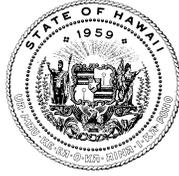


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
ON FEBRUARY 17, 2026 AT 1:05PM IN CR 224**

SB 2924, RELATING TO THE KANEHILI COMMUNITY HALE

February 17, 2026

Aloha Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports with amendments** this bill which authorizes the issuance of general obligation bonds and appropriates funds to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands for a capital improvement project for the construction of the Kānehili community hale, a new access road, and a parking lot at the Kānehili homestead.

DHHL appreciates the intent of this bill. The Kapolei Regional Plan Update which can be viewed here [Final-Kapolei-Regional-Plan-2022.pdf](#), identifies funding for park related improvements as a priority. The plan update also notes that a license was issued to the Kānehili Community Association for the Kānehili Community Association Park.

DHHL strongly recommends that the noted funding source be changed and amended in the language of the bill from general obligation bonds (GOB) to general funds, grant funds, or another appropriate funding source. When using GOB, there may be a requirement that the noted State agency may need site control. GOB may not be the best funding option because the park is licensed to the Kānehili Community Association.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Kānehili Community Association

A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

C/O HAWAIIANA MANAGEMENT CO. LTD, PACIFIC PARK PLAZA #700, 711 KAPIOLANI BLVD.
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813 PHONE: (808) 593-9100

SB2924 Testimony In Support of SB2924 Relating to the Kānehili Community Hale

Aloha Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao and Honorable Members of the Hawaiian Affairs Committee.

My name is Randy Akau, President of the Kānehili Community Association. I am writing in full support of SB2924 which requests for funding of \$15,000,000 for a Capital Improvement Project for the construction of the Kanehili Community Hale, a new access road, and parking. This long awaited facility represents a critical investment in the cultural vitality, educational advancement, and overall well-being of the Kānehili Homestead Community, and its Native Hawaiian beneficiaries.

The Kānehili Community Hale is a community driven project, conceived and led by homestead beneficiaries to strengthen our community through cultural preservation, education, and collective well being. It will serve as a dedicated space where Hawaiian cultural traditions, and our native language can be practiced, taught and perpetuated for future generations. This facility will also function as a center for education, and community engagement. Planned spaces include a computer room, learning/resource center, computer literacy programs, youth mentorship, workforce development support, community based programs, and conference room.

These resources will expand access to educational opportunities, strengthen economic pathways and empower our beneficiaries with tools necessary to thrive in today's economy. Equally important, this Hale will promote recreation and community well-being by providing a safe and welcoming environment where families can gather, build relationships, and reinforce the social fabric that sustains resilient homestead communities.

This project includes a commercial kitchen, an event hall, and supporting infrastructure, as well as construction of a new access road, and parking to ensure a safe and equitable access for all beneficiaries. This project has been thoughtfully planned by the Kānehili beneficiaries as a multiphase complex, designed to serve current and future generations. We remain committed to securing additional resources to complete future phases, including park structures and expanded recreational amenities.

SB2924 is directly aligned with the intent and purpose of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920, which was established to promote self-determination, economic self-sufficiency, and the long term stability of Native Hawaiian beneficiaries. The Hale represents an investment in that vision by enabling homesteaders to strengthen their cultural foundation, build economic capacity, and sustain their community for generations to come.

I respectfully urge this Committee to pass SB2924, and support this community-driven initiative for the Kānehili Community Association.

Mahalo Nui for your time, your leadership, and your sincere consideration.

Randy Akau, President, Kānehili Community Association

Randy Akau

SB-2924

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 3:52:32 AM

Testimony for HWN on 2/17/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donna Neitzel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of Kanehili Hawaiian Homestead for the last sixteen years I strongly support this bill SB 2924. Our community truly needs this for the current and future generations of Hawaiians in the Kapolei areas. We currently have four homestead communities in Kapolei. Maluohai, Kaupea, Kanehili and Kauluokahai the Hawaiians in Kapolei need a gathering hale for us all. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2924

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:33:57 AM

Testimony for HWN on 2/17/2026 1:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

****Testimony in Strong Support of SB2924 – Relating to the Kanehili Community Hale****

Aloha kakou, Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I., Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party. Aloha nui loa from the heart of our islands, where we live by the guiding spirit of ****aloha****—love, compassion, mercy, kindness, and grace—and where ****‘ohana**** means we mālama every member, building spaces that strengthen our cultural roots and community bonds, as the ‘ōlelo no‘eau teaches: *‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai. Kōkua aku, kōkua mai. Pēlā ka nohona ‘ohana.* “Observe others, be observed. Help others, be helped. That is the way of family life.”

Today, I stand in full, passionate support of SB2924, urging its swift passage to fund the construction of the Kanehili Community Hale and related infrastructure at the Kanehili homestead in East Kapolei, O‘ahu. This vital bill authorizes the issuance of ****\$15,000,000**** in general obligation bonds and appropriates those funds to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) for a capital improvement project in fiscal year 2026-2027.

The project focuses on building a ****community hale**** (with a new access road and parking lot) as the cornerstone of a multi-phase community complex that will include a lanai, imu station, craft hale, and a multi-sport court for pickleball, basketball, and volleyball. This hale will serve as a dedicated space to practice and celebrate Hawaiian culture, host educational programs, support community initiatives, and align with the principles of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920, as amended.

The Kanehili homestead community has already committed to fundraising for the broader complex, demonstrating their ****kuleana**** and dedication—now the state must step up with this targeted investment. Kanehili, a key Hawaiian homestead development on O‘ahu's ‘Ewa Plains (adjacent to the University of Hawai‘i – West O‘ahu campus), has delivered homes to hundreds of native Hawaiian beneficiaries through phases like Increment 1 and partnerships with developers such as Gentry Kapolei Development, LLC.

Yet the Hawaiian Homes program faces immense demand: DHHL's residential waitlist exceeds ****29,000 applicants**** statewide (with over ****11,000**** on O‘ahu alone), and the department

awarded a historic **~2,600 homesteads** in 2025—the most in a single year in its 100-year history—while planning for over **7,000** more by the end of 2026. Despite progress (including thousands of lots in the pipeline), people still die on the waitlist, and communities like Kanehili need gathering places to foster cultural continuity, education, health, and unity for existing lessees and future generations. Investing in the Kanehili Community Hale is a wise, high-impact use of funds: it strengthens **aloha ‘āina** by creating a hub for Hawaiian cultural practices, youth programs, elder support, and recreational activities that promote physical and mental well-being in a growing homestead area. Such facilities reduce isolation, build social bonds, and support self-sufficiency—core goals of the Hawaiian Homes program. With DHHL needing billions more to fully address the waitlist, this **\$15 million** appropriation is a focused step that multiplies benefits for the **hundreds** already homed in Kanehili and the thousands waiting statewide.

In closing, with deepest aloha and a call to mālama our ‘ohana by investing in cultural and community spaces that endure, I respectfully ask the Committee to pass SB2924 without delay. Key reasons include:

- **\$15,000,000** appropriation via general obligation bonds to DHHL for the Kanehili Community Hale, access road, and parking—providing essential infrastructure for a multi-phase complex that celebrates Hawaiian culture and supports education/recreation.

- Addresses urgent needs in a thriving homestead like Kanehili (East Kapolei, O‘ahu), where hundreds of native Hawaiian families already live, with more awards coming amid a statewide waitlist of over **29,000** applicants (**11,000+** on O‘ahu).

- Builds on historic progress: DHHL awarded **~2,600** homesteads in 2025 and plans **7,000+** by end of 2026—yet communities need gathering places to sustain cultural identity and prevent hardship for those on or off the list. - Aligns with the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920, embodying **mālama**, **kuleana**, and community-led efforts (homestead fundraising for the full complex). - True embodiment of Hawaiian values: **aloha**, **‘ohana**, **mālama**, and **kōkua aku, kōkua mai**—creating spaces where culture thrives, keiki learn, kupuna connect, and our people heal and grow together.

Mahalo nui loa for your kuleana in this meaningful work. I am available for any questions and urge you to pass SB2924—let us build with aloha, preserving our heritage for generations to come.

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Ohana Unity Party, Chairman www.Ohanaunityparty.com Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com

SB-2924

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 6:40:03 PM

Testimony for HWN on 2/17/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eric Twiggs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 16, 2026

I am writing to respectfully express my support for SB2924 and to urge its passage in the Hawaii State Legislature.

SB2924 represents a prudent and forward-looking policy initiative that addresses critical needs within Hawaii. The measure demonstrates a deliberate effort to improve governance outcomes through structured oversight, clearer statutory guidance, and long-term planning. In a legislative environment where competing priorities often constrain progress, SB2924 stands out as a well-considered and constructive proposal.

The bill's approach reflects an understanding that effective policy must be both principled and implementable. By establishing defined parameters and accountability mechanisms, SB2924 strengthens institutional integrity while ensuring that intended benefits reach the communities they are designed to serve. It promotes responsible stewardship of public resources and reinforces public trust in state leadership.

Moreover, advancing this legislation would help position Hawaii as a state committed to evidence-based policymaking and sustainable reform. Delaying or declining action risks perpetuating avoidable inefficiencies and missed opportunities for meaningful improvement.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you support SB2924 and vote in favor of its passage. Thank you for your continued service and thoughtful consideration of this important measure.

Sincerely,

Eric Twiggs

SB-2924

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 6:41:34 PM

Testimony for HWN on 2/17/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heidi Akau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 16, 2026

I am writing to express my strong support for SB2924 currently before the Hawaii State Legislature. I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of this important measure.

SB2924 represents a meaningful step forward in advancing sound public policy for the people of Hawaii. The bill reflects careful consideration of long-term community impact, fiscal responsibility, and the broader public interest. Its framework demonstrates a commitment to proactive governance rather than reactive policymaking.

Legislation of this nature is essential to ensuring that our state continues to address emerging challenges with clarity and foresight. By establishing clear standards and structured implementation mechanisms, SB2924 promotes accountability while also providing practical pathways toward improved outcomes. The bill appropriately balances public benefit with administrative feasibility, strengthening institutional effectiveness without imposing unnecessary burdens.

In addition, supporting SB2924 signals a commitment to stability, transparency, and sustainable progress. Failing to enact thoughtful reforms when opportunities arise often results in higher long-term costs—both financially and socially. Advancing this bill now positions our state to move forward with confidence and strategic direction.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support for SB2924 and encourage its favorable passage. Thank you for your continued service to our community and for your careful consideration of this measure.

Sincerely,

Heidi Akau

SB-2924

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 1:46:49 AM

Testimony for HWN on 2/17/2026 1:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melinda Healani Sonoda-Pale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please vote to support this measure.

The Kanehili Community Center will provide a space for community to gather.

With gratitude,

Healani Sonoda-Pale