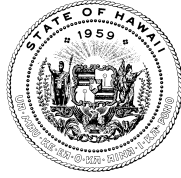


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DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS  
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TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR  
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION  
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
HEARING ON APRIL 1, 2025 AT 2:00PM IN CR 325

**HR 147**

April 1, 2025

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this resolution establishing a legislative working group for the continued oversight of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands' execution of funds appropriated by Act 279, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022.

DHHL has participated in six (6) public hearings where DHHL updated the Working Group on its efforts to utilize Act 279 funds. DHHL appreciates that Act 125 was signed into law in 2024, affording DHHL more time and flexibility in the execution of the Act 279, SLH 2022 funds with a special fund account until June 30, 2026. DHHL stands ready to continue to provide updates to the House Working Group regarding the encumbrance of funds, the expenditure of funds, and the delivery of lots pursuant to Act 279, SLH 2022.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.



March 31, 2025

**To:** Chair David A. Tarnas, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

**Date:** Tuesday, April 1, 2025 **Time:** 2:00 pm

**Place:** Via videoconference and Conference Room 325

**From:** Health Committee

**Subject:** Testimony in Support of HR147 - Working Group for oversight of the DHHL' Funds appropriated by Act 279

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

The Health Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, submits this testimony in strong support of **HR147**, which establishes a legislative working group to provide continued oversight of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands' (DHHL) execution of funds appropriated by Act 279, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022.

This resolution is critical for ensuring that the health, well-being, and stability of Native Hawaiian families and communities remain a central focus of DHHL's initiatives. The working group would play an essential role in addressing systemic challenges while promoting health equity and access to resources that directly impact the overall quality of life.

**Supporting Arguments with Health Committee Perspectives:**

- **Connection Between Housing and Health:**
  - Access to safe, stable housing is a fundamental determinant of health. Adequate housing improves mental and physical well-being, reduces stress-related illnesses, and enhances access to healthcare services.

- Oversight of Act 279 funds ensures these resources are used effectively to address the long-standing backlog of homestead leases, which directly impacts the health outcomes of Native Hawaiian beneficiaries.
- **Equitable Access to Healthy Environments:**
  - Oversight efforts can prioritize the development of housing projects with access to clean water, proper sanitation, and other necessary infrastructure to ensure a healthy living environment for Native Hawaiian families.
- **Mitigating Health Disparities:**
  - Native Hawaiians experience disproportionately high rates of chronic illnesses, including diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. Ensuring timely and equitable use of Act 279 funds can provide housing stability, a proven factor in reducing health disparities.
- **Mental Health and Community Well-Being:**
  - Safe and stable housing fosters a sense of security and belonging, reducing the prevalence of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The working group can help ensure that DHHL projects promote not only physical but also emotional and mental well-being.
- **Accountability and Resource Allocation for Health:**
  - By monitoring the progress of DHHL initiatives, the working group can ensure that funds are allocated in ways that support long-term health and sustainability for Native Hawaiian communities.

### **Conclusion:**

We believe that oversight of DHHL's execution of Act 279 funds is essential for creating a healthier, more equitable future for Native Hawaiian families. The establishment of a legislative working group under **HR147** aligns with the Health Committee's mission to support initiatives that improve the health and well-being of all Hawai'i residents.

We urge the Committee to pass this resolution to ensure transparency, accountability, and the effective use of resources to uplift Native Hawaiian communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this important measure.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

Alan Burdick Chair, Health Committee

Melodie Aduja Vice Chair, Health Committee



**HR-147**

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 8:18:58 PM

Testimony for JHA on 4/1/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

## Comments:

Continue to support. Based on the report of the last working group, they helped to support the work of DHHL by their recommendations to the legislature and by their public hearings to keep the public informed. This legislation would allow the working group to continue their oversight and to enable DHHL to carry out the mandate of Act 279