

LATE TESTIMONY

February 12, 2008

State Capitol Conference Room 309 at 2:00 PM

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2045 RELATING TO ESTABLISHING A GLOBAL YOUTH CENTER

By Rep. Dennis Arakaki (RETIRED), Phone: 271-0947

Aloha mai Chair CHANG, Chair CABANILLA, Vice chairs Joe Bertram III, James Tokioka and members of the House Higher Education and International Affairs Committees!

Back in 1999, I had the pleasure and honor to serve as an honorary co-chair, along with Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, for the very first Millennium Youth Congress right here in Hawaii. It could not have been a more auspicious or appropriate start of a new millennium for us, situated in the middle of the Pacific, to symbolically pass the torch to the youth of the world. Hawaii has long been considered the model of a diverse mix of ethnicity and cultures living in harmony bound by the Hawaiian concept of Aloha. The first Millennium Young People's Congress hosted young people from over a hundred different countries around the globe and provided the state of Hawaii an opportunity to showcase our concept of Aloha to the rest of the world and the kind of "Village" that all the world's children should be nurtured in.

Thanks to the advances in telecommunication and the internet, many of the generation of youth growing up today think of the world as their community. Issues are no longer local but global. It is imperative that our youth here in Hawaii and the rest of the United States be given the opportunity to access opportunities for international dialogue. We are indebted to the vision and energy of our leaders, who give Hawaii that international perspective.

Imagine if you will, a venue for forums in Hawaii for Israeli and Palestinian youth to dialogue, for youth from North Korea and South Korea to meet, for young people from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and U.S. meeting on common ground to seek peace... What better place in this world is there than Hawaii, with our diverse cultures and spirit of aloha, to serve as center for the international concerns of all children and youth?

To quote from the United Nations Secretary General, Kofe Anan from his testimony in support of the Young People's Congress in 1999;

"As we approach the third millennium, we should not forget that youth represents more than just a ready resource; young people have always stood for the hope that the mistakes of the past, our mistakes, will not be repeated. They offer us the prospect of redemption, that some of the damage we have done to this world can be repaired. Perhaps youth can succeed where we have not yet triumphed. Perhaps our children can make a stronger commitment to the environment, to development, to peace and to security, than we have done. Perhaps they will, but I can assure you that it will be a far more difficult task if they live in isolation, if they do not experience other cultures and other traditions. More than anything, young people need to learn an important lesson that we have failed to fully grasp—despite our diversity, we, all of us are not that different from one another. "

Two words that I want to leave you with, VISION and LEGACY.

The bible says in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, people perish." This is especially true for young people and future generations growing up in Hawaii. What kind of Vision do we have for the future of Hawaii. Is it one just dependent on tourism and a service economy or do we have a Vision for a Hawaii that will be a center for peace, for communications and an economy that co-exists and respects our natural resources? What is the LEGACY we will leave our young people for their future. Islands whose natural beauty has been devastated by overcrowding or one that will bring people together across oceans and continents. I ask what is

your vision for our young people and what kind of legacy do you want to leave them with. Ask if the Global Youth Center is exactly the kind of Legacy we want in order to pursue a vision for Hawaii's future.

As legislators, I hope you will share in this vision, the dream and the desire to one day have Hawaii be the Center for the World's Children and Youth. Mr. Chair, Madam Chair and members of the joint committee, let's keep the dream alive! Please pass this measure and help us to secure the funding that is vital to making it a reality.

Here we are, at the doorstep of the seventh year of the new millennium, about to embark upon that voyage to the future. A future based upon the hope, the love, the faith and the universal desire for peace by our young people and the generations to follow. I thank you all for being part of that vision. I pray that you, our state's leaders and citizens of Hawaii will join us along the way in our canoe on this remarkable voyage to the future.

Mahalo nui loa and aloha!