

HISTORIC HAWAII FOUNDATION

VIA EMAIL: TCItestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

To: Rep. Joey Manahan, Chair
Rep. James Kunane Tokioka, Vice Chair
Committee on Tourism, Culture & International Affairs

From: Kiersten Faulkner *Kiersten Faulkner*
Executive Director, Historic Hawai'i Foundation

Committee Date: Monday, April 6, 2009
9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 312

Subject: **HCR 296 and HR268, Urging the Nomination of Punahou Circle Apartment to the National Register of Historic Places**

On behalf of Historic Hawai'i Foundation (HHF), I am writing to support HCR296 and HR268, which encourage the owners of the Punahou Circle Apartment building to nominate the childhood home of President Barack Obama to the National Register of Historic Places, with the assistance and guidance of the State Historic Preservation Office and Historic Hawai'i Foundation.

The Punahou Circle apartment building was constructed in 1964-65 by Mrs. Emma Kwock Chun, who was also the founder of the Waikiki Circle Hotel. President Barack Obama lived in a 10th-floor apartment with his grandmother, Madelyn Dunham, from 1971-1979. Although the Punahou Circle Apartment has not yet attained the age of 50 years, it likely meets the criteria of being of "exceptional significance" due to its association with a prominent person significant to our history.

It is notable that the childhood homes of every United States President all have some level of historic designation, with National Register listing as the basic level of recognition. Both the childhood homes of former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush are house museums. The homes of Presidents Kennedy, Ford and Nixon are all National Historic Landmarks. President Carter's boyhood home is a designated historic site.

The Punahou Circle Apartment building would be a unique addition to the National Register, just as President Obama is a unique president. The multi-family residential building in the heart of an urban area helped shape the experiences and character of Mr. Obama. It is a significant historic resource, important to showcasing the personal history of the first American president to be born in Hawai'i and reared in an urban setting.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic buildings, cultural resources and archaeological sites considered to be worthy of preservation. The National Register was not designed to be a major regulatory program, but rather to expand recognition of significant historic properties. Listing properties on the National Register also brings with it significant economic benefits, including local and federal tax incentives.

Nomination to and designation on the National Register requires the consent of the property owner. HHF has not yet had time to ascertain the intentions of the Emma Kwock Chun Corporation. We look forward to hearing their views on this proposal. Through its Preservation Resource Center, HHF will be pleased to offer assistance, guidance and support for the nomination, should the Emma Kwock Chun Corporation be open to the offer.

Since 1974, Historic Hawai'i Foundation has been a statewide leader for historic preservation. HHF works to preserve Hawaii's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, economic viability and environmental sustainability of the state.

