

testimony

From: Shirley Okamoto [notacabal@yahoo.com]
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Subject: Written Testimony Supporting SB2733 SD1

SB2733 SD1 RELATING TO THE PUBLIC TRUST LANDS SETTLEMENT
February 21, 2008 9:30 am Room 211
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Aloha Chairperson Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and members:

I strongly support SB 2733 SD1. I believe that the State of Hawai`i clearly has a constitutional obligation to resolve the conflicts over the disputed revenue amounts relating to the portion of income and proceeds from the lands of the public land trust for use by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The Admission Act of 1959 and the Hawai`i Revised Statutes further mandate that a portion of the revenues from the use of ceded lands held in the Public Land Trust be provided to OHA and expended for benefit of all Hawaiians. Moreover, the Hawai`i Supreme Court ruled not once but on four separate occasions that the resolution of this lingering matter is a political question for the legislature to determine and to resolve with OHA.

As Hawai`i's seated legislators, you have been given the authority to judiciously settle the issue of OHA's past due entitlements determined to be legally owed to the indigenous Native Hawaiian people. You have also been given the opportunity to honorably fulfill the State of Hawai`i's long outstanding obligation to the Hawaiian people. You can lawfully enable the State to meet its legal obligations to OHA's beneficiaries to ensure that OHA shall receive a steady annual stream of revenues that it is entitled to receive to meet its statutory obligations to its beneficiaries.

The Settlement Agreement painstakingly reached between the State of Hawai`i and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs is undoubtedly a fair and reasonable one. While it does not fully resolve all obligations due and owing to the indigenous Native Hawaiians, this legislation provides a strong starting point and is certainly an enormous step forward in a positive direction.

For the foregoing reasons, I strongly support this measure and strongly urge the Committees to support and favorably respond to SB 2733 SD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Sincerely,

/s/ Shirley Okamoto

TJ MAHONEY & ASSOCIATES

Ka Hale Ho`āla Hou No Nā Wāhine

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Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice Chair

February 21, 2008. 9:30 a.m.
Room 211

SB 2733 SD1 Relating to the Public Lands Trust Settlement

Good morning, Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and members of the Committee. My name is Lorraine Robinson. I am the Executive Director of TJ Mahoney & Associates, Ka Hale Ho`āla Hou No Nā Wāhine, a program for women transitioning from prison to the community. I've served in this capacity for over 12 years and prior to that as a social worker at the Women's Community Correctional Center.

I am here this morning in support of Senate Bill 2733 SD1, Relating to the Public Trust Lands Settlement.

Unfortunately, Hawaiians are vastly over-represented in the criminal justice system. Approximately 60% of the residents in our program have Hawaiian ancestry. The support and funding we have received from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs has enabled us to address this social disparity in significant and meaningful ways.

OHA serves a critical role in our community in its support of programs and services that address the multiple and varying needs of Hawaiians throughout our state. HB2701 will allow OHA to continue to do this important work as we move forward into Hawaii's future. Please support this crucial legislation so that Hawaiians are able to continue to benefit from the services, programs, assistance and advocacy of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.