

HR-123

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 8:57:45 AM

Testimony for CAA on 3/19/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janice Kekoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kapela and the Committee on culture and the Arts!

I'm submitting testimony in strong support of bills HR 123/HCR 127 to urge the state to acquire the Hawaii Theatre to promote local culture and arts, preserve its historic and cultural significant and continue its use for future generations.

For many years, I enjoyed the use of the theatre for high school performances (Kamehameha Schools Christmas Concerts), watching sing-a-longs of Grease, seeing the MaMo Wearable Art Shows, live concerts by Kalani Pe`a, Jake Shimabukuro and so much more.

The Hawaii Theatre has been the nexus/hub of the downtown art scene and continues to be an anchor of businesses (restaurants and bars) in the evening. To see it go away due to the high costs of running the historic theatre would be a travesty for our community and culture.

I support a process that would allow the State to acquire the Hawaii Theatre, Pride of the Pacific, and allow the Hawaii Theatre Center (HTC) the ability to expand programming to continue to support local arts and culture through a combination of private/public collaboration with the State Foundation on Culture and Arts.

As a keik o ka `aina and parent of Native Hawaiian keiki, I fully support these bills and ask for your support too.

Aloha,

Janice Kekoa

HR-123

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 12:41:49 PM

Testimony for CAA on 3/19/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JACK LAW	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kapela and members of the Committee on Culture and the Arts!**The Hawaii Theatre (HCT) is the heart and soul and anchor of Downtown Honolulu.****The Theatre has survived as a non-profit entity successfully. Bringing entertainment, joy and amusement, under very difficult times in a difficult neighborhood.****The insurance crisis is one that may not be overcome. HTC needs the State of Hawaii's help for its survival As Soon as Possible.****I'm writing today in strong support of both HR 123 / HCR 127, an act urging the state to acquire the Hawaii Theatre to promote local culture and arts, preserve its historic and cultural significance and facilitate its continued public use.****For many years I've been a supporter of the non-profit historic Hawaii Theatre, and have enjoyed seeing the expansion of programs the Hawaii Theatre Center has been able to create for local audiences. As a board member of the Hawaii Theatre, I've also been dismayed at the massive 4,500% increase in our property insurance premiums over the past year. This massive financial burden makes nearly impossible for the Theatre to continue to provide an affordable venue for local arts and cultural organizations to present their programming.****Faced with limited options and the inability to purchase insurance to fully cover the building, I feel it is truly in the best interest of the public, and in the best interests of the community for the State to acquire the theatre to allow the facility to be covered under the state's insurance program.****I support a process that would allow the State to acquire the Historic Hawaii Theatre and allow the Hawaii Theatre Center the ability to expand programming to support local arts**

an culture through a combination of expanded partnerships, closer collaboration with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts and the cash savings from avoidance of massive property insurance premiums.

For these and many other reasons I support HR 123 / HCR 127 and urge you to pass this resolution.

Mahalo!

Jack Law

4690 Sierra Dr.

Honolulu, H.I. 96816

HR-123

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 3:55:14 PM

Testimony for CAA on 3/19/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Dunn	Hawaii Theatre Center	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kapela and members of the Committee on Culture and the Arts!

I'm writing today in strong support of both HR 123 / HCR 127, an act urging the state to acquire the Hawaii Theatre to promote local culture and arts, preserve its historic and cultural significance and facilitate its continued public use.

I've had the privlidge of both performing on the state of the non-profit historic Hawaii Theatre right after the Theatre reopened in 1997, and have now had the responsiblilty as the President & CEO overseeing the expansion of programs the Hawaii Theatre Center since 2017. We've been able to expand partnership with other non-profit arts organizations to grow access to the facility, and expand our reach into the community to the point where over 60% of all of the shows we present are done by non-profit organizations, and we've welcomed nearly 140,000 patrons who have attended shows in the last 12 months.

We had finally started a strong rebound following 22 months of closure during COVID, only to now have the theatre's future threatened by a massive 4,500% increase in our property insurance premiums over the past year. This huge financial burden makes nearly impossible for the Theatre to continue to provide an affordable venue for local arts and cultural organizations to present their programming. In order to get close to fully insuring the facility, our insurnace broker estimated it would cost nearly \$1,000,000 annually. To put this into perspective, our entire gross ticket sales for 2024 were nearly \$5,000,000, and our operating expenses were only in the \$2,300,000 range. We estimate that if we had to fully fund the insurance costs, we would either need to ask every patron who attends a show to pay an additional \$10 per ticket, or ask every parter who puts on a performance in the theatre to pay an additional \$10,000 per show to cover the increased insurance costs. This is a problem we will be faced with annually as we don't expect to see any decrease in the annual policy premiums going forward.

Faced with limited options and the inability to purchase insurance to fully cover the building, I feel it is truly in the best interest of the public, and in the best interests of the community for the State to acquire the theatre to allow the facility to be covered under the state's insurance program.

I support a process that would allow the State to acquire the Historic Hawaii Theatre and allow the non-profit Hawaii Theatre Center the ability to expand programming to support local arts and culture through a combination of expanded partnerships, closer collaboration with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts and the cash savings from avoidance of massive property insurance premiums.

For these and many other reasons I support HR 123 / HCR 127 and urge you to pass this resolution.

Mahalo nui loa for your support of the arts!

Gregory Dunn,

President & CEO,

Hawaii Theatre Center

HR-123

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 4:04:42 PM

Testimony for CAA on 3/19/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chris Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HR 123/HCR 127 – IN STRONG SUPPORT

Chair Kapela, Vice Chair Kong, Members of the Committee,

My name is Chris Lee, Founder and Director of the Academy for Creative Media System at the University of Hawai‘i and a Member of the Board of the Hawai‘i Theater Center.

HTC is over 100 years old and is both a cherished cultural landmark and a singular driver of economic vitality in Downtown Honolulu.

Here are some stats to consider in terms of the annual impact of the Hawaii theater:

- Nearly 140,000 in-person patrons attended performances at the Theatre last year
- We welcomed over 10,000 school children to our theatre education program shows in the last year
- We have provided over 220 show days and activations in the past year
- Over 60% of our presentations are by other Hawaii non-profit organizations

And all of these patrons of the Hawai‘i Theater bring customers to the many area restaurants, shops and hotels before and after our shows.

We are grateful that so many locals and tourists regularly attend our offerings at the Theater which include everything from being a home for the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra, a key fundraising venue for many Hula Hālau, a performance space for local high schools like ‘Iolani, to Ronny Chieng’s sold out five shows that were taped as his most recent, award-winning Netflix Comedy Special. Without the Hawai‘i Theater, Downtown/Chinatown would truly be a ghost town in the evenings and many other smaller establishments would not survive.

I write today in strong support for both HR 123 and HCR 127 which urge the State to consider acquisition of the Hawai‘i Theater Center which is currently facing an insurmountable 4,500% increase in property insurance premiums in just this year. We know we are not alone in this state-wide insurance crisis, as are similar institutions on the continent such as the Historic Balboa

Theatre in San Diego, Tower Theatre for Performing Arts in Fresno, Schnitzer Concert Hall in Portland, Pantages Theatre in Tacoma and many others that have been insured by their localities to ensure they can stay in business for the sake of their entire communities.

Make no mistake. This is an existential threat to the Hawai'i Theater Center. As there is no indication that the extreme upward trend for insurance rates is temporary, it is incumbent on the State to consider a way to allow this essential facility to be covered under the State's insurance program.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today.

March 18, 2025

Aloha Chair Kapela and members of the Committee on Culture and the Arts!

I'm writing today in strong support of both HR 123 / HCR 127, an act urging the state to acquire the Hawaii Theatre to promote local culture and arts, preserve its historic and cultural significance and facilitate its continued public use.

For many years I've been a supporter of the non-profit historic Hawaii Theatre, and have enjoyed seeing the expansion of programs the Hawaii Theatre Center has been able to create for local audiences. As a board member of the Hawaii Theatre, I've also been dismayed at the massive 4,500% increase in our property insurance premiums over the past year. This massive financial burden makes nearly impossible for the Theatre to continue to provide an affordable venue for local arts and cultural organizations to present their programming.

Faced with limited options and the inability to purchase insurance to fully cover the building, I feel it is truly in the best interest of the public, and in the best interests of the community for the State to acquire the theatre to allow the facility to be covered under the state's insurance program.

I support a process that would allow the State to acquire the Historic Hawaii Theatre and allow the Hawaii Theatre Center the ability to increase programming to support local arts and culture through a combination of expanded partnerships, closer collaboration with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts and the cash savings from avoidance of massive property insurance premiums.

For these and many other reasons I support HR 123 / HCR 127 and urge you to pass this resolution.

Mahalo and best regards,

Mathew Lee

March 18, 2025

Aloha Chair Kapela and members of the Committee on Culture and the Arts,

I'm submitting my personal testimony in strong support of both HR 123 / HCR 127, an act urging the state to acquire the Hawaii Theatre to promote local culture and arts, preserve its historic and cultural significance and facilitate its continued public use.

I have cherished memories of attending many wonderful shows performed by local schools and performing arts programs, and professional artists from Hawaii and across the world. I've also been fortunate enough to perform on stage and experience the theatre from the perspective of a performer which was an amazing experience. For many years I've been a supporter of the non-profit historic Hawaii Theatre and have enjoyed seeing the expansion of programs the Hawaii Theatre Center has been able to create for local audiences. As a board member and steward of the Hawaii Theatre, it's been difficult to see the impact of the massive 4,500% increase in our property insurance premiums over the past year. This significant financial burden makes it nearly impossible for the Theatre to continue to provide an affordable venue for local arts and cultural organizations to present their programming.

Faced with limited options and the inability to purchase insurance to fully cover the building, I feel it is truly in the best interest of the public, and in the best interests of the community for the state to acquire the theatre to allow the facility to be covered under the state's insurance program.

I support a process that would allow the State to acquire the Historic Hawaii Theatre and allow the Hawaii Theatre Center to continue its mission to support local arts and culture through a combination of expanded partnerships and closer collaboration with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

For these and many other reasons, I support HR 123 / HCR 127 and urge you to pass this resolution.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Davis