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LATE TESTIMONY

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WRITTEN COMMENTS
OF
RUSS K. SAITO, COMPTROLLER
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES
TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON
TOURISM AND CULTURE
ON
March 17, 2008

S.B. 2583, S.D. 1

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE HAWAII CAPITAL CULTURAL
DISTRICT

Chair Yamane and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on S.B. 2583, S.D. 1.

The Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) appreciates the intent of this bill and has comments for this Committee to consider. DAGS would like to point out that the Director of the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) is not named as a member of the task force but is directed to serve as its chair. This is inconsistent. DAGS would also suggest that someone other than the Director of SFCA serve as the chair. This would provide assurance that the task force recommendations reflect the perspectives of the entire capital cultural district and not overemphasize the desires of the Hawaii State Art Museum over which the Director has administrative control.

DAGS would be willing to serve as a member of the task force if it continues to be listed as a member and this bill is passed. DAGS would like to emphasize that it would be opposed to this bill if it takes away from projects in the administration's budget submittal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

LATE TESTIMONY

Date: March 17, 2008
To: Representative Ryan Yamane, Chair, and Members of the
Tourism and Culture Committee
Re.: Senate Bill 2583, Relating to the Hawaii Capitol Cultural
Appropriation; No. 1 Capitol District; Kamamalu Building
To Be Heard: Monday, March 17, 2008, Conference Room 325

My name is Satoru Abe and I am in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 2583. I believe the No. 1 State Capitol District Building is an ideal location as a mid-size museum in Honolulu.

The District Building is a unique historical structure that would well represent the theme of art and history of Hawaii's people. Hawaii is a culturally diverse state, with a tremendous variety of talented artists in many media. These artists need acknowledgement, encouragement, recognition, and exposure if they are to continue and maintain their craft. Hawaii's art history needs study and viewing, if appreciation and understanding is to ever evolve. Art needs to be seen, to be felt.

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts has an art collection, very vast in size, and a larger museum that showcases more than it can presently exhibit would greatly benefit the community and deepen the history of Hawaii.

Satoru Abe
Artist

TO: Representative Ryan Yamane, Chair, and Members of the
Tourism and Culture Committee
DATE: March 17, 2008
FROM: Herb Conley
RE: Senate Bill 2583, Relating to the Hawaii Capitol Cultural
District; Appropriation; No. 1 Capitol District; Kamamalu
Building

LATE TESTIMONY

TO BE HEARD: Monday, March 17, 2008 in Conference Room 325

I am Herb Conley. I currently serve as President of the Friends of the Hawaii State Art Museum. I am speaking in support of SB 2583.

I believe there are four important reasons to enact this bill.

1. The potential economic and cultural benefit to the State of Hawaii. We have the ability to brand Hawaii as a major art destination for visitors. The best example of a community who has accomplished this is Santa Fe New Mexico. With a population of only 70,000 they have developed an arts and culture industry that attracts over 1 million visitors a year. I believe we can create a similar industry segment in Hawaii. This new visitor segment in Hawaii can learn from, enjoy and acquire world class art from artists of Hawaii. The Louvre in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, all have artists from Hawaii in their permanent collections. We certainly have the talent and the product to develop this current cottage industry into another major driver for our economy. The state is in a perfect position to help jump start this growth by expanding the Hawaii State Art Museum to a size that can serve as the major focal point for arts and culture in Hawaii. The current museum is inadequate in size to make that happen.

2. There is nominal cost to create this new visitor industry brand compared to creating the infrastructure for potential new industries. We have the art and the artists and we have the real estate.

The Hawaii 1% for Art Law has enabled the State to develop the finest collection of art by artists of Hawaii in existence. This wonderful law and the size of the current collection is more than sufficient to supply an expanded Museum with product to showcase and brand the art of Hawaii as unique in the world. Our 1% art law enables the state to acquire many more pieces than can be shown through the Art in Public Places program and the museum. In fact showing this art collection was the original basis for the Museum. The state has an opportunity now to create the venue to take advantage of this existing situation to expose and brand another reason for tourists to come to Hawaii and learn about our culture and add to our economic base.

Its like our budding ecotourism industry. We had the resources and the visitors, we just needed to have a method of putting them together. We can now make the commitment and investment to put the arts community and the visitor industry together to get greater results.

Now we have the opportunity to show many more works in a building we already own and to move non-museum departments to another building we

currently own. To add to our visitor industry base with such a nominal cost is a great investment in our future.

3. The educational value of an expanded museum to the people of Hawaii and our visitors. The history of most cultures is recorded through the eyes of its artists. We have a rich, diverse and unique culture. It is of great historical value to share that history in as many ways as we can. A larger state museum has the ability to tell the history and evolution of Hawaii through the eyes of our artists for all to see.

4. The ability to keep our best and brightest artists in the islands. With a branded arts industry, our artists would not need to move to the mainland to support themselves in their chosen career.

Personally, my son is a performing artist getting his masters in performance music at Rice University. He was successful in his budding career while in Hawaii having auditioned for and being accepted into the Honolulu Symphony during his last year of high school. Unfortunately, as much as he loves Hawaii, he will likely not be coming back to Hawaii after graduation because the "arts industry" is not strong enough in Hawaii to support his career. With a thriving arts industry, our artists could pursue their creative talents while staying in Hawaii.

The expansion of the Hawaii State Art Museum would give us the opportunity to showcase the arts and artists of Hawaii to begin to attract a new visitor base to Hawaii and expand our most important industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.