

DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE KUPA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

ADMINISTRATION
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March 11, 2024

The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair
The Honorable Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair
And Members of the Committee on Transportation
And Culture and the Arts
State Capitol, Conference Room 224
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee on
Transportation and Culture and the Arts,

SUBJECT: H.B. 1861 H.D. 2 - Relating To Number Plates
HEARING: Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 3:05 p.m.

Pursuant to Section 6-402 of the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu, the Department of Customer Services (CSD) administers the motor vehicle registration program for the island of O'ahu, including the issuance of license plates.

Every license plate is required by law to have the word "Hawaii" along the top center of the license plate. Unfortunately, the statute does not spell "Hawaii" with an 'okina. This bill will ensure that the word is correctly spelled "Hawai'i".

This bill will also allow the word "Hawai'i" and the phrase "Aloha State" to be in either upper or lower case to increase design options for future license plates.

Two years ago, the Legislature passed Act 170 which requires Hawaiian diacritical markings in Hawaiian names and words in official State and County letterhead. We support further expansion of the use of Hawaiian diacritical marks in other aspects of government, including our State license plates. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support for this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly M. Hashiro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and "M".

Kimberly M. Hashiro
Director

Aloha nui kākou!

I am writing to express my full support for HB1861, HD2. As a speaker of Hawaiian language, a former teacher of Hawaiian language, former President of the 'Ahahui 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian Language Professional organization), and a dedicated Hawaiian language advocate, I strongly advocate for the enactment of this Act and any legislation that advocates for the inclusion of the 'okina.

The 'okina, recognized as the 13th letter of the Hawaiian Alphabet since 1978, is not merely a diacritical mark but a consonant integral to the structure of the language. Despite being not needed by the eldest mānaleo (native speakers), numbering approximately 16 (excluding the Ni'ihau Community of mānaleo, which could number 200 to 300), the 'okina holds significance across numerous Pacific Island nations today, with some formally incorporating it into their languages.

Opponents of the 'okina's use, even among speakers and professors of the language, may have overlooked its importance during their own language acquisition journey. In a practical sense, considering that the majority of Hawai'i's residents do not speak Hawaiian, the 'okina (and kahakō) aids in pronunciation and contextual understanding, especially in distinguishing between words like 'mai' and 'ma'i' when presented in isolation.

Some colleagues advocating for the removal of all diacritics may not fully grasp the historical context of the language's transcription during the early 1820s and 1830s by missionaries, who were not linguists. Their omissions and errors in transcription have had enduring impacts on the language. Moreover, given the Legislature's prior passage of Act 170, the enactment of this Bill would naturally complement and extend the spirit of that Act.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly endorse the approval of this Bill, HB1861, as it represents a crucial step in preserving and honoring the integrity of the Hawaiian language.

No laila, Eia ho'i wau e kāko'o a'e nei i ka 'āpono 'ana i kēia Pila HB1861

Me Ka Mahalo,



Hailama V.K.K. Farden

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 9:20:25 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bruce Torres Fischer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

The ‘okina (glottal stop) is considered a letter and has been a part of standard Hawaiian language orthography for decades. I fully support it's inclusion on our license plates to reflect its widespread use within Hawai‘i today and to encourage correct pronunciation.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Bruce Torres Fischer

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2024 5:24:02 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ralph Hasegawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support this HB1861 HD2. Adding the kahakō and ‘okina aligns the spelling of Hawai‘i in Hawai‘i State official communications thereby reducing potential uncertainty from users of State services. This also increases the use of the Hawaiian language.

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 10:00:06 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kauanoë Kamana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for supporting the intent of the use of the ‘okina and the kahakō, as a means to assist those that are not fluent in our language. We need to support increased interest in knowing and practicing the correct pronunciation of the Hawaiian language among all who live and visit Hawai‘i. This law builds upon Act 170, and should not be construed as being in opposition to efforts to preserve and acknowledge the original spelling of Hawaiian words without the ‘okina and kahakō.

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2024 8:13:09 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support as a logical extension of Act 170 which requires Hawaiian diacritical markings in Hawaiian names and words in official State and County letterhead. At the time of passage, the legislature recognized that Hawaiian language practitioners generally employ two written orthographies, namely unmarked language and marked language. The unmarked orthography was the first writing system of Hawaiian language. The marked orthography, which includes the kahakō and ‘okina, was created as a means to help learners of Hawaiian language determine when to elongate a vowel or where to insert a glottal stop. Reflecting on this Act helps all to understand the intent of the marked orthography which did not invalidate the spelling of Hawaiian words in their original form.

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 9:20:23 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Kimura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaiian spelling is based on pronunciation. It is a phonetic spelling. The Protestant missionaries did not know how to deal with the glottal stop in the throat that in Hawaiian is a whole letter. The macron is also a pronunciation that is vital in determining meaning. Both the glottal and macrons are being taught and used by the new generations of Hawaiian speakers. I support the government adoption of both the glottal and macron in its spelling system.

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/9/2024 9:11:53 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lu Ann Mahiki Lankford-Faborito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 10:14:23 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael EKM Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

HB-1861-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/10/2024 7:41:52 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/12/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. William H. Wilson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislators,

Mahalo for hearing HB1861 HD2. I urge support of this bill.

I am a faculty member of the UH Hilo Hawaiian language College. With the growth in the Hawaiian language more and more people have supported the use of the ‘okina and kahakō to assist those who are not fully fluent in the language in reading Hawaiian. Such full spelling of Hawaiian words also draws attention to the uniqueness of Hawai‘i and has positive economic and other impacts, while also recognizing the distinctive roots of our state's identity. Recently our College joined others in supporting initiatives of the US Department of the Interior to spell Hawaiian words and place names with the ‘okina and kahakō.

HB 1861 HD2 is consistent with the spelling practices that have led to the growth of the Hawaiian language in our state and attention on a national and indeed an international level. I strongly urge passage of HD 1861 HD2. Mahalo again for this hearing.

“Cow Eye”

LATE

Aloha nui kākou,

Please accept this testimony **supporting passage of HB1861 HD2** regarding a requirement that State of Hawai‘i license plates issued on or after 1/1/2025 include ‘okina in the word “Hawai‘i” and authorizing the use of all uppercase letters, all lowercase letters, or initial capital letters for the words “Hawai‘i” and “Aloha State” in motor vehicle license plates effective 7/1/3000 (HD2).

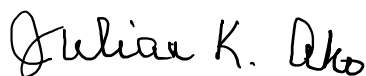
My late maternal grandmother was a mānaleo (native speaker) of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian language) from the island of Kaua‘i. When she was growing up in a home where ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i was her first language, use of the diacritical marks of the “modern” Hawaiian orthography was not common practice. It would have been considered superfluous because in reading the original Hawaiian Bible which had no ‘okina or kahakō, grandma and her family members automatically knew what the proper pronunciation of the words was by their common practice. However, it WOULD always “grate” on grandma’s ears (and still does on mine) to hear people who didn’t know the Hawaiian language mispronounce the name of the island they lived on as “Cow Eye” (their version of Kauai with no ‘okina).

As was true of many Hawaiian kupuna mānaleo, my grandmother did not teach me to speak our native language because assimilationist practices had successfully suppressed its use. Thus, I didn’t begin a study of Hawaiian in the University of Hawai‘i system until I was 48 years old. At that point, I was very appreciative and continue to be so that the inclusion of the ‘okina and kahakō is common practice as a part of the “modern” Hawaiian orthography.

In the state where the Hawaiian language now constitutionally holds a position equal to that of the English language, it is unconscionable that any agency or company would continue to permit Hawaiian words to be misspelled, in ignorance of the standards of the modern Hawaiian language.

Please support passage of HB 1861 HD2 and help to ensure that NO ONE ever mispronounces the Hawaiian name of your state. Help put an end to mispronounced words like “Cow Eye.”

Mahalo nui loa.



Julian Keikilani Ako