



SENATE DISTRICT 18 COMMUNITY REPORT

NOVEMBER 2022 – *Serving Mililani Town, Waipi'o Gentry, Crestview, Waikele,
portion of Waipahu, Village Park & Royal Kunia*



Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

The holiday season is here and I know we are all eager to celebrate this year's festivities with our friends and family. Though we are thankfully nowhere near the severity of illness of recent years, there are still continued challenges with the start of the flu season, as well as an increase in RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) and COVID-19 cases especially for our keiki. It is important to continue keeping ourselves healthy from such viruses, which have had a severe impact on many local families this fall. I encourage you to get your annual flu shot and additional COVID-19 booster shot to ensure you and your loved ones strengthen your immune systems and stay healthy throughout the holidays.

This month I was fortunate to attend several events dedicated to female leadership and education as we prepare for the upcoming legislative session. I attended the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, the first of which since the pandemic. During this conference, I got a chance to learn and be updated on national educational issues relating to charter schools. It was a great opportunity to connect with the Commission Vice Chair, Makalapua Alencastre (pictured left), as well as Chairperson Cathy Ikeda (pictured center). It is always a point of pride for me to stand with female colleagues in such important leadership positions, as we work together in support of our keiki and communities.



I also had the opportunity to attend the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) annual conference which was held this year in Charleston, SC. This conference focused on issues such as healthcare, criminal justice reform and addiction treatment, as well as cybersecurity, education, energy and mental health. It was particularly heartening to listen to the topic on period product access, which Hawai'i was noted for, in leading the charge with the passage of the SB2821. That bill, otherwise known as the Menstrual Equity Bill, was passed into law earlier this year and provides free menstrual products to public schools throughout the State. I am proud to be a part of these necessary and deserving strides for our keiki and community, and am encouraged knowing that more good work will be done on behalf of Hawai'i in the upcoming session to continue leading by example on ways in which we can improve our state and country.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to continue representing the residents of Senate District 18. I look forward to continuing to work tirelessly on behalf of our deserving local families. I wish you and your loved ones a safe and healthy Thanksgiving holiday filled with joy and grateful hearts. Happy Thanksgiving!



SENATE VICE PRESIDENT

Chair:
Committee on Education

Vice Chair:
Committee on
Higher Education

Member:
Committee on
Ways and Means

Member:
Special Committee on
COVID-19

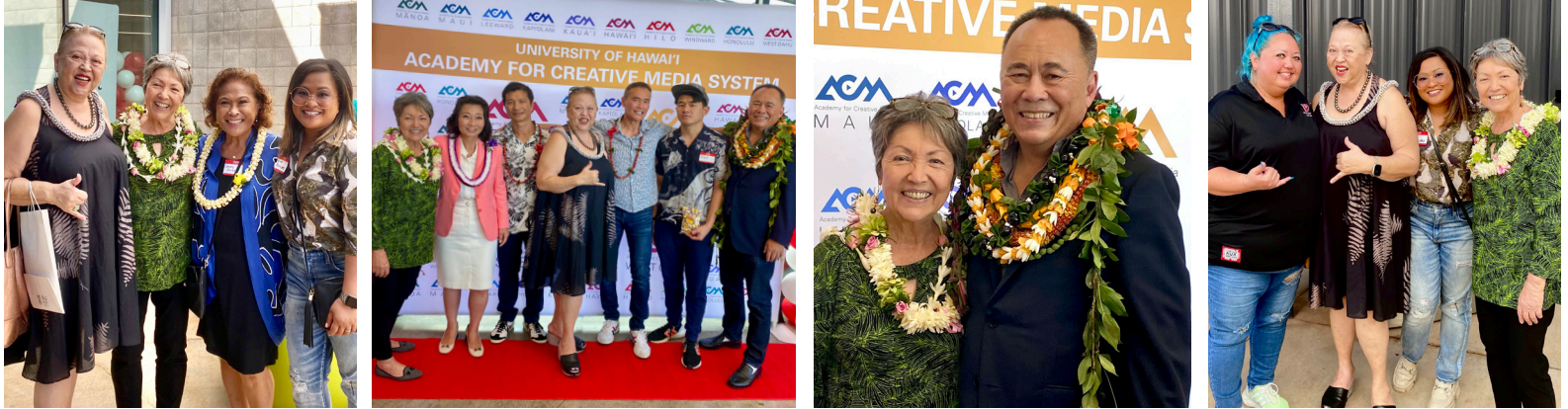
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UHWO ACADEMY OF CREATIVE MEDIA GRAND OPENING

I was thrilled to attend the long awaited grand opening of UH West O‘ahu’s Academy of Creative Media (ACM) department to celebrate their new student production facility. Because of my diligent efforts to build UHWO and this newest building, I have been fortunate to see our students hone their skills and interests in a variety of creative mediums as they now have a place here at home to do so. The star-studded event even included some of the industry’s most talented actors who participated in a celebrity panel. My deepest mahalo to founder and director Chris Lee, as well as the hardworking faculty and staff of the ACM program for sharing their talents and expertise. With their guidance, the next generation of creatives are growing and thriving in their craft.



L-R: Celebrating alongside actress Amy Hill, Candy Suiso and Hawai‘i’s own Kimee Balmilero; gathered on the red carpet with Representative Luke, actors Dustin Nguyen, Hill, Mark Dacasos and Ronny Chieng, as well as ACM founder Chris Lee; congratulating Lee on the incredible success of the ACM and continued growth of its program and facilities; my daughter Malia Cook joined Hill, Balmilero and myself for the exciting grand opening event.



UH Mānoa is offering high school graduates a second chance at admission through the College Opportunities Program.

The FREE 6-week summer program runs from July 2nd to Aug 11th 2023, and includes on-campus housing and classes designed to improve academic and social skills. The program is seeking Hawai‘i residents who may not meet the minimum admissions requirements, economically disadvantaged, academically under prepared or non-traditional students to apply.

Head online to their website for more information or to apply:
<https://www.hawaii.edu/cop/>

NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN LEGISLATORS CONFERENCE



I traveled to Charleston, South Carolina National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) with fellow legislators Senator DeCoite, Senator Kim, OHA trustee Kalei Akaka and myself for the NFWL annual conference. We had the chance to take in a wealth of workshops, roundtable discussions, and presentations celebrating excellence in female leadership.

I attended several insightful plenaries, including: Education at Any Age, which focused on the partnership between educators, government agencies and community leaders provide graduation pathways; Workforce Development, which highlighted the ways in which companies recruit untapped talent pools to meet workforce needs; Evaluating Education Options & Literacy, which discussed school choice as well as how literacy is the currency of the 21st century; and Protecting Older Americans From Financial Abuse, which noted the increase in financial scams and how to educate and protect our kupuna from digital scammers.