



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO HOUSE BILL 957 HD1
RELATING TO LAULAU DAY

Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts
Hawai'i State Capitol

March 13, 2025

3:15PM

Room 224

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

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB 957 HD 1 which would designate the first Friday in May of each year as “Laulau Day” in the State, effective July 1, 3000. Food, in its practice, is a form of resilience—a symbol of survival, perseverance, and cultural continuity. There was a time when Native Hawaiians faced near extinction, yet today, every act of cultural preservation—whether it’s hula, ‘ōlelo Hawai’i, or the foods we prepare and share—serves as a form of resistance and a reminder that our culture continues to thrive.

Last, year, taro (kalo) was officially designated as Hawai’i’s state plant—a milestone recognition of its deep-rooted importance to Hawaiian culture. Laulau is a direct extension of kalo, as its leaves are fundamental to this traditional dish. For many, laulau is more than just food—it’s an economic and cultural lifeline. For generations, laulau has been an early form of economic development, used to fundraise for everything from school tuition to sports teams and community programs.

The State of Hawai’i already recognizes other cultural observances, such as:

Buddha Day (April 8) - honoring Buddhist traditions

Sakada Day (December 20) - commemorating Filipino contract workers who helped shape Hawai’i’s plantation economy

Kimchi Day (November 22) - celebrating cultural contributions of Korean Americans

If passed into law, Laulau Day would follow in this tradition—it would not be an official state holiday, but rather a symbolic recognition of Hawaiian culture, much like Kimchi Day honors Korean heritage. Just as kimchi represents both a food and a cultural identity, laulau represents a staple of Hawaiian culture, history, and resilience. For these reasons, The Office of Hawaiian Affairs urges this committee to **PASS HB957 HD 1**. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



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March 13, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS

TESTIMONY ON HB 957, HD1
RELATING TO LAULAU DAY

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
3:15 PM

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice-Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 957, HD1, which designates the first Friday in May of each year as "Laulau Day" in the State. Laulau is an iconic dish in Hawaiian cuisine, deeply tied to both the cultural and agricultural traditions of Hawai'i.

Recognizing Laulau Day not only celebrates the cultural importance of laulau but also highlights the farmers and ranchers who provide the essential ingredients that make this dish possible. Kalo farming has been a foundation of Hawaiian agriculture for generations, with its leaves and corms serving as a staple food source. Traditionally used in cooking, medicine, and cultural practices, Ti leaves remain an important part of local agriculture. Hawai'i's pork industry also contributes to the production of laulau, further supporting local food sustainability.

Establishing Laulau Day provides a valuable opportunity to celebrate the traditions of Native Hawaiian culture and promote greater awareness of the time-honored practices that have been preserved and shared across generations. It also serves as an opportunity to recognize the farmers, ranchers, and food producers who sustain Hawai'i's agricultural industry. Promoting the use of locally grown ingredients in laulau preparation helps strengthen the state's food security, reduces dependence on imports, and supports Hawai'i's farming communities.

We encourage the committee to pass HB 957, HD1 to recognize this culturally significant dish while also celebrating and supporting Hawai'i's agricultural industry. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts
Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 3:15PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference**

RE: HB957 HD1 Relating to Laulau Day

Aloha e Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 957 House Draft 1, which Designates the first Friday in May of each year as "Laulau Day" in the State of Hawaii.

HB957 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Business Services. This bill promotes policies that drive economic growth, enhance workforce opportunities, and improve the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Establishing an officially recognized Laulau Day in Hawaii plays a pivotal role in preserving the cultural heritage of Native Hawaiian communities and ensuring that the tradition of preparing and sharing laulau continues to flourish. Celebrated for its method of wrapping pork or fish in kalo and tī leaves and cooking it in an imu, laulau symbolizes unity, pride, and the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge at family gatherings, celebrations, and feasts. By designating the first Friday in May as Laulau Day, the legislature highlights the central role this dish holds in Hawaii's history, creating an opportunity for residents and visitors to deepen their understanding of laulau's cultural significance.

Beyond honoring a beloved Hawaiian food tradition, the designation of Laulau Day raises awareness of the broader culinary practices that sustain local farmers, chefs, and cultural practitioners. By celebrating this dish's rich legacy, Hawaii not only fosters pride within Native Hawaiian communities but also enhances its standing as a destination that treasures authentic cultural experiences. The Chamber supports this bill because it promotes cultural awareness, strengthens local industry, and recognizes the heritage that distinguishes Hawaii as a unique place.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bil 957 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE



Highway Inn Waipahu • Kaka'ako • Kapālama

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March 13, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND CULTURE AND THE
ARTS

TESTIMONY ON HB 957, HD1 RELATING TO LAULAU DAY

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

3:15 PM

Aloha e Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Monica Toguchi Ryan, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Highway Inn in strong support of HB 957, HD1, which designates the first Friday in May as Lau Lau Day in Hawai'i.

Lau Lau are an iconic Hawaiian food, special to all of us in Hawai'i, and especially to our Hawaiian food family restaurant. Our customers clearly must agree, since they order more Lau Lau than any other item. We have made it the same way for 78 years and three generations, since 1947 when my grandparents opened Highway Inn in the plantation town of Waipahu.

I have made it my mission at Highway Inn to not only feed our guests, but to educate them about where our food comes from and do my part to ensure that our unique culinary food traditions are passed on to the next generation and beyond. My father who ran Highway Inn before me for more than thirty years and I - have shared our knowledge through cooking demonstrations on television and online media, highlighting the careful preparation, labor, and time intensive cooking process that goes into making each Lau Lau.

Establishing Lau Lau Day would provide an opportunity to further recognize and celebrate this cherished dish, ensuring its appreciation for generations to come.

Highway Inn urges this committee to PASS HB957 HD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

Monica Toguchi Ryan
President/Owner
Highway Inn Companies



Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS

HB 957 HD1 - Relating to Laulau Day – IN SUPPORT

Thursday, March 13, 2025 3:15 PM

LATE

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce, representing over 300 businesses and individuals on the east side of Hawai'i Island, I submit testimony in strong support of HB 957 HD1, designating the first Friday in May as "Laulau Day."

This bill aligns with the **Chamber of Commerce Hawaii's 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii**, promoting economic growth, workforce opportunities, and cultural preservation. Recognizing Laulau Day honors a cherished Hawaiian tradition while supporting local farmers, chefs, and businesses that sustain it. Laulau—a dish symbolizing unity and heritage—has long played a central role in family gatherings and cultural celebrations.

Beyond preserving Hawaiian and local traditions, Laulau Day highlights Hawai'i's diverse culinary landscape and strengthens the local economy. By embracing this designation, Hawai'i reinforces its identity as a place that values and shares its rich cultural heritage.

As a business advocacy organization committed to fostering a strong economy, the Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce supports policies that drive competitiveness, workforce development, and sustainable growth.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the passage of HB 957 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Carla Kuo

Executive Officer

Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:40:56 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Dolan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:41:50 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Montgomery Meyer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:42:10 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Like	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Robert Like, support bill HB 957.

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:42:16 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelsey Beck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:42:22 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anapuni Coleman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support.

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:42:30 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Mendiola	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Keoni Mendiola, in strong support of HB957. 🍌

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:42:51 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Paling IV	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:43:43 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noah Campbell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In BIG HUGE NUI LOA Support of Laulau Day

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:44:35 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liam Wilmott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:44:41 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kona Makaula	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:45:04 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cameron kama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:48:18 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joshua Mueller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:50:56 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Parker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:51:35 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ilima Maiava	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In Strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:56:38 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cole B Kashimoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:57:30 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jarred Burns	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:21:47 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Makana Fronda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of hb957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:53:34 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Mansanas jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 7:56:14 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Collin Mansanas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:35:32 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Dunhour	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:37:36 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kapukonakona	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:44:08 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robbie Paikai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strongly support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:38:52 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Al Savea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:47:36 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zorich Palimoo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 4:27:07 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bryson Wailehua-Hansen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957.

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 5:40:03 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Seth Holck	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 7:33:15 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Phlynn Pennington	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 7:34:32 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pomai Kalama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of HB957.

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 9:05:19 AM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jay Amina III	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB957.

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 1:17:41 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Makai Freitas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 1:36:57 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Micah Kahumoku	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support of HB957

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 5:05:53 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tai-ni Xia	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee and Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tai-ni Xia and I am writing in strong support of HB957, which seeks to designate Laulau Day as an annual celebration of Hawaiian culture, honoring the significance of this traditional dish and the people who perpetuate it. Laulau is more than just food—it represents the resilience, history, and cultural identity of the Hawaiian people. From the farmers who cultivate kalo (taro) and luau leaves to the chefs and families who prepare it with care, laulau embodies a deep connection to ‘āina (land), sustainability, and community. Hawai‘i has already recognized cultural observances such as Kimchi Day, Buddha Day, and Sakada Day, highlighting the contributions of diverse ethnic groups in our state. Establishing Laulau Day would ensure that Hawaiian culture is honored in the same way, celebrating not only a beloved food staple but also the economic, historical, and cultural significance it holds. For many, laulau has also served as a means of economic empower. This measure provides an opportunity to recognize Hawaiian traditions and ensure they continue to thrive for future generations. I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB957 and formally establish Laulau Day as a recognized cultural observance in Hawai‘i. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Tai-Ni Xia

HB-957-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 5:32:31 PM

Testimony for TCA on 3/13/2025 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heide Kila	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

I am I Full support of Laulau Day to be a recognized! It's definitely a Local Favorite and Represents us Hawai'i People. I grew up making Laulau from my younger kid days we had no choice but to help all the while knowing we are gonna be eating it also later at the Luau. Besides there's a "Kim Chee Day" why not have a "Laulau Day"! Laulau always put a smile on my face reminiscent of my childhood days when all you needed to worry about was getting home before sun down not to mention the Happy Bellies and sweet dreams to follow after eating some ONO Laulau. I feel Laulau represents what Ohana represents having everything coming together the Luau Leaf , the Pork , pork fat and Hawaiian salt to make ONOlicious item. What we as Ohana do come together to get through anything! From making Laulau in younger days whenever it's party time. To fundraising for my sons college journey in the states. To now having my own Laulau business since 2022! Full circle Blessings for me to now share my Onolicious Laulau to bring Ohana together to eat together a time to talk story and Heart check your Ohana because the Ono smells will bring them to the Table! Mahalo for your time.

Heide Kila Owner:Papa Laulauz LLC