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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

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February 11, 2019

To: The Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair,
The Honorable Les Ihara Jr., Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

Date: Tuesday, February 12, 2019
Time: 3:30 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 224, State Capitol

From: Scott T. Murakami, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: S.B. No. 1376 RELATING TO THE HAWAII LABOR HERITAGE COUNCIL

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara, and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts:

SB1376 appropriates funds to the Department to fund the production of a documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath "AQ", which would illuminate the major role she played in the Labor Movement and hence for economic and social justice in Hawaii. DLIR supports this measure as long as its passage does not adversely impact the priorities as identified in the Governor's Biennium Budget request.

AQ helped develop strategies to organize workers without regard to race, ethnicity, or gender in the Post-War period after the Second World War. These workers and their representatives played a vital role in the development of our State labor laws. Moreover, AQ was also a champion of access to education, culture, and the arts. She served two terms as a Regent for the University of Hawaii. After retirement, she continued to advocate for social and economic justice at the Legislature.

It is important for the historical record and future generations that the life and work of individuals such as AQ are documented. This project intends to preserve and communicate some of the seminal events in Hawaii's history through the life story of this remarkable women. For all the above reasons, the Department supports this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

February 11, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts
Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Fr: Chris Conybeare, Executive Producer, Ah Quon "AQ" McElrath Project

Testimony in Support of S. B. 1376, Relating to the Hawai'i Labor Heritage Council

Chair, Taniguchi and Members of the Committee,

Aloha, I am writing this testimony in support of S.B. 1376 on behalf of both the Hawai'i Labor Heritage Council (HLHC), and the Center for Labor Education and Research (CLEAR), University of Hawai'i-West Oahu.

Ah Quon "AQ" McElrath was one of the most important leaders in the struggle for economic and social justice in Hawai'i. HLHC and CLEAR have agreed to partner in this endeavor to both tell her life story and tell the story of this struggle. AQ was born in poverty, and often worked several jobs while attending the university, earning a degree in social work in 1938. In this time period, Hawai'i was dominated by a handful of companies and an elite business community known as the Big Five. Workers faced a feudal style oligarchy and had almost no control over their own lives. As indentured servants, many workers would never be free of debt at the company store and had almost no ability to seek redress of grievances. They were segregated by race and ethnicity and forced to work for inadequate wages and with terrible working conditions.

AQ was an inspired leader, often working in the shadow of male colleagues. She helped devise organizing strategies that gave voice to workers, without regard to race, ethnicity or gender. Together, workers and other supporters created the first multi-racial union (the ILWU) in Hawai'i. Their collective strength overcame great odds. They achieved success after historic strikes in the 30's and 40's and through mobilizing thousands through political action!

AQ was also a champion for all levels of society to have access to education, culture, and arts. She sang in the symphony chorus, performed in classical drama, and throughout her life fought for the right of the entire population to have access to music, plays, art exhibits, and life-long educational opportunities. Because of these interests and her effective leadership, she served 2 terms as a Regent for the University of Hawai'i.

After her retirement from the ILWU, she devoted her life to advocacy for issues such as health care for all, press freedom, women's rights, peace, and elder care issues. She continued her leadership role for social and economic justice at the legislature.

In order to tell this story CLEAR and the HLHC have agreed to a partnership that maximizes the strengths of both organizations.

HLHC was formed in 1993 to develop education, culture, and arts programs that build understanding of labor in Hawai'i. HLHC has a solid track record in projects big and small in this regard. HLHC has helped organize Labor Day events, was instrumental in raising support for Tom Coffman's book, *I Beg to Dissent*, about Hawai'i Lawyer and Supreme Court Justice the Honorable Edward Nakamura, and administered the \$2 million project that restored and refurbished the historic labor mural that was created for the ILWU by famed Mexican Muralist, Pablo O'Higgins. HLHC collaborates with the Hawai'i Council on Humanities' annual History Day, providing rewards for outstanding student achievement.

CLEAR was established in 1976 by State Law, [HRS §304A-1601 et seq. \(Act 202\)](#) and designated to provide labor education, research, and labor-related programs to workers, their organizations, and the general public through classroom instruction, seminars, workshops, publications, the internet and other public media. By statute, the Center is guided and advised a [Labor Education and Advisory Council](#) appointed by the President of the University.

The AQ Project has 3 main goals: The first goal is to create an hour-long documentary that not only tells the inspiring story of Ah Quon McElrath's life, but also recounts the major role she played in ending oppressive labor practices. Through an examination of her life, the project will document some of our state's most important history and demonstrate how one woman's compassion and determination helped to lift thousands of families out of poverty.

The second goal is for CLEAR, utilizing the production, to create a website that will allow free access to the documentary, to the complete interviews done for the documentary and other labor-related projects, to other educational materials about the history of labor unions, and to links to other relevant educational material and information.

The third goal is for CLEAR to utilize the documentary to create curriculum materials to be made available for classroom use to insure that this important history is not lost in the chasm of time.

CLEAR will provide in kind services of both myself as executive producer/producer, and Joy Chong-Stannard as director/editor. The combined value of these services is \$110,000. In addition, CLEAR will provide \$20,000 in cash.

CLEAR will also provide at no charge access to its video collection of more than 2,500 video tapes that document our state's plantation and labor history. These tapes from the 1980s and 1990s have recently been digitized by a private donation of \$150,000 secured by CLEAR. These tapes include more than 25 hours of interviews with AQ that took place over a 30-year span. These tapes also include stories of dock workers, plantation families, picture brides, and historical figures, all part of AQ's life and times. These links and archival video images will be provided at no charge to HLHC by CLEAR.

Together, Joy and I have been involved in documentary production and telling stories of Hawaii's working people since 1983! We have produced numerous programs for PBS

Hawaii and for national and international institution. Some of these titles: Coach; 1946: The Great Hawai'i Sugar Strike; 1949: The Great Hawai'i Dock Strike; Jack Hall: His Life and Times; and Canefield Songs: Holehole Bushi. Canefield Songs, the most recent of these, has been distributed nationally through PBS stations and has been seen by more than 350,000. The PBS Hawai'i You Tube channel, alone, credits more than 38,000 views, and this documentary has been broadcast locally 4 times! It has also been featured at the Smithsonian Institution, the Japanese American National Museum, and Amherst College.

The public purpose of the project is to preserve and communicate some of the most important events in our island history through the telling of the story of a remarkable woman whose personal history was inextricably tied to critical, history-turning public events. The history of the rise of labor unions in Hawai'i, the great personal and heroic sacrifices of a generation of working people, and their monumental achievements is in danger of being forgotten. This project will protect this history by bringing it to life and making it available for generations to come.

The great need to be served is the widening gap in public memory of this history. Younger generations need to be taught and older generations reminded that the struggles of the working class have benefitted all Americans--that decent hours, decent pay, and safe working conditions came about through passion for "what's right" and through perseverance and should never be taken for granted. In this time of growing economic inequality, all people need to remember that protecting the rights of working people protects our common good.

S.B. 1376 funding is essential for us to complete this project and provide a lasting tribute, not only to AQ, but to all who have struggled for economic and social justice. It will allow us to rescue our history and make it accessible to present and future generations! Mahalo.



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**TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2019**

TIME/DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2019, 3:30 PM, ROOM 224

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL NO. 1376 – “RELATING TO THE
HAWAII LABOR HERITAGE COUNCIL.”**

**TO CHAIR TANIGUCHI AND MEMBERS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR,
CULTURE AND THE ARTS:**

The International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 50 (DC50), appreciates the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT to Senate Bill No. 1376 – “RELATING TO THE HAWAII LABOR HERITAGE COUNCIL.” My name is Lorna Woo, Director of Government Affairs, District Council 50. DC50 is an organization that represents five (5) local unions, the Painters, Local Union 1791; the Glaziers Architectural and Glass Metal Workers, Local Union 1889; the Carpet Linoleum and Soft Tile, Local Union 1926; the Drywall, Tapers Finishers, Local Union 1944 and the Pearl Harbor Metal Trades Specialty Workers, Local Union 1944 – approximately 2000 members statewide.

DC50 stands in support to Senate Bill No. 1376, which appropriates a grant to the Hawaii labor heritage council to fund the production of a documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath (AQ). AQ has worked tirelessly throughout her lifetime to help raise thousands out of poverty and she has helped to guide the formation of the ILWU as the first multiracial union; she believed that workers held the key to their own future. AQ’s story is especially important at a time when we are often overwhelmed by issues of race, class, immigration policy, and basic problems of social and economic justice. Her

story will also help to bring awareness by illustrating history's past struggle of oppressed workers by empowering our young people to take control of their lives and have something to say about their future. A history, almost forgotten by today's students and many in leadership positions.

AQ's story has been touched on in largely academic journals but is rapidly being forgotten by the general public. A documentary of AQ's life is needed and is underway through a collaboration between the Hawaii labor heritage council and the Center for labor education and research (CLEAR), University of Hawaii, Hawaii-West Oahu. The documentary will be accompanied by a robust website and curriculum-support videos, to be developed by CLEAR, for grades K-12, the university, and the general public. These products will enable future generations to access Hawaii's hidden history.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to support the proposals in Senate Bill No. 1376. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

February 11, 2019

TO: The Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
The Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Labor, Culture, and the Arts

FROM: Robert G. Girald, President, ILWU Memorial Association

RE: **SB. 1376 – Relating to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council**
Hearing: February 12, 2019
3:30 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 224

The ILWU Memorial Association **strongly supports** S.B. 1376, which appropriates funds as a grant to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council for a documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath.

The ILWU Memorial Association is an organization separate from the ILWU Local 142, but its mission is to support Local 142. Its Board of Directors are retired officers of the ILWU Local 142. Each of the officers and directors worked closely with Ah Quon McElrath over many years. Some of us helped her and her husband, Robert McElrath, ILWU International Regional Director, to organize workers in factories and plantations. Others worked alongside her to represent members on the sugar and pineapple plantations, especially during periods of labor strikes, which were sometimes an unfortunate consequence of negotiations with employers. Still others learned from her and helped her to educate and offer services to ILWU members.

Ah Quon was one of us, yet we also recognized her greatness. She was a small Chinese woman, one of 10 children born to working class immigrants from China. She attended public school and valued vocabulary, which she used extensively in her fiery oratory to make her points. Her views were always progressive and sometimes audacious. She believed in workers' rights and representation on the job. She believed in access to quality, affordable health care. She believed that war disproportionately affects poor and working class men and women and advocated peace. She passionately promoted for civil rights. She disagreed with and often scolded the rich and powerful.

Today, there may be few of us now who knew her personally or even by reputation. And that is sad. Younger generations could benefit from knowing about this remarkable woman, which is why this documentary project is underway and needs your financial support. Ah Quon McElrath can be an inspiration to many about how someone—a woman, no less—from a poor background could become a leader in the community and in the labor movement

The ILWU Memorial Association urges passage of S.B. 1376. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

The Thirtieth Legislature
Regular Session of 2019

THE SENATE

Committee on Labor, Culture, and the Arts
Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair
State Capitol, Conference Room 224
Tuesday, February 12, 2019; 3:30 p.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON S.B. 1376
RELATING TO THE HAWAII LABOR HERITAGE COUNCIL**

The ILWU Local 142 **strongly supports** S.B. 1376, which appropriates funds as a grant to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council for a documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath.

Ah Quon McElrath was a social worker, both paid and unpaid, for the ILWU Local 142 for decades. She retired more than 30 years ago and passed away at the age of 92 in 2008, but is still known by many for her progressive stand on many issues and for her role, along with the ILWU, in helping to bring dignity to work and respect to workers in what had been a near-feudal system in Hawaii. Small in physical stature but mighty in her fiery oratory and unabashed ability to persuade decision-makers and others about the right to health care for all, the injustice of income inequality, the importance of labor representation, and the fundamental goal of peace in the world, Ah Quon was not only a treasure to the ILWU but also a progressive icon to the larger community.

The documentary project seeking financial support hopes to share Ah Quon's life, struggles, and purpose to a new generation. Ah Quon was a major part of Hawaii's history. We believe her story should be shared widely so that those living in Hawaii today and those who will come after us will know who she was and what she did and, through her story, can understand the values and ideology she represented in order to carry on her legacy.

Ah Quon was remarkable as a woman of her generation and, we believe, can inspire future generations of women and men to strive for the betterment of their community.

The ILWU urges passage of S.B. 1376. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

SB-1376

Submitted on: 2/8/2019 6:46:55 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/12/2019 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Robert Lillis	Testifying for Machinists Union Hawaii Federal and Amalgamated Lo	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support of the bill to create a documentary film about the life and times of Ah Quon McElrath. We need to document our heroes. If we do not do this, no one will and they will be forgotten.

My name is Amy Agbayani, chair of the Filipina Advocacy Network (FAN). We advocate for policies and programs that support diversity, inclusion and civil rights. Filipinos, like other members of our multiethnic community share a strong interest in Hawaii's history and AQ McElrath's contributions. We strongly support SB 1376 for funds for a documentary, curriculum and website on the legacy of AQ McElrath.

Over the decades, when the two letters AQ were mentioned, people in Hawai'i knew they were referring to AQ McElrath. Generally, important people (RBG), big corporations (GM) or countries (UK) are known by their initials. Unfortunately today in Hawai'i, I think most college-age and high school students do not know what AQ stood for and if we do not fund this request, fewer people will know much about AQ. They might google AQ to try to find out what AQ stands for. I googled AQ and found out is the internet country code for Antarctica, a village in Iran and province in Italy.

SB 1376 is a commendable effort to make sure that we in Hawai'i and elsewhere do not forget AQ and what AQ stood for. AQ sometimes referred to herself as "a little Pake wahine." Those of us who had the privilege to have met or heard her would never think of describing her as "little." Although she was probably less than 5 ft tall, she was and is huge. Her life, words and actions were and are awesome and inspiring. She brought truth to power and empowered those without power and wealth.

I think it is both a privilege and responsibility to help make a documentary on AQ. Her eloquent words, her simple courage and kindness not only made a big impact historically but is so relevant today and for future generations. We need to share the story of a remarkable woman who has shaped not only our state's labor history but our shared future. AQ was born to immigrant parents from China; after her father died when she was 5 years old, she and her siblings picked kiawe beans and dried bones to sell to fertilizer companies. Her brother's shined shoes and sold newspapers. She joined the McKinley high school debate club, graduated from the University of Hawai'i and helped ILWU become a multiracial and effective voice for labor. AQ retired from the ILWU in 1981 and for the next three decades she continued her work for peace and social justice, diversity and inclusion. She advocated for basic economic rights that are of part of our current public policy debates: a single payer national health system, freedom of the press, death with dignity and the rights and contribution of women and workers. If AQ were alive today, she would have a lot of bold statements to make about President Trump's attacks on immigrants. I do not think she would do well with twitter because she was pretty long-winded. Her speeches were eloquent, spell-binding, historically correct and based on evidence.

As a UH emeritus Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Diversity, I wanted to point out that AQ had many ties to UH: she spoke to many classes (social work, ethnic studies, political science), was honored as a distinguished University of Hawaii alum and served as a Regent. I strongly support SB 1376 which requests grant funds for the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council to fund the production of a documentary film would like the legislature to consider appropriating the requested fund as a UH budget line item for the Center for Labor Education and Research

(CLEAR). CLEAR has a good working relationship with the Hawai'i Labor Heritage Council and has done much of the work collecting manuscripts and images that can be used for the documentary, web site and curriculum. AQ was also a very strong advocate for CLEAR.

AQ is an important part of our history and she should not be forgotten. We respectfully urge you to approve SB 1376 and fund this documentary and related educational programming. There is already a significant collection about AQ and we have the expertise to develop an informative, honest and inspirational documentary. I would like to thank this committee for hearing this bill as well as the many individuals and groups including the Hawai'i Labor Heritage Council and CLEAR who are advocating for SB 1376.

LABOR EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Robert D. Lillis, Vice-Chair
Hawai'i Federal &
Amalgamated Machinists
Intl. Assn. of Machinists &
Aerospace Workers

Jason Bradshaw
ILWU, Local 142

Reginald Castanares
Plumbers & Pipefitters UA,
Local 675

Dion Dizon
OPEIU, Local 277

Donovan Duncan
Inlandboatmen's Union

Asimoto O. Fakaosi
Hawai'i Teamsters, Local 996

Terry Lau
Hawai'i State Teachers Assn.

Catherine Lederer
Hawaii AFL-CIO, LCSP

Brian Lee
Laborers' Union, Local 368

Steve Pearson
Musicians' Assn. of Hawai'i
Local 677

Paola Rodelas
UNITE HERE, Local 5

Lorna Woo
Intl. Union of Painters
& Allied Trades,
District Council 50

Marc Yamane
Elevator Constructors
Local 126

Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Vice Chair
Tuesday, February, 12, 2019, 3:30 p.m.
Conference Room 224, State Capitol

TESTIMONY ON SB 1376, RELATING TO THE HAWAII LABOR HERITAGE COUNCIL

Aloha Committee Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Clyde Hayashi and I am the chair of the Labor Education Advisory Council (LEAC) and on behalf of the Council, I wish to express our **strong support** for SB 1376.

We are pleased to join with many other individuals and organizations in support of this measure that would enable the creation of a documentary about the life and times of Ah Quon "AQ" McElrath. AQ's story is especially important today when we are often overwhelmed by issues of race, class, immigration policy, and basic problems of social and economic justice! Her story will help illuminate Hawaii's hidden history, the struggle of workers to take control of their lives and have something to say about the future of Hawaii. A history, almost forgotten by today's students and many in leadership positions.

AQ, born in poverty, raised by a single mother, an immigrant from China with bound feet. Her early experiences informed her philosophy that life's issues require collective action to achieve success. She helped guide the formation of the ILWU as the first multiracial union. She believed that workers held the key to their own future. As a woman she was often relegated to the background, yet it was her ability to help shape the direction of organizing that resulted in the successful labor movement that defeated an oppressive oligarchy and brought about a modern labor democracy. She never wavered, despite red baiting, threats against her and her family, and seemingly impossible odds! She and her colleagues helped raise thousands out of poverty. The documentary will tell this story and provide a much needed heroic role model for future generations!

CLEAR is contributing \$110,000 worth of production related services, plus \$20,000 in cash, and free access to hundreds of hours of archival film and video. This demonstrates that considerable work and support for this effort have already been mobilize.

CLEAR has a strong production record for local, national and international audiences. Most recently, CLEAR's Canefield Songs: Holehole Bushi, featuring narration by Jake Shimabukuro has been seen by more than 300,000 people via national distribution to PBS stations, has been broadcast 4 times by PBS Hawaii, and has garnered 37,000 views on the PBS Hawaii You Tube station. This program has also been featured at the Smithsonian Institution, the Japanese American National Museum, and at several international conferences.

AQ's story has been touched on in largely academic journals, but is rapidly being forgotten by the general public. A documentary of AQ's life is needed and is underway through a collaboration between Hawaii Labor Heritage Council (HLHC) and the Center for Labor Education and Research (CLEAR), University of Hawaii-West Oahu. The public benefits from a high-level documentary, suitable for local, national, and international audiences. The documentary will be accompanied by robust website and curriculum-support videos, to be developed by CLEAR, for grades K-12, the university, and the general public.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify in support SB 1376.



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WEST O'AHU

To: Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and Arts, Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Fr: William Puette, Ph.D. Director, Center for Labor Education and Research, University of Hawaii – West O'ahu

Testimony in Support of S. B. 1376, Relating to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council

Chair, Taniguchi and Members of the Committee,

Aloha kākou,

I write on behalf of the Center for Labor Education and Research (CLEAR), University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu, in support of SB 1376, an exciting documentary project that tells the story of the life and times of Ah Quon "AQ" McElrath (1915 -2008).

AQ was the daughter of an immigrant Chinese mother. Although born in poverty, she became one of the state's most influential leaders, helping to shape a labor movement based on racial equality that would transform Hawai'i from a semi-feudal oligarchy to a modern labor democracy.

Upon retirement in 1980 from her position as social worker for ILWU Local 142, AQ spent the next 28 years working tirelessly for social and economic justice. She championed healthcare, education, press freedom, civil and human rights for all, and was named a Regent of the University of Hawai'i. Her life serves as a role model, especially for girls and all who face barriers to obtaining social and economic justice. This documentary will not only tell the life story of this remarkable woman, but will bring to the screen rare and fascinating interviews and stories of those who came to Hawai'i as immigrants to work on plantations, docks, hotels and factories.

CLEAR was established in 1976 by State Law, HRS §304A-1601 et seq. (Act 202) to provide labor education, research, and labor-related programs to workers, their organizations, and the general public through classroom instruction, seminars, workshops, publications, the internet and other public media. By statute, the Center is guided and advised by a Labor Education and Advisory Council appointed by the President of the University.

CLEAR has been documenting and producing programming since its inception. In addition to local, national and international broadcast distribution of this programming. We have also created one of the most extensive collections of archival film and video documenting our state's labor and plantation history. Recent work by our staff has resulted in private funding commitments amounting to more than \$150,000, that will preserve, digitize, and make available this invaluable collection. A collection that includes more than 25 hours of video interviews with AQ done over a 30-year period, much of which has been produced CLEAR faculty and staff, Chris Conybeare and Joy Chong-Stannard.



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WEST O'AHU

Testimony in Support of S. B. 1376, Relating to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council
Page 2

CLEAR is pleased to partner with the Hawai'i Labor Heritage Council (HLHC) in this important endeavor, providing, at no charge, Executive Producer, Chris Conybeare and Director/Editor, Joy Chong Stannard, who will be in charge of this production. This amounts to approximately \$110,000 of donated services. Involvement of Conybeare and Chong-Stannard insure the highest level of professional expertise in documentary production. Our commitment to this project will include provisions at no charge access to CLEAR's *Rice & Roses* video collection of more than 2,500 video tapes that document our state's plantation and labor history.

CLEAR will also be responsible for creation of curriculum support videos, suitable for K-12, higher education, and independent study. We will draw on our expertise as well as that of both academic and community partners in this endeavor. CLEAR will also be responsible for creation of a dynamic website that links the documentary with CLEAR archival collection. CLEAR's contributions as outlined, when combined with the \$180,000 needed for basic documentary out of pocket costs, will result in a multi-platform, media project that will make AQ's story and Hawaii's struggle for economic and social justice, available to present and future generations.

As a labor historian and educator, I know that much of the real history of our state's working class is not known by the general public, is not adequately taught in our schools, and is in danger of being lost. We need to insure that this real history is known and appreciated. I urge this committee and the legislature to support S.B. 1376 or the Grant in Aid application associated with this project. Mahalo nūnui kākou.

SB-1376

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 11:15:14 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/12/2019 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Adam Carlson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I full support this project. In this day and age, when there is a concerted effort by some to undermine Labor in this country, history must be preserved so it is not forgotten. I am pleased to join with many other individuals and organizations in support of this measure that would enable the creation of a documentary about the life and times of Ah Quon "AQ" McElrath. AQ's story is especially important at a time when we are often overwhelmed by issues of race, class, immigration policy, and basic problems of social and economic justice! Her story will also help illuminate Hawaii's hidden history, the struggle of workers to take control of their lives and have something to say about the future of Hawaii.

THE SENATE
The Thirtieth Legislature
Regular Session 2019

Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

Tuesday, February 12, 2019
Conference Room 224, 3:30 p.m.
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of SB 1376 – Relating to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council

Aloha Chair Taniguchi and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting testimony in support of SB 1376 to appropriate a sum of at least \$180,000, as a grant to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council to fund the production of a documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath.

Ah Quon McElrath's accomplishments and her contributions to the labor movement and to the community extended over fifty years. As an activist, she was an inspiration to those who worked with her and knew her. She was a tireless advocate for all workers and people of our community.

This documentary will recount her humble beginnings, the major roles she played in ending oppressive labor practices and how her dedication and compassion for social justice and civil rights affected the lives of thousands of families, students and citizens.

I was fortunate to know Ah Quon McElrath. Her continued advocacy for the betterment of people's lives had a big impact on me.

This documentary will tell the story of one of Hawaii's bravest women who made a difference -- Ah Quon McElrath, the activist, the advocate and the tireless champion of for all of Hawaii's working people.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 1376.

Aloha, Brenda Ching

SB-1376

Submitted on: 2/10/2019 2:53:58 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/12/2019 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nancy Aleck	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

Those of you who have been around long enough know that AhQuon McElrath would likely come before you to challenge the many ways you could better spend these funds; and to insist that you did so.

AQ was truly a treasure of Hawaii who cared so much about our people and our social institutions, about equality, healthcare and economic justice.

Soon, no one will be left at the Legislature (or in the community) who remembers her. Yet, her wisdom should be shared with many generations to come. That is why this project, headed by folks who have proven track records, is so needed.

Mahalo,

Nancy Aleck

I wish to give my wholehearted support to the enactment of S.B. No. 1376, which is now pending before Hawaii State Senator Brian T. Taniguchi's Committee on Labor, Culture, and the Arts. This bill relates to funding for the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council's planned documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath.

My name is Harvey Schwartz. I am the curator of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Oral History Collection at the union's international headquarters library in San Francisco. Over many years I worked with and got to know Ah Quon McElrath. Her decades of service to the union's members and to the citizens of Hawaii as the ILWU social worker in Honolulu between 1954 to 1981 is the stuff of legend. Of special note is that she toiled endlessly to improve the lives of elders and others who were in need of aid in the union and beyond. Whole generations of Hawaiian citizens still owe their dignified housing, their medical coverage, and their access to other kinds of social services to McElrath's coming to their aid while active in the union and even for a long time during her retirement.

McElrath, of course, is also a historic figure in Hawaii. She was directly involved with the 1930s union organizing in the Islands by Jack Hall, later the ILWU's influential leader in Honolulu between 1943 and 1969. When Hall initiated his 1930s organizing efforts, McElrath was there with her considerable editing skills to make sure that his newspaper was properly produced. I know these details because I researched McElrath in depth in the early 1990s before interviewing her for a feature length 1996 oral history article for *The Dispatcher*, the ILWU's international newspaper. Later I used my knowledge of McElrath's historic social and economic contributions to the betterment of the citizens of the Islands in a chapter on Hawaii in a book I wrote called *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009). I also penned a profile of McElrath for editor Gary Y. Okihiro's *Great Lives from History: Asian and Pacific Islander Americans* (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2012).

I also know that the documentary coverage of McElrath's life that is under consideration will be an outstanding film. I can attest to this because I worked with the University of Hawaii-West Oahu, Center for Labor Education and Research's film team when it produced an excellent documentary about Jack Hall a decade ago. That movie was balanced, fair, historically sound, educational, and, as a bonus, even very entertaining. Fortunately, it is the same prominent and highly accomplished University of Hawaii film team that would be making the proposed McElrath documentary.

All of this is why I am extremely enthusiastic in wishing to endorse the passage of S.B. No. 1376. Thank you very much for your kind attention to my letter.

Harvey Schwartz, Ph.D.
Curator, ILWU Oral History Collection
ILWU Library
San Francisco, California

Date: February 10, 2019

To: SENATE Committee on LABOR, CULTURE & THE ARTS
Sen., Brian Taniguchi, Chair
Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair

From: Teresa Bill, tbill808@gmail.com

Re: Supporting SB 1376, Relating To Hawaii Labor Heritage Council
Tues. Feb 12, 2019 3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224 Committee Clerk, room 226

I am Teresa Bill, **testifying in strong support of SB 1376** funding a documentary film project about the life of Ah Quon McElrath.

It is befitting of this bill that this Committee addresses LABOR, CULTURE & The ARTS – because Ah Quon McElrath’s contributions to Hawaii – which need to be known and shared with our next generation – encompassed the same broad expansive reach. She was intimately involved in Labor Organizing and worked tirelessly for working families. And her community organizing and political involvement also positively impacted the Arts –especially the Symphony.

As an historian, educator and advocate for low-income families, I am aware of the enormous influence Ah Quon McElrath has had on many facets of Hawaii’s history, politics and communities. I had the privilege of seeing first-hand Ah Quon’s community organizing and advocacy for welfare families. But many of our younger generation and even older adults, do not know of AQ’s many contributions, successes and life-long fight for social justice.

Funding for this project encompasses a number of educational components (web-based curriculum, documentary film, etc) that will reach a broad range of demographics – both adults and students.

Ah Quon McElrath’s life-long belief in the possibility of positive change – when we organize and work for it – is an important lesson for all of Hawaii. Few individuals have had such an impact on so many areas of public life, and her life-long quest for quest for social justice offers important lessons and inspiration that needs to be shared.

Ah Quon McElrath was a tireless organizer with the ILWU when it was first organizing workers and continued her work with the labor movement and working families through her retirement and beyond. She is an exemplary example of women’s less visible but impactful community organizing and impact, particularly in the arena of labor history. But Ah Quon didn’t restrict her work to traditional “labor issues.” She understood and worked to address all arenas of worker’s lives. She tirelessly fought both on the State and Federal level for low-income families, access to health care, affordable public education, and also the Arts.

Please fund the Ah Quon McElrath documentary project through SB 1376
Thank you.

SB-1376

Submitted on: 2/11/2019 8:31:48 AM

Testimony for LCA on 2/12/2019 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Gail McElrath Long	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts
Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, LCA Chair

Testimony in Support of SB1376, relating to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council

Chair Taniguchi and members of the Committee

My name is Gail McElrath Long and I was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on July 26, 1943 to Ah Quon and Robert McElrath. My parents raised me to believe in the equality of all individuals and the importance of fighting for what is right and in particular the dignity of working men and women. For me in the 1950's this meant plantation workers and dock workers on Hawaii, Oahu, Kauai, Maui and Lanai. As young children my brother Brett and I participated in many a picket line, Labor Day Parade and soup kitchen to support the fight to better the lot of Hawaii's plantation and dock workers.

I support any educational effort to preserve the history of Hawaii's labor movement. The story of Ah Quon McElrath must be told. There are thousands of people in the State of Hawaii that have benefitted from her work on their and their children's behalf. Although Hawaii is no longer covered with pineapple and sugar cane fields, those who toiled there built the Hawaii that we know today.

The work that Ah Quon did in labor organizing, higher education, racial equality, welfare reform, health care for all, death with dignity, women's health, affordable housing and saving the Star Bulletin has had a lasting effect on the State of Hawaii and its people. If her positive influence is to continue than her story must be told. I strongly urge the Labor, Culture and Arts Committee to pass this legislation.

Thank you,

Gail McElrath Long

Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, LCA Chair
Honorable Glen Wakai, EET Chair
Senate Committees on Labor, Culture and the Arts, and Energy, Economic Development and
Tourism

SB 1376 Relating to the Hawaii Labor Heritage Council
Documentary on Ah Quon McElrath
Hearing: February 12, 2019
3:30 p.m.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1376 RELATING TO
AH QUON MCELRATH AND THE HAWAII LABOR HERITAGE COUNCIL**

Members of the Committee:

I very eagerly support SB 1376 which provides an opportunity to tell the story of Ah Quon McElrath to generations who may not have known her or may not have been informed of her activities as one of our State's most heroic activists. Ms. McElrath's extraordinary story and dedicated commitment to social justice in the 1930s and beyond is an invaluable statement for not only adults but our many students and younger generation who need to have instilled within them the importance of a sense of social justice and the relevance of pursuing a life of activism. Quite apart from any politics Ms. McElrath may have supported, the tireless efforts through the turbulent times of the 30s involving labor strikes in the McCarthy era and Smith Act trials to which union organizers were subjected is a story that needs to be preserved. Her life as an activist and an individual who had a very strong commitment to social justice is an important example to those who will lead our country and state in the future.

This bill will support and enable that story to come to life in a documentary which is a valuable vehicle to embrace our heritage and to teach the importance of social justice to all those who may enjoy the story of her extraordinary life.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark S. Davis
mdavis@davislevin.com
808 524-7500

From: Franklin Odo <franklin.odo@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 11, 2019 11:05 AM
To: LCATestimony
Subject: 1376

Aloha Brian and committee members:

I write in support of SB 1376 - a very important bill supporting a proposed documentary on the life and significance of Ah Quon McElrath. From 1978 into the 1990s, I was chair of the Ethnic Studies Program [not dept] at UHM and know full well how important she was to the development of Hawaii's growth in Democratic and democratic politics and the lives of all working people in the Territory and State. I am now the John J McCloy Visiting Professor of American Institutions and Intl Diplomacy at Amherst College and continue to use her life as a guideline for my work. SB 1376 is important not only to the history and peoples of Hawaii but to the national historical perspective. Amherst College is prepared to publicize the documentary when done and to provide financial support as it is developed. I know from my work with the Association for Asian American Studies that this documentary will be acknowledged and used in many places across the country. Thank you for this opportunity.

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Franklin Odo

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts
Senator Brian Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

February 12, 2019 at 3:20 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 224

Submitted by Doris Ching, Educator
Emeritus Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Hawai'i System

SB 1376 Appropriates funds as a grant to the Hawai'i Labor Heritage Council for a documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath

Chair Taniguchi, Vice-Chair Ihara, and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts:

I fully support Senate Bill 1376, and I thank the committee for introducing the bill that appropriates funds as a grant to the Hawai'i Labor Heritage Council for a documentary film on the life of Ah Quon McElrath. AQ, as she is respectfully known, was an amazing woman who dedicated her life and used her power of voice and deed to support important causes that improved the quality of life and gave hope to poverty-stricken laborers and their families, actively opposed racism and other forms of discrimination, and created real change that made our state a better and more equal place. She was a most selfless person who used her powerful voice and actions to fight for causes because it was the right thing to do and not for fame or recognition.

AQ was a multi-faceted, high quality individual. In addition to supporting social justice, equality, anti-racism, rights of laborers and women, and other significant causes to improve our community, AQ contributed—often anonymously—to the culture and the arts. Her contributions of tens of thousands of dollars for scholarships at the University of Hawai'i and donations to sustain the symphony and promote the arts in the community are relatively little known. AQ was also a staunch supporter of education. As a member of the prestigious University of Hawai'i Board of Regents, she consistently supported measures that assured educational success for students and other initiatives that elevated the value of the University of Hawai'i as a first-rate institution of higher education.

It is important that the values, courage, and contributions of Ah Quon McElrath are documented and preserved. It is essential that the life story of AQ McElrath is preserved and shared to inform, enlighten, and inspire current and future generations.

LATE

Why in the world should the people of the State of Hawaii spend \$180,000 to create a film about A.Q. McElrath? The answer is simpler than you would think. It is the obligation of the people of the great place we call Hawaii to leave evidence for future generations of how it is we became who we are. How is it that we overthrew the slave owners without a civil war? How is it that we became a place where the quality of the human climate takes precedent over the quality of the business climate?

The answer to these questions revolves around people such as A.Q. McElrath who in the face of extraordinary challenges marshalled the forces of us to stand resolutely before all and resolutely declare that people matter more than profits; matter more than businesses and that a society built for the convenience and success of business, but not people, is never sustainable.

Every day from varied corners of our country Hawaii is attacked because it won't kowtow to business and create a place that FORBE'S Magazine worships and adores. As A.Q. would and did say to me, "I'd rather be known for a great environment for people to live and thrive in that one that is great for business."

I thus ask that you recognize that as we build monuments in our parks and public squares, we build monuments in film to honor, teach, and provide testimony in perpetuity about how we came to be this great place we call Hawaii, a place where the human environment comes first and foremost. That story must include A.Q.'s and \$180,000 is a less expensive and more lasting monument to her and more importantly to all of us than any statue in any park.

Mark Bernstein
Honolulu, Hawaii