

SCR 28

EDT

Testimony of Duk Hee Murabayashi

Senate Committee on Economic Development & Technology

**Wednesday, February 29, 2012
1:15 pm, Conference Rm 016**

**In Support of SCR 28
Placing a Commemorative Plaque at the former Sites
Of the Korean Christian Institute**

I am Duk Hee Murabayashi, former Chair of the Centennial Commission of Korean Immigration to Hawaii (2002-2003), and president of the Korean American Foundation Hawaii, a successor organization to the Centennial Committee of Korean Immigration to the United States.

An increasing number of Korean visitors to Hawaiian Islands want to learn about early Korean immigrants' lives in Hawaii. One of the remarkable activities of early Korean immigrants is that a population numbering less than 5,000 supported Dr. Syngman Rhee in establishing the Korean Christian Institute (KCI) in 1918, a co-educational institution for grades 1 through 8. Dr. Syngman Rhee, who was elected president of the Republic of Korea in 1948, first located KCI at 3320 Waialae Avenue, the site of the present Aliiolani Elementary School (1240 7th Avenue). In 1922 KCI relocated to the current Kalihi Elementary School site at 2471 Kula Korea Drive. After producing almost 300 graduates, KCI closed in 1947 and its twenty-four acre site was sold to a developer in 1950. Funds from the sale of the school site became the seed money for establishing Inha University in Incheon, Korea. President Syngman Rhee, who lived in Hawaii for a quarter century from 1913 through 1945, wanted to remember Hawaii's Koreans by naming the school Inha for Incheon, the port city where Korean

immigration started and Hawaii, where Koreans supported the independence movement to regain sovereignty of Korean from Japanese occupation.

Subsequently, a singly family subdivision was developed in the old KCI site in Kalihi Valley and the developer named a street Kula (school) Kolea (Korea) in honor of the school that once existed at the site.

It is fitting to recognize both sites of KCI, albeit belatedly, with bronze plaques no larger than 24 by 15 inches mounted on a 24-inch high stone pedestal to be place in appropriate places at Aliiolani Elementary School and Kalihi Elementary School.

Such commemorative plaques will serve to inform Korean visitors about the lives and activities of early immigrants. Such plaques will also remind students of both elementary schools that their schools played significant roles in the immigrant history of Hawaii.

We strongly support SCR 28 and ask for your favorable action.