

SB 3111

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF
HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
WATER, LAND AND AGRICULTURE**

**Monday, February 8, 2016
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 3111
RELATING TO MOANALUA GARDENS**

Senate Bill 3111 proposes to authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds and appropriates funds for the purchase of Moanalua Gardens. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) offers the following comments.**

Background:

Moanalua Gardens (Gardens) is a 24-acre privately owned public park in Honolulu, Hawaii. Once owned and operated by the estate of local businessman and landowner Samuel Mills Damon (1841–1924), the garden was bought by Kaimana Ventures. The park is the site of the Kamehameha V Cottage, originally built in the 1850s, which used to be the home of Prince Lot Kapuāiwa, who would later become King Kamehameha V. The Gardens is the site of the annual Prince Lot Hula Festival.

The Gardens has many large monkey pod trees of which one is known in Japan as the “Hitachi tree.” The tree is registered as an exceptional tree by the City and County of Honolulu and cannot be removed or destroyed without city council approval. Japanese electronics manufacturer Hitachi, Ltd. has used the tree as a corporate symbol since 1973. An agreement between the Damon Estate and Hitachi gave Hitachi exclusive worldwide rights to use the tree’s image for promotional purposes in exchange for annual payments. Hitachi negotiated with Kaimana Ventures in 2006 where Hitachi would continue to pay a substantially increased sum for promotional rights until 2016. This funding source likely contributed significantly to the cost of operations at the Gardens, which are managed at a very high quality, and appears to be at an end this year.

SUZANNE D. CASE
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

KEKOA KALUHIWA
FIRST DEPUTY

JEFFREY T. PEARSON, P.E.
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Department's Position:

The Department is unaware of the landowner's position on this bill, as the Department has not had any conversations with Kaimana Ventures about the sale of the Gardens or the State acquiring this property.

In addition, the Department does not have any appraisal information to determine the accuracy of the proposed \$7,000,000 acquisition price. While the open space and historic elements of this property are unique and warrant preservation, the Department is unaware of any current plans to develop or change the character of this property's current use.

The Department has not studied or evaluated the long term public value in preservation of its current use in comparison to both a proposed acquisition price and just as critical – the perpetual management cost associated with maintenance and new and additional staffing should the State acquire the Gardens for the public trust.

The Department cannot consider the acquisition of the Gardens (or any new land) without commensurate staffing and operational funding – once these cost are clearly determined.



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**Testimony For Senate Bill 3111
Relating to Moanalua Gardens**

February 8, 2016 – 10 AM

COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND AND AGRICULTURE

TO: Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

FROM: Alexander Alike Jamile, Executive Director and President
Moanalua Gardens Foundation

RE: Senate Bill 3111, Relating to Moanalua Gardens

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara and Committee Members. My name is Alike Jamile, Executive Director and President of Moanalua Gardens Foundation. We strongly support SB 3111.

For the past 46 years, Moanalua Gardens Foundation (MGF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has been working “to preserve and perpetuate the native culture, environment and people of Hawai'i through education and stewardship of Kamananui (Moanalua) Valley and celebration of the Prince Lot Hula Festival at Moanalua Gardens.”

This legacy of preservation began in the early 1900's with Samuel Mills Damon who set aside Kamananui (Moanalua) Valley and Moanalua Gardens for use by the general public and earmarked a portion of the net income of his estate to maintain and protect this historic property. When these lands were threatened by the encroachment of the H-3 freeway, MGF was founded in 1970 to safeguard these lands, effectively preserving in perpetuity over 3,700 acres for the recreation and enjoyment of the people of Hawai'i. Since then, MGF has served as steward of the valley and the gardens continuing the legacy of S.M. Damon.

Moanalua Gardens is home to many rare trees and historic structures. Several of the trees are on the City's exceptional tree registry and one of two exceptional monkeypod trees is on the National Historic Register. Prince Lot's summer cottage and Chinese Hall are two buildings of historical significance.

For the past 39 years, the gardens have also been home to the state's largest non-competitive hula celebration, the Prince Lot Hula Festival. Presented by MGF, this spectacular event showcases hula kahiko and 'auana performances by hula hālau throughout the islands.

For over a hundred years, Moanalua Gardens has been an oasis for the people of Hawai'i to visit and enjoy as intended by Samuel Mills Damon. It is one of Honolulu's most historic parks with beautiful trees and cultural sites. As development swallows more and more of our green spaces, it is critical that we move forward now to protect and preserve Moanalua Gardens for our future generations to enjoy.

We strongly endorse SB 3111 and humbly ask for your approval of this important measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alike Jamile". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "A".

Alexander Alike Jamile

Although MGF is one of the primary caretakers of the ahupua`a of Moanalua, MGF is not financially supported by, nor an entity of the beneficiaries of the Estate of Samuel Mills Damon. MGF is self-supporting.

Since 1970, MGF has pioneered programs which help people understand and appreciate the unique environmental and cultural resources of our islands. Our educational programs have reached over 80 thousand students teaching them how to “malama `aina.” Through our annual Prince Lot Hula Festival at Moanalua Gardens, we perpetuate the hula traditions of Kamananui Valley, in ancient times a center of hula and chanting.

An historic and cultural treasure, Moanalua Gardens is one of the most beautiful places in Honolulu on the island of O`ahu. Once a botanical garden, it is home to famous structures and rare trees, including the famous “Hitachi” tree.

The entire ahupua`a of Moanalua –two valleys, from the Ko`olau peaks to the sea—were Kamehameha lands that passed through Bernice Pauahi Bishop in 1884 to her friend, Samuel Mills Damon, the business partner of her husband, Charles Reed Bishop. The property was the one-time home of Prince Lot Kapuāiwa, who reigned as King Kamehameha V from 1863 to 1872.

Damon set aside Moanalua Gardens, one of Hawaii’s earliest public parks, “for public use and enjoyment,” and so it has remained for over 130 years. It spans over 23 acres and has “general preservation” zoning.

The gardens is home to many rare trees and historic structures. Four of the trees, including a *Ficus religiosa* (bo tree) and an Honduran mahogany tree, are on the city exceptional tree registry. Two exceptional monkeypod trees, one nicknamed the “Hitachi” Tree, are on the National Historic Register. Prince Lot’s summer cottage and Chinese Hall, built by S.M. Damon, are two buildings of historical significance. Other attractions include a lo`i and koi pond.

For the past 38 years, the gardens has also been home to the state’s largest non-competitive hula festival, the Prince Lot Hula Festival. Presented by Moanalua Gardens Foundation (MGF), this spectacular event showcases hula kahiko and `auana performances by hula hālau throughout the islands who perform on an authentic pa hula (hula mound) dedicated to Prince Lot’s beloved companion from Molokai, Kama`ipu`upa`a.

In ancient times, the property was part of the sacred valleys of Kamananui and Kamanaiki, a center of hula and chanting, and spiritual renewal. Hula halau flourished in the area and cultural

practitioners performed their rituals and cultural practices where the gardens are now located and where Hawaiians of high rank were buried.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WLA Testimony](#)
Cc: dylanarm@hawaii.edu
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB3111 on Feb 8, 2016 10:00AM*
Date: Saturday, February 06, 2016 4:05:13 PM

SB3111

Submitted on: 2/6/2016

Testimony for WLA on Feb 8, 2016 10:00AM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dylan Armstrong	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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From: [Pat Jones](#)
To: [WLA Testimony](#)
Cc: [Donna Mercado Kim](#)
Subject: SB3111
Date: Friday, February 05, 2016 5:47:56 PM

I am a member of the Moanalua Gardens Community Association, and want to add my support to SB3111 which would allow the State to purchase the Moanalua Gardens Park from its current private owner, J.P. Damon. This is the site of the annual Moanalua Gardens Foundation sponsored Prince Lot Hula Festival. It features the Kamehameha V (Prince Lot) summer cottage built in 1867, a koi pond, taro patch, and hula mound, and is famous for its impressive monkey pod trees, one of which is designated the "Hitachi tree." Hitachi pays the current owner a fee to continue its use of the tree as a corporate logo. Since the property was purchased from the Damon estate in 2006 by J.P. Damon, he has managed to maintain the beauty of the gardens, and has allowed the MGF to sponsor the annual Prince Lot festival. However, in the past 10 years this valuable native Hawaiian cultural resource has not shown any significant improvement in serving the local population and visitors. We are concerned that the property will deteriorate under current management, and hope that the State of Hawaii will step in to assure that Moanalua Gardens will remain the relatively pristine and natural outdoor venue for activities like the Prince Lot Hula Festival and encourage the educational and recreational aspects that residents, visitors, and children from the surrounding schools may enjoy.

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