

SB 2740

EDT



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State Capitol, Fifth Floor
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Phone: (808)586-0255
Fax: (808)586-0231
email: ltgov@hawaii.gov
www.hawaii.gov/ltgov

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JAMES R. AIONA, JR.
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**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**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair**

**Friday, February 19, 2010
1:45 P.M., Conference Room 016**

Good afternoon Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Baker, 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

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.



1485 Linapuni Street, Suite 105
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819
Tel. (808) 847-3285
Fax (808) 841-1485

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- KPT FAMILY CENTER
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- OHIA - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SHELTER
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KAUAI COUNTY PROGRAM

- INTENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

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CHILD CARE

MEMBER:

- CWLA
- ALOHA UNITED WAY
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- BBB

TO: Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Economic Development & Technology

FROM: Haaheo Mansfield
Vice President of Programs
Parents And Children Together

RE: **SB 2740 Relating to Saint Damien DeVeuster Day**

DATE: February 16, 2010

My name is Haaheo Mansfield. I am employed by Parents And Children Together, a statewide agency providing services to Hawaii's families since 1968. We began as a Head Start initiative and have grown from a small single purpose organization to a large multi-purpose and vibrant community based agency. I strongly urge you to pass SB 2740, a bill that proposes to change the current name and celebration date from Father Damien DeVeuster Day on April 15th, to Saint Damien DeVeuster Day on May 10th.

Although Parents And Children Together is not affiliated with the Catholic Church in any way nor am I a Catholic, we nonetheless take great pride in celebrating this man's life and his courageous unwavering commitment to the people of Kalaupapa and to those afflicted with Hansen's Disease. His life's work stands as a beacon to all peoples of what can be accomplished by one person when you care enough to dedicate a lifetime of hard work and advocacy to what you believe in.

Now that Father Damien has been anointed a Saint by the Catholic Church, it is time for the State of Hawaii to recognize that change in status by adopting the new name of Saint Damien DeVeuster Day.

Mahalo nui for the privilege and honor of testifying in strong support of SB 2740, and more importantly, thank you for this Bill.

Diocese of Honolulu

Chancery Office • 1184 Bishop Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813-2858 • Phone (808) 585-3300 • Fax: (808) 537-1860



Office of the Bishop

Date: February 17, 2010

To: Senator Carol Fukunaga, Committee Chairperson
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technology

From: Most Rev. Clarence (Larry) Silva, Bishop of Honolulu + *Larry Silva*

Re: Support for SB 2740 Relating to Saint Damien Day

Father Damien DeVeuster, SS.CC., is well known in Hawaii, and his heroism as a servant of the patients of Hansen's Disease in Kalaupapa is renowned the world over. On October 11, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI canonized Father Damien, officially declaring him a Saint. In the weeks leading up to the canonization and the weeks of celebration that followed throughout the State of Hawaii, the outpouring of admiration and love for this exemplary priest was obvious. Television and newspaper coverage were intense and positive, indicating a great devotion of the people of Hawaii to the religious and humanitarian ideals St. Damien embodied. Father Damien's statue adorns the front of our State Capitol and is proudly displayed as one of two representatives from Hawaii in our Federal Capitol. It is quite fitting, therefore, that the State of Hawaii proclaim May 10 as St. Damien Day. This anniversary of his arrival in Kalaupapa is also the feast day the Catholic Church has chosen to celebrate Father Damien's legacy. It would be very appropriate if all the people of the State, who almost universally admire him as a hero to be emulated, could be reminded of his dedication -- and renewed in their own -- on St. Damien Day, May 10.

John (Home)

From: "John (Home)" <jnrz@hawaii.rr.com>
To: <Harold.Nedd@hawaii.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 9:23 PM
Subject: Re: Testimony on Saint Damien De Veuster Day
 Testimony on House Bill No. 2587
 A Bill for an Act Relating to Saint Damien de Veuster Day

LATE

Chair Manahan, Vice Chair Tokioka, and Members of the Committee. I am John Fielding, and I led a group of Boy Scouts from Hawaii to the Vatican this past October to witness and celebrate the Canonization of Saint Damien de Veuster of Molokai, and I strongly support H.B. 2587.

Saint Damien of Molokai, as he is known around the world, deserves to be honored for he has always been a treasure of our State. As you know, his statue not only graces the entrance to our State Capitol, but also as one of the two Hawaii statues in the Hall of Congress in Washington D.C. We have honored him because he sacrificed his life for those who suffered. We continue to honor him because of his selflessness to all people of Hawaii. There is no greater love than to give one's life to a friend, and St. Damien was to many Hawaiians and our own ancestors, their only friend when they needed one the most.

Born in Belgium, he traveled at a young age to Hawaii, where he was ordained a Priest at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace in downtown Honolulu. He continued his education in the English language at St. Louis School in Kaimuki. He provided the people of the Big Island and Maui with his ministries, prior to volunteering as the parish priest for those exiled to the Colony at Kalawao on Molokai. By accepting his new assignment, St. Damien knew his fate, and accepted the potentiality of death from the disease.

While on Molokai, he buried the dead, fed the hungry, cared for the sick, ministered to masses, and loved everyone. His love had no boundaries. The descendants of those on Molokai hold a dear place in their heart for him.

When in Belgium this past fall, it was evident that the sacrifice St. Damien gave for our ancestors inspired a nation. Belgium has selected St. Damien as the most famous Belgian ever. He exudes what all Belgians aspire to be.

In Rome, prior to the Canonization, I had the opportunity to speak with hundreds of faithful from all over the world. Their admiration for St. Damien was awe inspiring. People from all over the world see St. Damien as a Hawaiian treasure.

Throughout the United States, schools are named in his honor, shelters called Damien House, places where the sick and outcast may call home, are being erected in his name and sacrifice, Churches pay homage, and Faithful continue to pray for him to intercede on their behalf.

With all this said, I truly encourage our Hawaii State Legislature to pass this bill to honor a man who gave himself to our families so they may have the dignity of life.

Mahalo for your time,

John Fielding
 Scout Master, Saint Damien Boy Scouts
 Grand Knight, Knights of Columbus, Council 5000, Our Lady of Peace Cathedral

— Original Message —

From: Harold.Nedd@hawaii.gov
To: jnrz@hawaii.rr.com
Sent: Tuesday, February 02, 2010 12:21 PM
Subject: Testimony on Saint Damien De Veuster Day