

SCR 125

INDIVIDUAL TESTIMONY OF DR. KŪ KAHAKALAU

IN RE: SCR125 – SUGGESTED CHANGES

S.C.R. NO. I25 TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE, 2016 MAR 1 1 2016

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS FOR STEWARDSHIP AND PRESERVATION OF WAIPI'O VALLEY.

WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that Waipi'o Valley, located on Hawai'i Island, is an area with great cultural, historical, genealogical, and agricultural significance; and

WHEREAS, Waipi'o Valley is a revered wahi pana, or sacred place, and has served as a cultural and demographic center for the Native Hawaiian culture for many centuries, housing precious resources including multiple heiau, an extensive taro lo'i and auwai system, fishponds, burial sites, ocean culture, and incomparable scenic beauty; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force to Preserve Waipi'o Valley, formed pursuant to House Resolution No. 277, Regular Session of 1990, found a need to protect and preserve the cultural, aesthetic, and agricultural integrity of Waipi'o Valley and identified several concerns including:

- (1) Health and safety issues arising from a lack of public facilities and substandard infrastructure aggravated by unregulated access into the valley;
- (2) Demographic changes on Hawai'i Island and in the Hamakua region impacting the natural and cultural resources of the valley; and
- (3) Environmental concerns related to stream management and flood control to preserve and protect life and property; and

WHEREAS, the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Department of Urban and Regional Planning compiled community planning and ahupua'a management reports in 1999 and 2003-2003 and offered possible solutions to many of the issues identified; and

WHEREAS, the Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance (WVSA) HĀ OLA O WAIPI'O was formed in July 2015 Summer 2014, and includes representation from the Waipi'o Taro Farmers Association, various non-profits, including Pōhāhā I Ka Lani and Friends of the Future, Waipi'o Community Circle, and Ha Ola O Waipi'o Valley, and the Waipi'o-Kukuihaele community, their voices representing the many perspectives of the Waipi'o community; and

WHEREAS, HĀ OLA O WAIPI'O WVSA works collaboratively with various community resource partners to proactively implement solutions to issues that have negatively impacted the valley, including addressing road access and safety issues and implementation of the Waipi'o Valley Stream Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Bishop Museum has owned and managed five hundred and thirty-seven acres of Waipi'o Valley property, representing approximately sixty per cent of the valley floor, for the past one hundred thirty years and has publicly announced its intent to sell its interest in order to enable the museum to move forward with a new strategic management plan; and

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WHEREAS, the land, which is divided into approximately one hundred tax map key parcels, contains a majority of the taro growing lands as well as significant cultural sites ~~such as Paka'alana Heiau~~; and

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WHEREAS, most of the taro production lands are leased to Waipi'o families, many of whom have cared for their 'aina for many generations, and the announcement by Bishop Museum to sell their lands has created a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety for the taro farming families of Waipi'o Valley and the future of their beloved and well-cared for farms; and

WHEREAS, ~~HĀ OLA O WAIPĪ'O WWSA~~ is fully committed to take the lead on stewardship efforts to transition the Bishop Museum lands, and is currently working with many stakeholders, community leaders from groups who have experienced similar situations, and others who have expertise in land acquisition and land management to

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identify possible options that will both ensure that Bishop Museum can remain solvent and continue its important work caring for Hawai'i's cultural treasures, while at the same time honoring Waipi'o Valley's past, present, and future to ensure that the land remains in the loving, caring hands of the Waipi'o families as it has for centuries; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-eighth Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, Regular Session of 2016, the House of Representatives concurring, that ~~the Bishop Museum Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance~~ is requested to coordinate with ~~HĀ OLA O WAIPĪ'O and other interested parties~~ ~~the Bishop Museum, for example,~~ Kamehameha Schools, ~~Friends of the Future,~~ County of Hawai'i, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Trust For Public Land, State of Hawai'i ~~and others, and other interested parties who may be invited by WWSA to provide their guidance and mana'o~~ regarding the future preservation and stewardship of Waipi'o Valley; and

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• ~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that WWSA is requested to submit a report of the results of stewardship meetings including findings, recommendations, and any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the commencement of the 2017 Regular Session; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislature strongly urges Bishop Museum to ensure its Waipi'o Valley lands are transitioned with the Waipi'o community continuing to be the active stewards on the land and also a primary role in the long-term management of the transitioned lands.~~

• ~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED The legislature strongly urges Bishop Museum to preserve the historical, cultural, and natural resources with the continuation of small-scale, community agricultural and conservation land use.~~

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that HĀ OLA O WAIPĪ'O is requested to submit a report of the results of stewardship meetings including findings, recommendations, and any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the commencement of the 2017 Regular Session; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawai'i State Director of the

Trust for Public Land, Mayor of the County of Hawai'i, Community Liaison of Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance, President of Bishop Museum, and the Chair-CEO of Kamehameha Schools, and President of Friends of the Fut 27

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WLA Testimony](#)
Cc: begoniabarry@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SCR125 on Apr 4, 2016 15:00PM*
Date: Thursday, March 24, 2016 3:00:55 PM

SCR125

Submitted on: 3/24/2016

Testimony for WLA on Apr 4, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Barbara Barry	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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Aloha Chair Gabbard and members of the committee,

My name is Jim Cain, my family and I have been blessed to live in Waipi'o Valley for almost 30 years. There we farm taro, process poi for our Big Island community, and have raised our family. I am currently the vice-president of the community group known as Ha Ola O Waipi'o Valley, and an active member of the Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance. The Alliance was formed in July 2015 and includes representation from the 3 active community groups of Waipi'o: The Waipi'o Taro Farmers Assoc., Ha Ola O Waipi'o Valley and The Waipi'o Community Circle. The Alliance contains representative voices from all the many perspectives of the Waipi'o community and has been working on road access and safety issues with the County of Hawai'i, the implementation of the Waipi'o Stream Management Plan, and is focused on working collaboratively with various community resource partners to proactively implement solutions to issues that have negatively impacted the valley.

Recently the Bishop Museum publicly announced plans to offer 537 acres of Waipi'o Valley property for sale. While the museum has at various times over the past 40 years discussed divesting themselves of their Waipi'o kuleana, this recent announcement expressed a sense of urgency in the museum's need to acquire capital that would enable the museum to move forward in a new strategic and management plan in order to remain solvent. The land, which has been under the ownership and management of Bishop Museum for approximately 130 years represents about 60% of the valley floor. The land, which is divided into about 100 TMK parcels, contains a majority of the taro growing lands, as well as significant cultural sites such as Paka'alana Heiau. Most of the taro production lands are leased to Waipi'o families, many of whom have cared for their 'aina for many generations. The announcement by Bishop Museum to sell their lands has created a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety for the taro farming families of Waipi'o and the future of their beloved and well-cared for farms.

The WVSA is fully committed to be the lead on any efforts to transition stewardship of the Bishop Museum lands and is currently working with many stakeholders and others who have the experience and expertise in land acquisition and land management to identify possible options that will both ensure that Bishop Museum can remain solvent and continue their important work as Hawai'i's State Museum caring for Hawai'i's cultural treasures, while at the same time honoring Waipi'o's past, present and future and ensure the land remains in the loving, caring hands of the Waipi'o families like it has for centuries. The goal is to preserve the historical, cultural and natural resources with the continuation of small-scale community agriculture and conservation land use.

I fully support SCR 125 which honors Waipi'o Valley and the Waipi'o families as the long time stewards of this precious wahi pana, identifies the Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance as the entity that can best build upon past community efforts, engage with appropriate community resource partners and devise a strategic and long-term management plan for Waipi'o, and encourages Bishop Museum to work closely with WVSA on charting a course forward. I ask for your support in passing SCR125. Mahalo

“WAIPI’O VALLEY STAKEHOLDERS ALLIANCE”
PRESS RELEASE – for January 19, 2016

On January 8, 2016, Bishop Museum issued a public announcement that they were moving in a new direction, with major changes ahead, including the sale of Amy Greenwell Ethnobotanical Garden in Capt. Cook and 537 acres of land in Waipi’o Valley. The Museum’s financial challenges had compelled them to reassess their core mission of operating a museum and develop a strategic plan to phase-out operational activities which are not directly part of their kuleana to care for their trust collections related to Hawai’i and the Pacific.

While the news has taken most of Hawaii by surprise, this is not the case for our Waipi’o Valley community. Bishop Museum has for more than 20 years, considered divesting themselves of their Waipi’o landholdings and as recent as 2013 entertained the possibility of selling their lands in Waipi’o Valley to the State of Hawaii. That effort was abandoned after it became clear to the Museum that the successful sale of its Waipi’o lands was much more challenging and complex than it was prepared to deal with at that time.

What is also not widely known is that our Waipi’o community has undergone major changes as well and in mid-summer of 2015 the three most active and committed organized groups representing Waipi’o Valley today, began a series of meetings toward forging an alliance and collaborating together on matters which impact the entire Ahupua’a and community of Waipi’o.

The new alliance, called the “Waipi’o Valley Stakeholders Alliance” is represented by:

1. The Waipi’o Taro Farmers Association
2. The Waipi’o Community Circle
3. Ha Ola o Waipi’o Valley

The Waipi’o Taro Farmers Association (WTFA) is the oldest active organization in Waipi’o Valley, founded in 1989. This group consists of generational taro farming families who lease the majority of Bishop Museum’s lands in the Valley. They are representatives of the surviving edge of the Native Hawaiian culture in Waipi’o Valley and are currently Bishop Museum’s primary land management and local community advisors.

The Waipi’o Community Circle (WCC), founded in the year 2000, is today, represented by a small group of community volunteers who have been providing oversight for the Waipi’o Valley Information & Education Officers Program since 2007 until 2014 when the County of Hawai’i began funding and managing the Program. This small group of community volunteers also represents the efforts of Auntie Ku’ulei Badua who was responsible for initiating “Friends of the Waipi’o Community Park” (the former Rice/Thomas property, at the Waipi’o lookout) and an effort to organize a community Charrette to develop a vision for a future Cultural Educational and Museum facility at the lookout. While the WCC has not been active since 2012, this small group continues to represent all of the various work of the WCC, including the two above projects.

Ha Ola o Waipi’o Valley (HOOWV), formed in 2014, is comprised of Valley residents, farmers (including Bishop Museum lessees that are not members of the WTFA), cultural educators and practitioners, Waipi’o tour operators and a board of advisors including, the County and State of Hawai’i, Kamehameha Schools, Friends of the Future and the Big Island Visitors Bureau. It is a State of Hawai’i not-for-profit organization that was formed to provide representation for other Valley stakeholders who were not recognized in the State’s proposed Bill to purchase Bishop Museum’s lands in Waipi’o in 2013 when the Museum was considering the sale of its Waipi’o

lands at that time. It is the largest and most diversely represented group in Waipi'o, currently working on various initiatives from River Maintenance with WTFA, stewardship of Kamehameha Schools Waipi'o beach parcel, eradication of Little Fire Ants, and other community initiatives.

The efforts of the Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance is also currently supported by an advisory group of "Community Resources Partners" which includes the County of Hawai'i, the State of Hawai'i, Kamehameha Schools, Friends of the Future and Big Island Visitor's Bureau.

The purpose of this press release is to inform the public of the Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance and the fact that we had already begun to develop our own strategic plan and engaged in preliminary talks with our Community Resource Partners and other potential entities for the acquisition of Bishop Museum's landholdings in Waipi'o Valley.

Unfortunately, Bishop Museum's announcement was not well coordinated with our Waipi'o community and the Museum had not yet recognized our Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance. . Since their announcement, however, our Alliance has informed Bishop Museum of our commitment to protect the current lessees and ensure that we have a lead voice in the future ownership and management of their Waipi'o lands.

Bishop Museum has responded positively to our Alliance's position and is now engaging directly with us and the substantial support of our Community Resource Partners. We are asking all of our friends and family in our community-at-large to support our Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance as the lead in this matter and be assured that we are committed to see that only the highest good and outcome is achieved for the preservation of the heritage, culture and natural resources of Waipi'o Valley, and for the families who for generations have cared for the land and kept our culture alive in Waipi'o.

Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance Co-Leaders:

Noland Eskaran, President, Waipi'o Taro Farmers Association

Jesse Potter, President, Ha Ola o Waipi'o Valley

Doug Genovia, Liaison, Waipi'o Community Circle – E&I Program & Friends of the Waipi'o Community Park Project

Contacts for the Waipi'o Valley Stakeholders Alliance:

Alliance Liaison: Jim Cain, Cell: 333-0457 kinglaulau@hotmail.com

Alliance Cultural & Educational Liaison: Ka'iulani Pahio, Cell: 960-5272 kaiulani@kalo.org