

TESTIMONY OF
LORI V. THOMAS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM,
CULTURE, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
ON

February 7, 2009

H. B. 963

RELATING TO WORKS OF ART SPECIAL FUND

Chair Manahan and members of the committee, I am Lori Thomas, chairperson of the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts and I am testifying today as an individual. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on H. B. 963, which I oppose.

This bill, which amends sections 6E-35, 6E-40, and 103-8.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to allow the State of Hawaii Museum of Monarchy History (Friends of 'Iolani Palace) and the Bernice P. Bishop Museum to receive funds from the Works of Art Special Fund. This Special fund currently supports the Art in Public Places Program and Hawaii State Art Museum, which are administered by the SFCA of the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS).

The Works of Art Special Fund was established in 1989 to ensure the beautification and aesthetic value of the built environment through the placement of art as part of the architectural plan for the building and to curate the collection of acquired pieces. The collections of 'Iolani Palace and the Bishop Museum differ dramatically from the State Art Collection,

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which is predominantly contemporary and acquired to support living local artists, thereby contributing to the economic vitality of the state.

Although I support the intent of the legislation to provide additional funding for these older collections, revising the Works of Art Special Fund compromises the ability of the SFCA to maintain, conserve, and grow the State Art Collection. The intent of Section 103-8.5, HRS would also be compromised in that directing funds to 'Iolani Palace and the Bishop Museum denies adherence to art as an aesthetic component to the architecture of a building.

Moreover, the SFCA administers its fund expenditures carefully, with more than \$1 million dedicated to staff salaries for the Art in Public Places Program, Hawaii State Art Museum, and beginning FY2010, 50% of its three administrative positions. If the fund must absorb additional costs, fund revenues will be totally expended within 2 years. This may result in staff layoffs or significantly curtailing operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.