledged and recognized for the service and sacrifice they endured in combat. Our wounded service members fought tirelessly when our nation called upon us. Now that we have returned home bearing the physical and emotional wounds of war, it is vital that our service and sacrifice are recognized—not only by our nation, but by the State we proudly call home.

This bill holds deep personal meaning for me. Many Purple Heart recipients are no longer with us today, and I have pushed for this legislation in their honor, as well as for the recipients who remain and for their 'ohana, who also share in the sacrifice. Designating Hawai'i as a Purple Heart State would send a powerful message that our state stands with and supports its combat-wounded veterans.

I have had the privilege of working with Councilmember Augie Tulba on the Purple Heart City initiative and the creation of Purple Heart City signage throughout O'ahu. I have also been honored to work alongside Senator Mike Gabbard and Representative Sam Kong in obtaining the State Proclamation recognizing Hawai'i as a Purple Heart State. Passing this bill would be a meaningful continuation of those efforts and would signify Hawai'i's lasting commitment to honoring its wounded warriors.

This designation is not about politics—it is about respect, remembrance, and recognition. It is about ensuring that the sacrifices made by Hawai'i's sons and daughters in combat are never forgotten.

Mahalo nui loa for your time, consideration, and continued support of Hawai'i's veterans. I look forward to working with you all in the near future.

Very Respectfully,

Takumi Abe
Purple Heart Recipient
Military Order of the Purple Heart
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HB-9-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2026 10:46:22 AM

Testimony for CAA on 2/20/2026 11:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tevita Tulahe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Kong, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tevita Tulahe, and I am a proud service member of the United States Army. I was born and raised in Wailuku, Maui, and Hawai'i will always be my home, no matter where my service takes me. I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of HB9 which designates Hawai'i as a Purple Heart State.

As a soldier, I have the privilege and responsibility of wearing the uniform of our nation. I have deployed in defense of our country, placing my life on the line, leaving behind my wife and family to uphold the freedoms and values that define America. Every time I step onto foreign soil in service to this nation, I do so knowing the risks, but also with an unwavering commitment and dedication to protect my fellow citizens and the land that raised me.

The Purple Heart is one of the most distinguished military decorations, awarded to those who have been wounded or killed in combat. It is a solemn recognition of the sacrifices made by service members who have endured the physical and emotional scars of war. Hawai'i, a state with a deep and proud military history, should join the ranks of other states that have honored these brave men and women by becoming a Purple Heart State.

Designating Hawai'i as a Purple Heart State is more than just a symbolic gesture, it is a statement of gratitude, respect, and remembrance. It is a commitment to honoring those who have borne the wounds of battle and ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten. This recognition will remind our communities of the price of freedom and the heroism of those who have served and those who continue to serve.

As someone who has experienced the realities of military life firsthand, I urge this committee to pass HB9 and stand in support of Hawai'i's service members, past and present. Let us show the world that Hawai'i does not take for granted the sacrifices made by our military 'ohana.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Tevita Tulahe