



**TESTIMONY BY:**  
EDWIN H. SNIFFEN  
DIRECTOR

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**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

March 23, 2023  
3:01 P.M.  
State Capitol, Teleconference

**S.C.R. 170 & S.R. 128**

**URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO  
EVALUATE OPTIONS THAT PROVIDE ADDITIONAL AIR SERVICE TO REMOTE AND  
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE STATE.**

Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture  
and the Arts

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The Department of Transportation (DOT) **supports** this measure, which requests that the DOT establishes an air service task force to provide recommendations for improving commercial air travel to and from Molokai.

The DOT supports this measure but proposes that the members of the task force be changed and consist of the following:

- (1) One (1) member selected by the Senate President;
- (2) One (1) member selected by the House Speaker;
- (3) One (1) member selected by the Governor;
- (4) The Director for Transportation, or their designee; and
- (5) Any additional member whose expertise may be relevant to and as recommended by the working group.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

**LATE**

March 23, 2023

The Honorable Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts  
The Thirty-Second Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Lee and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SCR170/SR128

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **strongly supports SCR170/SR128**, which is urging the department of transportation to establish a working group to evaluate options that provide additional air service to remote and underserved communities across the state.

We hosted our Annual Day at the Capitol Event on March 2<sup>nd</sup> this year. At this event we fly in individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities from all over the state to come and spend the day at our state capitol advocating for important issues. This year we had several advocates coming in from Molokai who almost did not make it. The airline rebooked their flight and cancelled their flight on several occasions. Without the help of help of Senator DeCoite and her office staff these advocates would not have been able to participate in the event due to the airline issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of SCR170/SR128**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator



TO: The Honorable Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts  
The Thirty-Second Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

**LATE**

FROM: Brandon Reny-Wong, Moloka'i Self-Advocacy Advisory Council, Chair

SUBJECT: SCR 170 – RELATING TO ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP FOR  
ADDITIONAL AIR SERVICE TO REMOTE AREAS.

Dear Senator Lee and Committee Members:

The 7 Self-Advocacy Advisory Council members of Moloka'i are in support of SCR 170, relating to establishing a working group to evaluate options for additional air service to remote and underserved communities across the state.

**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 11:10:14 AM  
Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM

**LATE**

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
PF BENTLEY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of Molokai we are in desperate need of more and reliable ontime air and sea options for travel in and out of Molokai. Sometimes we can't get to business meetings or medical appointments that take months to get, or we miss a Mainland plane connection which result in the loss of hundreds of dollars in tickets. Hours or days long delays happen frequently without compensation from Mokulele.

**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 10:55:02 AM  
Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ARABELLA ARK	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

This testimony is to address state and county issues regarding transportation for Molokai residents to neighbor islands as it is a statewide problem. And, to kindly ask your help in finding solutions for better service.

I have written about our difficulties traveling to and from Molokai to Governor Green, Mayor Bissen and his staff, Senator Decoite, Richard Schuman at Mokulele Airline, Southern Airlines the parent company, and the only response I have received was an acknowledgement from the governor.

I have some ideas to share.

As you are aware, Molokai no longer has a ferry offering transportation to Maui. As you are also aware, there is now only one airline, Mokulele, servicing Molokai. When the ferry went out of business, a major factor was price competition with the three airlines that served Molokai at that time. Covid hit and reduced the number of people traveling interisland. Hawaiian stopped its flights serving Molokai. Now there is only one airline, Mokulele.

Times have changed.

There is a serious problem with only having one method of transportation to and from Molokai.

The first is medical. There seems to be no way to get priority seating for medical appointments. There needs to be.

To my knowledge, no priority for airline booking is given to residents seeking medical help off island. I personally have had flights cancelled, rebooked, the new flight delayed, and I have been forced to abandon hope of timely medical help in Honolulu. Rescheduling appointments with very busy specialists has taken me, for example, over six months to get a necessary eye surgery only to have flights cancelled for time sensitive follow ups. I have gone so far as to beg to fly in a dog kennel when told there were no seats available on any flights. That got a good laugh but no results.

The doctors and medical personnel who service Molokai also have the problem of cancellations

and delays coming from Honolulu to help us on Molokai. Thus patients here have to wait a month or longer to see that doctor due to rescheduling.

This situation is simply not acceptable.

My suggestion is that the airline be asked to give priority to travelers with medical appointments and to medical personnel traveling for work.

The second problem is cost. From a consumer point of view, to pay \$240 for a round trip interisland is unaffordable. If family members traveling is factored in as well, the cost becomes astronomical. And, of course, there are the charges for baggage. And, worse, minimal to no space for ice-chests with food.

On the ground in Maui County we have the MEO bus for transportation. We need to recognize the need for affordable travel not only on the ground but also over water and in the air.

My suggestion is to develop some type of interisland MEO type of travel subsidy. Such a subsidy would be innovative and helpful...whether it comes from the state or the county...is for you to determine.

And now to the ferry.

Many Molokai residents, shoppers, school sports teams and other scholastic opportunities, large families, and people with medical needs would use the ferry if it was reinstated with a new and different route: instead of going from Kaunakakai to Lahaina, it would go from Kaunakakai to Kahului, where more conveniences are available. Molokai residents would easily be able to get to Maui Memorial or Kaiser or HMSA providers' offices as well as participate in school activities, shop, and more. In addition, large ice-chests, hardware, and other materials can be brought on the ferry.

I appreciate your attention to these matters of transportation, priority travel, cost, and more.

I look forward to hearing from you on these topics.

Respectfully,  
Arabella Ark

resident of Hawai'i since 1972: living in Waianae, Hana, and Kaunakakai  
2376 Kamehameha V Hwy., Kaunakakai, HI 96748  
Tel. 808 553 3099  
Text: 808 658 9616

**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 11:38:34 AM  
Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hokulani Alcon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

As a resident of Molokai, Mokulele has been the only primary air service to and from Molokai to the other neighbor islands. First off, I appreciate the service as myself as well as my father travel often to Oahu for medical purposes quite often. BUT...being the only primary and only air service it has been really tough not only on our family but the whole island of Molokai and all the islands and airports Mokulele services.

A need for another airline is desperately needed for our island and Lanai as well as Hana and Kalaupapa. A subsidy is needed to help cut cost of airline prices for everyone. Also with the cancellations and delays that Mokulele has been having for the last year or so, it really inconveniences our Kupuna and families, like myself, that travel to Oahu or Maui for doctors appointments. Some have had to reschedule their appointments many of times because they were delayed and stuck on Molokai or flat out their flight was cancelled. The prices are completely ridiculous and most kupuna and retirees are on a fixed income. How can they afford to live when they have to pay an unbelievable amount of money to travel whether it be for doctors appointments or just to visit their family off island.

The promise of bigger planes from Mokulele happened but not even a year in and they are already broken. That now causes use to be at square one with just the little planes. What also is very frustrating is the lack of communication between the staff or administration in the call centers or main office, to the ticket counter to the passengers. Granted the staff at the ticket counters are only doing what they are told and we appreciate their work in trying to accommodate passengers. Whatever happened to the ticket agents being able to make a reservation and rescheduling passengers right there at the ticket counter? Now if we're delayed and/or flights cancelled, we are MAYBE notified by text or email then we need to call the reservations agent to rebook. By the time we get to speak to an agent, there's no guarantee you'll get a flight to your destination.

It is absolutely frustrating I'm sure for all parties involved, whether passengers or employees at the different airports.

Please help our remote passengers find a better solution for travel. Your help is deperately needed.

Mahalo!



**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 12:00:38 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM

**LATE**

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lisa Omalsa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

Competition is needed to help with price of airfares. Mahalo.

**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 12:03:06 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cora Schnackenberg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Cora Schnackenberg. I am from the island of Molokai. Our community members especially our Kupunas are being challenged to obtain flights to attend medical specialist appointments on Oahu and Maui.

Mahalo,

cora Schnackenberg

**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 12:36:41 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christina Cummings	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern:

I live on Moloka'i. It is a remote and underserved island in the state of Hawaii. It is serviced by ONE airlines (Southern) by a smaller aircraft known as Mokulele.

In recent weeks, Southern airlines has been canceling flights without adequate prior notice to its clients. In turn, the clients have been placed with the responsibility to reschedule their own flights & seek additional accommodations without being fairly compensated.

In addition, flights have been delayed over and over, even more so in the recent weeks. The airlines DOES NOT communicate with its passengers as to the reason why so many flights are being canceled or delayed.

Also, Mokulele (Southern), has been gouging the people of Moloka'i because of it's monopolization. There is no other airlines to service our community. In the end, residents have been missing important medical appointments, family emergencies, career committments and other important events due to cancelations & delays in flights.

We are being overcharged by this airlines but adequate service is not being rendered.

Thank you for your time!

Christina M. Cummings

**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 12:46:39 PM  
Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileen Carr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

The residents of the island of Molokai desperately and humbly request your immediate attention to this matter. Island residents are currently obliged to pay over \$200 for each round trip Mokulele ticket to our bigger, better-served neighbor islands. Molokai is well-known (and deeply proud) to be one of the least developed Hawaiian islands, but this means that we must travel to other islands for health and dental care, for family visits, for supplies, for connecting flights to the mainland, and more. The cost of airfare as it currently stands is not sustainable, and yet ticket prices continue to rise. As do flight delays, cancellations, and changes, which subsequently lead to costs incurred for the ensuing chain of events (unexpected overnight stays, missed appointments, etc.). With the highest unemployment rate in the state and a scarcity of services and providers, Molokai residents shouldn't have to continue suffering the highest and most prohibitive costs for interisland travel. Our island simply can't afford it.

Please help by supporting SCR 170.

Respectfully,

Eileen Carr

Molokai Resident & Teacher

March 23, 2022

**LATE**

Aloha Senators,

This email is to address issues regarding the lack of transportation options for Molokai residents and to kindly ask your help in finding solutions for better service.

Prior to the pandemic, we had three airlines. Prior to that, we also had a ferry providing roundtrip service from Lahaina.

Times have certainly changed.

Now we have one airline, Mokulele Airlines, a monopoly, owned and managed by an out of state company, Southern Airways with no ties and no aloha to the residents of Molokai.

We and most Molokai residents we have spoken to have, on a regular basis, had flights cancelled with very little notice, rebooked, the new flight delayed, or as was the case last weekend, cancelled again! Southern Airways provides no explanation or communication as to one's flight status, either to the customer or the terminal staff. Recently, Southern Airways' policy is to no longer rebook cancelled flights to the nearest available flight, now requiring one to spend 20-30 minutes on hold anxiously waiting for an agent in order to reschedule a very last minute cancelled flight. As longtime residents of Molokai, we are appalled and disheartened by the lack of communication, customer care and respect shown by the management of Southern Airways.

Molokaians have been forced to abandon hope of timely medical help in Honolulu. Rescheduling appointments with very busy specialists can take up to six months only to have flights cancelled prior to departure, necessitating another wait. PT scans, MRIs, radiation treatment, some chemo treatments, even minor surgeries; none of these can be done on Molokai and require a reliable means to access them. We have now learned that we must book our travel at least the day before and add the cost of a hotel room and transportation to our medical costs. Sometimes, booking the day before isn't even timely enough.

The doctors and medical personnel who service Molokai also have the problem of cancellations and delays coming from Honolulu to help us on Molokai. Patients then have to wait a month or longer to see that doctor due to rescheduling. It also exacerbates our health care shortage as health professionals are now hesitant to service Molokai if it means that their days are shortened or cancelled unexpectedly. Why should they give up their full schedules on O'ahu to sit in the Mokulele terminal wondering when their next flight will be and if they make it to Molokai, can they make it back home?

I have heard that having checked out of their hotel, turned in their rental car, only to find out their flight had been cancelled has left tourists sleeping in our terminal overnight. Or, their flights are delayed/cancelled causing them to miss their connection to the mainland costing them hundreds of dollars to rebook.

The second problem is cost. From a consumer point of view, to pay \$240 for a round trip interisland is unaffordable. If family members traveling is factored in as well, the cost becomes astronomical. For our local high school sports teams, it's almost impossible. I understand that Senator Decoite is looking into a subsidy for Mokulele to service Molokai. That would be great, particularly if Molokaians enjoy the benefit and not just Southern Airways, but it will not address the lack of timely service and kokua that our residents deserve.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this very critical matter.

Aloha,  
Kip and Leslie Dunbar  
9750 Kamehameha V Hwy  
Kaunakakai, HI 9748  
808-558-8362

**SCR-170**

Submitted on: 3/23/2023 1:59:09 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/23/2023 3:01:00 PM



<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jane Yoo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you in advance for reading my testimony, which I am writing on behalf of our 'ohana on Molokai. With Mokulele Airlines as our only transportation option off island, we find ourselves exceedingly burdened by their cost, delays, and constant changes to the schedule. In the past year, over 80% of our flights have been changed or cancelled, creating a difficult ripple effect - an effect of not only inconvenience but cost burden (paying for hotel, transportation, changes to connecting flights) and significant delays in accessing medical care off island. We sincerely believe that this is not acceptable. While more transportation options are needed, we do ask that you think carefully about for whom transportation options are needed. We ask that you prioritize Molokai residents - not tourists - and think through options, listening carefully to the voices of Molokai for what is equitable and sustainable.

With great appreciation - mahalo,

Jane