

LATE



HB251
RELATING TO NATIVE HAWAIIANS

House Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources & Hawaiian Affairs

February 1, 2013

8:00 a.m.

Room 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment Committee **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** HB251, which would reduce to \$1 the cost for copies of documents demonstrating Native Hawaiian ancestry, for purposes of enrolling with the Native Hawaiian Roll Commission (NHRC).

This bill would go a long way toward ensuring that the cost of acquiring documentation of Native Hawaiian ancestry will not be a barrier to accessing Native Hawaiian rights and benefits provided for by law. Moreover, **OHA anticipates that the proposed cost reduction will have a negligible impact on the State's General Fund.**

While OHA strongly supports this effort to reduce the economic burden on individuals seeking to register with the Native Hawaiian Roll Commission—which was created by state law in 2011 to further Native Hawaiian self-governance efforts—OHA would also like to see this proposed cost reduction extended to individuals who need similar documentation to register for other Native Hawaiian programs created by federal or state law, such as the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' Hawaiian Registry Program.

In 2003, the state enacted HRS § 10-19, requiring OHA to maintain a registry of all persons of Native Hawaiian ancestry. Currently, beneficiaries of OHA are required to register with OHA's Hawaiian Registry Program in order to access benefits, programs and services. Many of these registrants come to OHA because they need financial assistance with educational endeavors or other similar pursuits, and the high cost of obtaining documents is especially troubling when it is imposed on these individuals.

OHA anticipates that an amended version of HB251 will address this concern at a negligible cost to the State, because most NHRC and OHA applicants do not need to purchase new documents from the Department of Health to verify their ancestry. For those who do, however, the cost of copies can be prohibitive, especially because these complex ancestry cases require the production of several different documents from different family members.

Therefore, the OHA BAE Committee urges the committee to pass an amended version of HB251 that replaces the current language on page 4, lines 1-4, with the following language:

sought as proof of an individual's Native Hawaiian ancestry pursuant to section 10H-3 or section 10-19. The director of health shall deposit moneys collected under this subsection into the general fund."

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.