



SUPPORT
WITH AMENDMENTS

HB 1796
RELATING TO KUPUNA HONORARY DEGREE PROGRAM
House Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

February 10, 2010

10:00 am

Room: 329

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** HB1796 that requires OHA to develop and administer the Kūpuna Honorary Degree Program, which would award the Pōhaku Degree, intended to be Hawai'iys equivalent to the Nobel Peace Prizes, to eligible Hawaiian kūpuna worldwide. OHA's concern is that as there are no appropriations included in HB 1796 to implement this action, the award may be stalled until possible funds are identified and committed by the Legislature.

There are 12 areas identified in the act: 1) religion; 2) health; 3) agriculture; 4) fishing; 5) crafts and weaving; 6) celestial navigation; 7) education; 8) government; 9) business; 10) performing arts, including hula and chant; 11) fine arts; and, 12) music. Of the longstanding awards in Hawai'i, including Honpa Hongwanji's *Living Treasures of Hawai'i*, the *Kalaniāli'i Awards* of the ŷAha Hīpu'ū (royal Hawaiian societies) and the Hawaiian Academy of Recording Artists' *Lifetime Achievement Awards*, this new Pōhaku Award will nearly double the number of awardees. Furthermore, the act proposes to honor kūpuna worldwide and seeks to elevate the status of this award to be equal to the Nobel Peace Prize, which would also expand the pool of candidates. The Legislature must consider that in order to achieve this worthy level, there must be a commitment to appropriate funds for its implementation. Therefore, OHA requests that this bill be amended to include state funding.

OHA commends the House Committee on Hawaiian Affairs and its chair for taking leadership on this proposal to honor our kūpuna. The amendments proposed by OHA during the last legislative session were amiably integrated into the new act.

HB 1796 honors our kūpuna and harkens back to the words of King Liholiho who said, "Na wai e ʻōle ke akamai, he alanui i maʻa i ka hele ʻia e oʻu mau mākua. *Who would not be wise to walk the path trodden upon by our ancestors.*"

Therefore, OHA urges the committee to PASS HB1796, taking into account our above-mentioned concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.