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**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS**

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TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM J. AILA, JR, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
HEARING ON FEBRUARY 21, 2020 AT 12:00PM IN CR 308

HB 2216, HD2 RELATING TO HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

February 20, 2020

Aloha Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) submits comments on this bill that requires at least 5 Hawaiian Homes Commission (HHC) members to be native Hawaiian or current Hawaiian homestead lessees and at least 2 of those 5 to be on the waitlist for Hawaiian home lands; authorizes commission members to elect a chairperson and vice chairperson; and creates the position of Director of Hawaiian Home Lands and separates the Director's responsibilities from those of the Chairperson of the Commission.

The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) as enacted in 1921 established the HHC to be composed of five members – the Governor and four citizens of the Territory to be appointed by the Governor with at least three of the appointed members of the HHC to be native Hawaiian. In 1935, Congress amended the HHCA providing that the HHC is to be composed of five members appointed by the Governor and at least three of the members shall be descendants of not less than one-fourth part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778. Since this amendment to the HHCA came shortly after the HHCA was passed through an Act of Congress, DHHL would prefer that this language remain and not be deleted as proposed on Page 2, lines 2-4 of the bill. DHHL supports increasing the members from four to five that are descendants of not less than one-fourth part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778. With regard to representation of lessees and applicants on the HHC, DHHL notes that as of June 2019, there were 9,898 lessees and 28,753 applicants, which may be a consideration in allocating representation on the HHC.

The larger policy implications of separating the Director's responsibilities from the Chairman should be fully vetted given the enactment of the HHCA by Congress.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.