

SB 3107

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Unity, Equality, Aloha for all



To: TEC
For hearing Tuesday February 25, 2014

Re: SB 3107 RELATING TO THE STATE INSTRUMENT.
Establishes and designates the ukulele as the official state instrument.

Testimony in support of the intention of the bill but noting a need for changes to the language of the bill regarding the origin of the word “ukulele.”

The bill SB 3107 contains a misleading irrelevant statement concerning the origin of the name of the musical instrument “ukulele.” The bill says on page 1, lines 12-14, “The word ‘ukulele’ is translated from Hawaiian in two parts: ‘uke’, meaning to strike and ‘lele’, meaning to jump.

The Hawaiian word “uke” is not a part of the instrument’s name, so the fact that “uke” means “to strike” is irrelevant. The word that is a part of the instrument’s name is “uku” which means “flea.” Since the 19th Century the instrument’s name “ukulele” has referenced the concept

“jumping flea.” I suggest you remove the quoted portion of the bill and replace it with the following information:

Here are two authoritative sources regarding the meaning and derivation of the instrument's name "'ukulele."

1. Hawaiian Dictionary, Revised and Enlarged Edition, by Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, 1957-1986, page 366: 'ukulele. n. Ukulele. Lit., leaping flea, probably from the Hawaiian nickname of Edward Purvis, who was small and quick and who popularized the instrument brought to Hawai'i by the Portuguese in 1879. (Elbert and Knowlton, 1957.)

2. 'Olelo No'eau, Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings collected by Mary Kawena Pukui, 1983, page 84, item # 762: He li'ili'i ka 'ukulele, naue na'e kino nui.

A flea may be small but it can make a big body squirm.

Never belittle anyone because of their small body; he may be able to do big things.

[Also has a kaona, or double metaphorical meaning, referring to the fact that the musical instrument 'ukulele is small in size like a flea, but can make Hawaiians move their big bodies in time to the rhythm.]

I strongly support SB3107 and ask that this bill be passed.

The Ukelele is the most important instrument to Hawaii and is certainly already the instrument that is identified as Hawaiian. It is part of the mystic of our island state.

Tourists identify Hawaii with this instrument as much as they do palm trees.

Please pass this important bill.

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