



# HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: 586-8636 FAX: 586-8655 TDD: 568-8692

Wednesday, March 23, 2022  
Videoconference , 10:40 a.m.  
Room 329

To: The Honorable Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair  
The Honorable Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Culture, Arts, & International Affairs

From: Liann Ebesugawa, Chair  
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.R. 159 / H.C.R. 159

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

HCRC supports H.R. 159 and H.C.R. 159 which, if passed, would recognize the historic, cultural, and strategic connections among the peoples of Oceania, of which Hawai‘i is a part, and urge greater collaboration and exchange of best practices with government officials of Pacific Island nations, and implementation of programs and training to combat discrimination against Pacific Island communities.

Native Hawaiians are included among the indigenous peoples of Oceania, who share common cultural and linguistic ties. It makes sense to develop these ties that bind the peoples of Oceania, to reduce discrimination that divides and hinders our governments from collaborating to address the most pressing issues of the day that affect Pacific Island nations – rising sea levels,

environmental degradation, mitigation of natural disasters, economic development, managing tourism, access to healthcare, improving healthcare, and promoting indigenous rights.

It is important and appropriate that the Legislature of the State of Hawai‘i recognize the achievements of the indigenous people of the Oceania regions, and that the State of Hawai‘i proactively engage in efforts to combat discrimination against Pacific Island peoples right here at home. **The HCRC supports H.R. 159 and H.C.R. 159.**

**HCR-159**

Submitted on: 3/22/2022 9:27:39 AM

Testimony for CAI on 3/23/2022 10:40:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristen Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HCR159 which affirms the connections among peoples of Oceania, of which Hawai'i is a part; urges greater collaboration between governments to address our common, pressing issues; and combats discrimination against Pacific Island communities.

We are naturally connected by water throughout Oceania yet we create and continue to observe human-made boundaries that divide us from our natural state. It is in our best interest to recognize and utilize our connections and to partner with nations that face similar situations as us.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, ARTS, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
Wednesday, March 23, 2022  
10:40 AM

Dear Chair Gates, Vice Chair Tam, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keoni Moen Williams and I write in support of HCR 159, Recognizing the connections we have in Oceania, and encouraging better cooperation between the State of Hawai'i and Pacific Island nations, territories, and other states.

I write in support of this resolution through three main lenses. First, I write as the son of a woman who emigrated to Hawaii from the island of Chuuk in the Federated States of Micronesia to seek a better future. Second, I write as a United States citizen born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, who is a proud product of our public school system. Third, in my capacity as a law school student and member of the next generation of Hawaii.

First, as the son of a woman who emigrated to Hawaii from Micronesia, I consider myself a product of the relationship between Freely Associated States and the State of Hawaii. My middle name, Moen, is the former name of my mother's home island, now known as Chuuk, in the Federated States of Micronesia. My first name, Keoni, was given by my "calabash" family, the 'ohana who hired my mother for their small business upon her arrival in Honolulu. Although she was barely able to speak English at first, she was grateful for the work and remained loyal to that locally owned family business for more than thirty years. Her story is not uncommon in Hawaii.

Second, as a product of the public school system here in Hawaii, I have witnessed first-hand the way Micronesian students were treated by peers and even teachers. I personally avoided these stereotypes because I am of mixed race and do not fit the stereotype of a typical "Micronesian" student. I often wonder what my academic and professional trajectory may have been if I did. Micronesian students were not the most promising students when I was in high school. Adults lowered their expectations of them. In turn, they lowered their own expectations. It was a vicious cycle. One day in high school, I came home to my mother watching "Papa Mau: The Wayfinder" on PBS Hawaii. She beamed with pride in a way I had never seen before.

Third, as a law student and member of the next generation of Hawaii, I believe in peace, civil rights, and integrity. Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink once said that "We have to build things that we want to see accomplished, in life and in our country, based on our own personal experiences . . . to make sure others . . . do not have to suffer the same discrimination." HCR 159 is but one canoe in the legislative ocean. Too many canoes like this one have never reached shore and their navigators have lowered their expectations. It is a vicious cycle.

Kinisou Chapur,



Keoni Moen Williams

**HCR-159**

Submitted on: 3/22/2022 12:11:12 PM

Testimony for CAI on 3/23/2022 10:40:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Teri L Skillman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I write in support of HCR159 which articulates Hawaii's identity as a part of Oceania and affirms the importance of ties with Pacific Island cultures.

Mahalo,

Teri Skillman

**HCR-159**

Submitted on: 3/23/2022 8:03:17 AM

Testimony for CAI on 3/23/2022 10:40:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniel Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Gates, Vice-Chair Tam, members,

Thank you for hearing this important measure I stand in **STRONG SUPPORT** for recognizing our role and truly our identity in the region of Oceania. The state has always had a healthy focus on North East Asia or the Philippines, and it is now time to return to our roots. We have much more in common with the Pacific Islands, and our issues are dramatically the same. Sharing policy notes on the issues we commonly share, and indeed the crises we commonly share, is critical. I think of the tragic possibility that climate change might cut off communities like Hau'ula, and know so many Pacific Island nations face similar, if not more acute, dangers. Let's cooperate with the communities that we align most closely with, within our Sea of Islands.

Thank you for your consideration.

Daniel Lee