

ACT 52

S.B. NO. 697

A Bill for an Act Relating to Kalaupapa Month.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the month of January is significant in the history of Kalaupapa on the island of Moloka'i.

In 1865, the Kingdom of Hawai'i passed "An Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy", which required the board of health to "cause to be isolated and confined . . . all leprosy patients who shall be deemed capable of spreading the disease of leprosy." Accordingly, to prevent the spread of leprosy, the Kingdom bought eight hundred acres of land on the remote Kalaupapa peninsula of Moloka'i in order to forcibly remove individuals believed to have leprosy from the general population.

On January 6, 1866, twelve citizens of Hawai'i arrived at Kalaupapa, the first of an estimated eight thousand people who were taken from their families and forced into isolation. These first twelve women and men were J. N. Loe, Kahauliko, Liilii, Puha, Kini, Lono, Waipio, Kainana, Kaaumoana, Nahuina, Lakapu, and Kepihe. The original inhabitants of Kalaupapa played a critical role in helping these leprosy patients who faced tremendous difficulties. If not for their kindness and compassion, life would have been far worse for those who had been banished to the peninsula. The government provided very little support or supplies to the early settlement of isolated leprosy patients, including no doctor or hospital, and expected the patients to be self-sufficient.

The peak of leprosy in Hawai'i came in the 1880s, when more than one thousand individuals lived at Kalaupapa. As the settlement grew and became overcrowded, the government ordered the original inhabitants to leave the land they had occupied for generations. The last of the original inhabitants of Kalaupapa were evicted in January 1895, a year after the Republic of Hawai'i was established.

The legislature further finds that Hale Mohalu, a collection of World War II barracks on eleven acres of land at the edge of Pearl City, Oahu, was converted into a treatment center for leprosy patients registered at Kalaupapa and became a “second home” for many of its patients. Beginning in the 1950s, state officials let Hale Mohalu fall into disrepair, and in 1978, the State began relocating patients to Leahi Hospital, its designated Honolulu treatment center. On January 26, 1978, eight residents of Hale Mohalu were relocated to Leahi Hospital against their wishes. Twelve others refused to leave and remained behind, including Bernard Punikai‘a, Clarence Naia, and Frank and Mary Duarte. This began a nearly six year occupation of Hale Mohalu by these residents, who together with their supporters, protested policies imposed by the then governor and board of health. Punikai‘a, Naia, and several of their supporters were arrested on September 21, 1983, when the buildings of Hale Mohalu were bulldozed.

The legislature additionally finds that two key individuals who committed their lives to serving those affected by leprosy also share significant dates in the month of January.

On January 3, 1840, Jozef De Veuster was born in Belgium. He later joined the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Known as Father Damien, he was ordained in Honolulu. Father Damien arrived at Kalaupapa in 1873 and spent sixteen years of his life caring for the people of Kalaupapa, ministering to them, building houses and churches, and tending to their medical needs, until his death at age forty-nine in 1889. He was canonized by the Catholic Church as Saint Damien of Moloka‘i in 2009.

On January 23, 1838, Barbara Koob was born in Germany. She later became a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Syracuse, New York, and eventually became known as Mother Marianne Cope. She was a respected health administrator and answered the call of King Kalākaua and Queen Kapi‘olani to help people affected by leprosy in Hawai‘i. She spent thirty years at Kalaupapa, supervising the Bishop Home for Single Women and Girls and serving as a leader in the community. She was canonized by the Catholic Church as Saint Marianne in 2012.

Many of the people banished to Kalaupapa became great leaders of the community. On January 5, 1879, Ambrose Kanewalii Hutchison arrived at Kalaupapa where he lived for the next fifty-three years. He served as resident superintendent for a total of ten years, from 1884 to 1894, longer than any other person facing the challenges of leprosy.

The legislature further finds that since 2014, on the fourth Sunday of January, the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ observes “Kalaupapa Sunday”, where Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ churches across the State remember the people of Kalaupapa, particularly the thirty-five men and women who founded Siloama Church less than six months after the first leprosy patients were sent to Kalaupapa in 1866.

In 1946, leprosy patients in Hawai‘i began being treated with sulfone drugs, which meant they did not need to be isolated from others. Forced isolation at Kalaupapa ended in 1949 though it took until 1969 for the State’s policy to officially end. In 1976, Kalaupapa was designated a National Historic Landmark by the United States government. The Kalaupapa National Historic Park was then established in 1980 to recognize and preserve the history of the peninsula and support the remaining residents.

In 2003, Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa was formed by many of the remaining residents of Kalaupapa, their extended ohana, and descendants and long-time friends of the community, who felt that as the number of residents dwindled, the residents needed an organization to ensure their voices would continue to be heard. In 2009, the United States government approved the Kalaupapa Memo-

rial Act of 2009, making Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa the only organization, other than the National Park Service, to be authorized by the United States government to operate at Kalaupapa.

The legislature finds that the people of Kalaupapa today are viewed as valuable members of society who are some of Hawai'i's finest citizens, having overcome the most difficult of circumstances. Mercy Hutchison Bacon, great niece of Kalaupapa leader Ambrose Hutchison, called the people of Kalaupapa "the pride of a nation".

The purpose of this Act is to establish January of each year as "Kalaupapa Month" to serve as an annual reminder of the importance of Kalaupapa and the significant sacrifices and contributions of its residents throughout the history of Hawai'i.

SECTION 2. Chapter 8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§8- Kalaupapa Month. The month of January shall be known and designated as “Kalaupapa Month”, to serve as an annual reminder of the importance of Kalaupapa and the significant sacrifices and contributions of its residents throughout the history of Hawaii. This month is not and shall not be construed as a state holiday.”

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 16, 2021.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.