



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

April 7, 2026

2:00 PM

Conference Room 325

In SUPPORT of HCR15/HR17: EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS POLICY AND URGING THE HAWAII ATTORNEY GENERAL TO SUBMIT AN AMICUS CURIAE BRIEF TO DEFEND THE ADMISSIONS POLICY IN ANY FUTURE LAWSUIT

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

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** HCR15/HR17, which recognizes the moral and legal need to collectively defend Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy, and to heal the colonial injustices and generational harms inflicted upon the Kānaka 'Ōiwi community and by extension, our 'āina, social fabric, and climate resilience.

The international and local communities have recognized that colonialism - the displacement of indigenous peoples for the extractive exploitation of their land and resources - has been a major if not primary driver of climate destabilization.¹ Accordingly, the restoration of indigenous rights to self-determination and the healing of the unique and particular harms perpetrated against native communities - including Kānaka 'Ōiwi in Hawai'i - may be our best, and last, chance to create a just, livable, and hopeful future for our keiki, and the future generations who will call these islands home.²

Unfortunately, the opposite is now happening. We are witnessing continual attacks on indigenous communities everywhere, from the federal defunding of Native Hawaiian and Native American education grants and programs,³ to the continued destruction and desecration of indigenous lands and cultural sites for corporate and military

¹ See, e.g., INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE, CLIMATE CHANGE: IMPACTS, ADAPTATION AND VULNERABILITY, CONTRIBUTION OF WORKING GROUP II TO THE IPCC SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT (2022), available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/>.

² Mari Vaughn V. Johnson, et. al., *Chapter 30: Hawai'i and U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands*, in FIFTH NATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT 30-1 (2023), available at https://toolkit.climate.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/NCA5_2023_FullReport.pdf.

³ Wendy F. Hensel, *President: Urgent Update on Federal Funding for Native Hawaiian/Minority Serving Programs*, UNIV. OF HAWAI'I SYS. NEWS, Dec. 19, 2025, available at <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2025/12/19/update-federal-funding-native-hawaiian-minority-serving-programs/>. Megan Tagami, *Hawai'i Colleges Face Loss of Federal Grants for Minority Students*, HONOLULU CIVIL BEAT, Sept. 10, 2025, available at <https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/09/hawaii-colleges-face-loss-of-federal-grants-for-minority-students/>.



SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

exploitation, here⁴ and across the continent.⁵ Now, a continent-based organization has launched an attack on Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy, and by extension, its mission to reverse the generational burdens borne by those whose forebears were specifically and unjustly stripped of their lands, government, cultural practices, and very ways of life⁶ - by the same interests that have now pushed our islands, and our planet, to the brink of existential devastation.⁷

We cannot stand in silent acquiescence as an organization 5,000 miles away tries to tear down a cornerstone of restorative justice for Kānaka 'Ōiwi and by extension, the future of Hawai'i and the wellbeing all who call these islands home.

To be very clear: the attack on Kamehameha Schools is not only a bold perpetuation of historic injustices that plague our islands to this day, but it is an attack on all who love Hawai'i nei, Kānaka 'Ōiwi or otherwise. The legacy of Ke Ali'i Pauahi not only provides schools and scholarships that help to create a much more enriched, enlightened, and just society as a whole, but also invests significantly in 'āina stewardship, watershed protection, sustainable food systems, renewable energy initiatives, and cultural programs that truly strengthen Hawai'i, and that are key to creating a sustainable, resilient, and hopeful future for us all.

We can and must stand up to this uncalled-for attack on our environmental and cultural integrity, our social fabric, and the Hawai'i our children and their children will inherit.

If adopted, HCR15/HR17 will send a clear statement from the Hawai'i legislature, as the elected representatives of the people of Hawai'i, that our islands and communities stand firmly with Kamehameha Schools and the larger mission it represents. In doing so, it will also reflect an ongoing commitment to heal the historic injustices that continue to burden the Kānaka 'Ōiwi community, stain our social fabric, and render us all ever more vulnerable to the environmental and human impacts of colonialism and the climate destabilization it has wrought upon our planet.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i respectfully but strongly urges the Committee to **PASS HCR15/HR17**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.

⁴ Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, Ph.D., *Hawai'i Can Do Better: Rejecting A Militarist Future*, KA WAI OLA, Apr. 1, 2026, available at <https://kawaiola.news/cover/hawaii-can-do-better-rejecting-a-militarist-future/>.

⁵ See, e.g., The Westport Library, Pipeline Protests, LibGuides, <https://westportlibrary.libguides.com/PipelineProtests> (last visited Apr. 6, 2026)

⁶ Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor & Melody Kapilialoha MacKenzie, *Chapter Eight: Territory of Hawai'i and Indigenous People*, in MO'OLELO EA O NĀ HAWAI'I: HISTORY OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN GOVERNANCE IN HAWAI'I 450 (2015), available at https://downloads.regulations.gov/DOI-2015-0005-4290/attachment_1.pdf.

⁷ Chip Fletcher, et. al., *Earth at Risk: An urgent call to end the age of destruction and forge a just and sustainable future*, 3 PNAS NEXUS 106 (2024), available at <https://academic.oup.com/pnasnexus/article/3/4/pgae106/7638480>.

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 5:30:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jowana Lobendahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My son is a 9th grade student of Kamehameha Schools, Kapalama Campus, and has been apart of the IMUA Lahui since Pre-K. As a mother of indigenous native blood, who attending a free private tribal school, it's only right for our native Hawaiian students to also be granted these privileges. It's the gift of Pauahi that we are protecting. No outsider, regardless of the color of their skin should be able to take that away.

This isn't about race, it's about tradition, culture and birthrights.

Please ensure my son, and our future generations also can take part in a life long legacy endowed to them by our beloved Princess!

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:21:06 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Desirae Bates	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HR 17 / HCR 15 and the admissions policy of Kamehameha Schools.

As a single mother (1 child accepted to Kamehameha School & 1 student not yet accepted) without a college degree, I have always worked to create opportunities for my children that I did not have. When my oldest son was accepted to Kamehameha Schools as a freshman, it did more than provide a great education—it changed the course of our lives. It gave us the opportunity to return home to our ancestral land, something I never imagined would be possible as a first generation born in the Continental US.

Because of Kamehameha Schools, my son is now graduating not only with his high school diploma, but also earning his Associate’s degree through dual enrollment with Hawaii Pacific University. This is not just an academic achievement—it is a reflection of what happens when students are supported, seen, and rooted in their culture. He is thriving!

Kamehameha Schools represents hope, identity, and opportunity for families like mine. Protecting its admissions policy means protecting pathways for Native Hawaiian students to succeed, heal, and thrive in ways that honor who they are and where they come from.

I respectfully urge you to support this resolution and to ensure that the Hawaii Attorney General stands in defense of this mission.

Mahalo for your time, your leadership, and for supporting families like mine. Forever indebted to Keali'i Pauahi.

Mahalo nui loa,

Desirae Bates

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:46:19 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 15 / HR 17

Aloha Chair Chris Tarnas and Members of the Committee,

I support HCR 15 and HR 17.

These measures are important in affirming support for the Kamehameha Schools admissions policy and urging the State to stand firm in defending it.

As a mother of a Kamehameha Schools alumnus, this is personal. Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop was clear in her will—these schools were created to educate and uplift Native Hawaiian children. That intent must be protected, not challenged.

I support the call for the Attorney General to defend this policy in any future legal action. We have a kuleana to uphold Pauahi’s legacy and ensure our lāhui continues to benefit from what was entrusted to us.

I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo,

Teri Kia Savaiinaea

Wai'anae resident

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:27:56 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Dumlao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a proud graduate of Kamehameha Schools, I strongly urge you to defend the will of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop and uphold the admissions policy for any future lawsuit that may arise. The princess' will was not written to discriminate against those without Hawaiian blood. It was written to support and educate Hawaiian children to help them grow and continue to uphold the intelligence of the people of Hawai'i. It was to help Hawaiian children continue to build the lāhui and become industrious men and women. As is said in the school's statement of appreciation, we pledged to *"develop our potential in all we do, To strive to meet our responsibilities, To progress to the best of our ability, To carry ourselves with dignity and pride."* Many of my classmates have gone on to be professional athletes, musicians, lawyers, physicians, healthcare workers, teachers, educators, coaches, and so many other professions that give back to the lāhui. It was always about giving back to the people of Hawai'i. Just look, the first known Native Hawaiian woman to become a neurosurgeon graduated from Kamehameha Schools. Princess Pauahi and Kamehameha Schools played a huge role in her education and developing her character. Pauahi gave what she could to her people and her people will continue her legacy and give back what they can. With this testimony, I urge you to do what you must and support Kamehameha Schools and its admissions policy.

April 2, 2026

TO: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

RE: HR 17/HCR 15: Expressing Support for the Kamehameha Schools Admissions Policy and Urging the Hawaii Attorney General to Submit an Amicus Curiae Brief to Defend the Admissions Policy in Any Future Lawsuit

Aloha, Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for hearing this resolution affirming Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy to give preference to Native Hawaiians. My background and motivation for this position are the following:

- Fourth-generation alumnus of the Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama with fifth-generation nieces who are alumnae of Kamehameha Schools-Hawaii.
- Graduate of the William S. Richardson School of Law, and attorney practicing in the area of Native Hawaiian rights, including 11 years in the Kamehameha Schools Legal Group (1988-1999).
- 20 years' service on the board of directors of the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation.

These are my own personal views, without attribution to any other person or organization.

I support the resolution whole-heartedly for many reasons, including but not limited to the following, which for brevity I summarize below:

1. Native Hawaiians should not be viewed as a racial group, but rather an indigenous people within the borders and under the occupation of the United States.
2. We must emphasize this at every opportunity and press Congress to find that Native Hawaiians have suffered specific instances of discrimination in, among other injustices, the well-documented and long-standing prohibition of the use of the Hawaiian language in public education.
3. That we lack federal recognition is not for lack of trying, but rather because every effort has been thwarted externally time and time again.
4. The Hawaiian ali'i who founded charitable organizations for the betterment of the Hawaiian people did so to prevent our utter extinction at the hands of foreign business interests.
5. Native Hawaiians continue to be overrepresented in poor social, educational, health and housing indicators from unaddressed historical trauma caused in large part by the United States' participation in the illegal overthrow of our internationally-recognized kingdom by these foreign interests.
6. The misguided attacks on Kamehameha Schools are borne of jealousy, envy, willful ignorance, and false virtue. Shame on them all.
7. We stand to lose too much by not pushing back—hard, with conviction and without apology.

Testimony on HR 17/HCR 15

April 2, 2026

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8. Until such time as Native Hawaiians are on parity with the many other groups whom we have welcomed to our homeland, the private and self-funded organizations established for that purpose are duty-bound to serve us before others.

This is a hill that hundreds of thousands, including myself, are (metaphorically) willing to die on. We need and appreciate your help.

Mahalo,

/s/ Stacy Pilialoha Plunkett Rezendes

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 10:57:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janel Romero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support for the current Kamehameha Schools admissions policy. I am a recipient of Pauahi Bishop's will. I owe my education to her legacy. Hawaiian people are indigenous to Hawai'i, under privileged and grossly under represented. Pauahi's Trust should be upheld. It has nothing to do with with any discrimination.

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 11:28:46 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Awapuhi Kalauli Robinson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There is a conflict of interest for the Attorney general to get involved with a private matter. This seems to violate oversight for fair judicial process.

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 2:50:28 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT HCR 15 AND HR 17.

CHERYL Burghardt

Nuuanu Oahu

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 7:15:12 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Ing	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

4 April 2026

TO: Aloha Chair and Members of the House Committee

SUBJECT: In STRONG support of HCR 15

I am a graduate of Kamehameha Schools and a current kumu at Hālau Kū Māna PCS, a Hawaiian culture-, ‘āina-, and project based school located in Makiki valley, O‘ahu. The ‘ike that we pass on to our haumāna is centered in our relationship with this place, Hawaiian traditions, and ‘ike kūpuna. Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop foresaw the value of these practices in the future existence and well-being of our people. Any attack on Kamehameha Schools is an attack on our lāhuikānaka as a whole and the foundation upon which we build our future. Kamehameha Schools is a private entity that serves a specific community in need. Lawsuits that seek to undermine the will of the princess should cease and never be given priority in any courtroom.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in favor of HCR 15,

Tiffany Lani Ing

Mānoa, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 10:41:49 AM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine L. Andrews, J.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Christine Andrews and I write you today from Wailuku, Maui to respectfully request your **support** of this measure.

Mahalo.

HR-17

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:43:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ilima DeCosta	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha and mahalo to the Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members for the opportunity to submit my testimony in strong support of HCR15/HR17, a resolution supporting the Kamehameha Schools admissions policy.

The United States says it operates on a system of ownership and the power of the owner - even after death - to decide how their assets will be used or distributed. I support this principle and the legal rights of native Hawaiians pertaining to ownership of our assets.

As a graduate of the Kamehameha Schools and a member of an alumni association board, I am humbled by my circumstances and the knowledge that my life was made exponentially better as a result of foresight of Princess Bernice Pauahi.

I feel so much love for Princess Pauahi and a sense of giving back what she gave to so many of us, that I penned these sentiments in an editorial entry I submitted to our senior year album.

The schools has gone through various serious trials over the years and - in my estimation- has met those challenges with dignity and grace. The schools has expanded their reach over the years and are now serving native Hawaiian learners across all the islands.

In addition, Kamehameha provides generous sums to persons who are not native Hawaiian via grants and scholarships, including such programs as the Mahi'ai Challenge, where many non native Hawaiians were provided the foundation for their now thriving businesses.

In the coming years, Kamehameha will abolish tuition for eligible students and I am particularly concerned that those who are not native Hawaiian may wish to take advantage of Princess Pauahi's generosity - only to use their native Hawaiian funded education to hurt native Hawaiians.

I urge this legislative body to adopt a resolution in support of the Kamehameha Schools admissions policy and by doing so demonstrate their full and unequivocal support for the extended native Hawaiian community.

In addition, I urge the AG's to please take the time to submit an official amicus brief in support of the Kamehameha Schools admissions policy. Mahalo piha.

Imua, Kamehameha!