

Testimony before the
Committee on Tourism, Culture, and International Affairs

Monday, February 1, 2010
8:45 a.m. Conference Room 312

On H.B. 2317 -- Relating to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

By Lori V. Thomas

Chair Manahan, and members of the committee, I am Lori Thomas, Chairperson of the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, from Oahu. I am testifying as an individual.

While the intent of the legislation is very much appreciated, there are important concerns that I ask this panel to consider.

First, I would like to thank those who have offered this proposal for its clear intent to support the State Foundation's mission by seeking an alternative to General Fund funding for key positions during this economic crisis.

As you may know, the HSFCA has lost 11 positions out of about 30 in the last two years. These losses have clearly threatened the ability of the agency to carry out programs and services that are used and appreciated by thousands of people monthly, from the students in our public schools for whom the only art education they receive may be through State Foundation programs, to visitors who appreciate the arts and culture of Hawaii by their visits to the Hawaii State Art Museum. Of course, untold hundreds and in some months thousands of people appreciate the art on display in public buildings.

Also threatened is federal and private sector funding to carry out a range of programs, mostly aimed to provide learning and life enhancing opportunities for our students and young people that the State Foundation has committed to carrying out.

What you may not know is that the remaining staff of the State Foundation, with the strong support of the commissioners, is working hard to reorganize, adjust and revitalize their efforts to meet our commitments to our young people. We appreciate the support of the arts community, a vibrant and vocal force, to continue our efforts, as well as many government leaders and policy makers.

Our concern with this well intended legislation is that by funding more positions from the Works of Art Special Fund, the fund would be completely depleted within just a few years. Given the political difficulty with reversing this move, that would effectively bring an end not only to the state's art in public places program – the first and perhaps most respected program of its kind in the nation – but also programs that include arts education, and the ability to maintain and operate the Hawaii State Art Museum.

The commissioners and staff of the HSFCA have worked hard to conservatively manage the Works of Art Special Fund and other programs we provide. We have sought additional private funding when possible and we have recently worked to revitalize the Friends of the Hawaii State Art Museum to support programs that are popular with thousands of Hawaii residents. We have put on hold ambitious plans to extend the reach of the agency as we continue to keep our core programs strongly present throughout the state.

We all know that while we are in a severe fiscal situation right now, better times are ahead. We must be sure that the work of the last almost 50 years “to promote, perpetuate, preserve, and encourage culture and the arts, history and the humanities as central to the quality of life of the people of Hawaii” is not lost for future generations.

Even in these difficult fiscal time, I personally ask you, and I believe many many others who have benefited from the work of the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, including children from end to end of our islands, would ask you to seek other revenue streams for the agency rather than put the Works of Art Special Funds at risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

From: Marla Musick [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2010 5:28 PM
To: TCltestimony
Subject: HB 2317 - Testimony from Hawai'i Arts Alliance

Representative Joey Manahan, Chair

Committee on Tourism, Culture, & International Affairs

Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations

Testimony on H.B. 2317 for February 1, 2010 at 8:45 p.m. Conference Room 312

Hawai'i Arts Alliance continues to be greatly concerned about the vitality of our public arts agency, Hawai'i State Foundation for Arts and Culture (SFCA). The Alliance firmly supports the efforts to find a viable solution that will restore the specialized staff that are so necessary to the efficient and expert functioning of this agency.

As stated in previous testimonies, public funds are essential to the arts. Without public support, the arts can become the private domain of an elite ownership. For a functioning democratic society, we must honor the essential role that the arts play in our economic health. For every one dollar of state support, the arts and culture organizations have been able to bring three to four dollars of non-state revenue to our economy.

We all know that research by prestigious universities continues to show that the arts are a key to all learning. Arts education is actually linked to the creation of neural pathways that connect our logical left brain with our spatial/imaginative right brain. To build the world class education needed for our 21st century civilization, we cannot afford to continue to risk sacrificing a complete education for our children and our future.

Arts and culture are one of the most unique assets of our peoples in Hawai'i. As a destination of choice for visitors, all art, music, dance and culture will be irrevocably damaged if Hawai'i becomes a state without a functioning public arts agency. We must work to find the solution which can restore our State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. We trust that our wise public leaders will be able to find a solution to maintain this relatively small but extremely essential state agency.

With aloha,

Marilyn Cristofori

Chief Executive Officer

From: Christina Currie [mailto:christina@artbydesign.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 30, 2010 12:39 PM
To: TCItestimony
Subject: Regarding Arts and Culture

Representative Joey Manahan, Chair
Committee on Tourism, Culture, and International Affairs

Testimony on H.B. 2317 for February 1, 2010 at 8:45 a.m. Conference Room 312

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With aloha,
Yours in Decor,
Christina Currie
ART BY DESIGN

tokioka1-Elijah

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, January 30, 2010 5:29 PM
To: TCitestimony
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Testimony for HB2317 on 2/1/2010 8:45:00 AM

Testimony for TCI 2/1/2010 8:45:00 AM HB2317

Conference room: 312
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Teri L. Skillman
Organization: Individual
Address: [REDACTED] Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone: [REDACTED]
E-mail: [REDACTED]
Submitted on: 1/30/2010

Comments:

H.B. 2317

Monday, February 1, 2010

8:45 a.m. Conference Room 312(companion Senate Bill 2143 hearing is same day, 1:15pm, room 016) Bill H.B. 2317 - Relating to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

"Authorizes the use of monies from the works of art special fund for state foundation on culture and the arts staff costs; sunsets June 30, 2015."

I am writing in support of the Bill. I would also like to request that the monies be divided evenly between positions in the SFCA so that a broad base of programs can continue, such as education, folk arts, the Museum, and grants.