

# Letter in Support of SB2477

February 27, 2026

To: Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts  
Hawaii State Legislature  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: Strong Support for SB2477 – Cultural Recognition Through Historical Markers at Maunalua**

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is R.Kana'iaupuni Gomes, and I am a resident of Honolulu and a Kumu Hula for Ka Pā Hula O Hakamaikalani. I write to you today as a concerned private citizen in strong support of SB2477, which requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources to place historical markers acknowledging the traditional landform on which the Hawaii Kai Towne Center is sited as "Maunalua."

## The Importance of Place Names and Cultural Memory

Hawaiian place names are not simply labels on a map—they are repositories of history, genealogy, and cultural knowledge. Each name tells a story about the land, the people who lived there, and the events that shaped our islands. When we lose these names or allow them to be erased by modern development, we lose irreplaceable pieces of our collective memory and identity.

Maunalua is one such name. It refers to a significant landform and area with deep cultural and historical meaning. Yet for many residents and visitors who frequent the Hawaii Kai Towne Center, that name and its significance remain unknown. SB2477 addresses this gap by requiring the installation of historical markers that acknowledge and educate the public about the traditional name and cultural importance of this place.

As a Kumu Hula, I understand deeply the importance of preserving our traditional place names. These names are woven into our mele, our mo'olelo, and our cultural practices. They connect us to our kūpuna and to the land itself. When we allow these names to be forgotten or replaced by commercial designations, we sever those connections and diminish our collective understanding of who we are and where we come from.

## Why SB2477 is Necessary

**This bill serves several critical purposes:**

- **Cultural preservation:** It ensures that the traditional Hawaiian name "Maunalua" is publicly recognized and preserved for future generations, preventing it from being forgotten or overshadowed by modern commercial names.

- **Public education:** Historical markers provide an accessible way for residents and visitors to learn about Hawaiian history, culture, and the significance of the land they are standing on.
- **Respect and acknowledgment:** Recognizing traditional place names is a matter of respect for Native Hawaiian culture and for the kūpuna who named these places and passed down knowledge about them.
- **Restoration of identity:** As Hawai‘i continues to develop and urbanize, it is essential that we do not allow commercialization to erase the cultural and historical identity of our islands. SB2477 is a small but meaningful step toward restoring that identity in public spaces.

## Who This Bill Benefits

SB2477 benefits the people of Hawai‘i—particularly Native Hawaiian communities who have advocated for the preservation and recognition of traditional place names and cultural knowledge.

- **Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners** and community members gain public acknowledgment of their history and the traditional names that have been passed down through generations.
- **Residents and visitors** benefit from increased awareness and education about Hawaiian culture, history, and the significance of the land.
- **Future generations** will grow up with a stronger connection to the cultural and historical identity of their home, rather than knowing only modern commercial names.

This is not a bill that benefits developers, corporations, or commercial interests. It is a straightforward cultural preservation measure that costs little but means a great deal to those who value Hawaiian history and identity.

## A Modest but Meaningful Action

SB2477 does not require significant expenditure or impose burdensome obligations. It simply directs DLNR to install historical markers—a modest action with lasting cultural and educational value. The markers will serve as permanent reminders of the land's traditional name and significance, ensuring that Maunalua is not forgotten.

In a state where so much land has been developed, commercialized, and renamed, it is essential that we take every opportunity to preserve and honor the traditional names and knowledge that connect us to this place. SB2477 does exactly that.

## Conclusion

SB2477 is a necessary and respectful measure that honors Hawaiian culture, preserves traditional place names, and educates the public about the significance of the land on which they live and visit. It costs little, requires little, and means a great deal to those who value cultural preservation and historical memory.

Maunaloa deserves to be recognized. Its name and its history deserve to be known. SB2477 ensures that they will be.

**I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB2477.**

Mahalo nui for your commitment to cultural preservation and for ensuring that Hawaiian history and identity remain visible and honored in our public spaces.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

R.Kana'iaupuni Gomes  
Kumu Hula, Ka Pā Hula O Hakamaikalani  
Honolulu, Hawai'i