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**TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL NO. 2740
A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO
SAINT DAMIEN DE VEUSTER DAY**

**Lieutenant Governor James R. Aiona, Jr.
Office of the Lieutenant Governor**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, CULTURE & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Representative Joey Manahan, Chair
Representative James Kunane Tokioka, Vice Chair**

**Monday, March 8, 2010
9:30 A.M., Conference Room 312**

Good morning Chair Manahan, Vice Chair Tokioka, and Members of the Committee. The Office of the Lieutenant Governor strongly supports S.B. 2740 - a bill for an act relating to Saint Damien De Veuster Day.

Joseph de Veuster, who would later be known as Father Damien of Moloka'i and Blessed Damien de Veuster, was a Roman Catholic missionary who sacrificed his life in service to those suffering from Hansen's Disease in Kalaupapa on the Hawaiian island of Moloka'i.

Born on January 3, 1840 in Belgium, Joseph de Veuster was the seventh of eight children. After college, he entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and took the name Damien, after the ancient physician and martyr, in his first vows.

He arrived in Honolulu on March 19, 1864 as a missionary, and was later ordained to the priesthood at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace, a church built by his religious order. He served at several parishes on the Island of Hawai'i until he learned about Kalaupapa, a secluded settlement on the Island of Moloka'i

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populated by Hansen's Disease patients. Though the Board of Health provided the residents of Kalaupapa with food and supplies, there were not enough resources to give them the health care they required.

On May 10, 1873, Damien arrived in Kalaupapa to meet the spiritual needs of the 600 residents. The first thing he did was set up a church, the Parish of St. Philomena. He soon realized that his presence provided much needed comfort to those suffering from Hansen's Disease, and he served in different capacities, including doctor, carpenter, legal advocate and grave digger. He also organized religious associations, a children's band and a choir. Through his work, Damien instilled pride and dignity in the residents of Kalaupapa, restoring the faith of the forgotten.

In recognition of Damien's selfless actions, King David Kalākaua bestowed on him the honor of Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Kalākaua. When Princess Lydia Lili'uokalani visited the settlement to present the medal, she witnessed the pain Hansen's Disease brought to her subjects. Impressed by his compassion, the princess spread the word of Damien's work across America and throughout Europe. As a result, various organizations raised money and sent food, medicine and supplies to Kalaupapa.

Though Damien passed away on April 15, 1889, his legacy lives on. His service and ministry at Kalaupapa has perpetuated the Spirit of Aloha, and has offered hope and inspiration to past, present and future generations. In Hawai'i, Damien remains a spiritual hero and an icon of love, compassion, courage, humility and humanitarian service. Deservedly, this noble man is one of the only two individuals honored with a statue on the grounds of the Hawaii State Capitol building. The other is Hawaii's last reigning monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani.

On October 11, 2009, Damien was canonized as Saint Damien by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in Rome. Additionally, Damien was granted a memorial feast day celebrated annually on May 10. This bill seeks to amend Hawai'i Revised Statutes Section 8-8 to reflect Damien's recent confirmation of Sainthood and his corresponding feast day.

We ask that the committee pass this important measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.