



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 109, RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

DATE: Tuesday, January 28, 2025 **TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 224 and Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
R. Hokulei Lindsey, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Richards and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General appreciates the intent of the bill and provides the following comments.

This bill amends section 1-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) to make the Hawaiian version of a law binding if that law was originally drafted in Hawaiian and then translated into English.

Section 1-13, HRS, currently provides that the English version of a law is binding whenever there is any radical and irreconcilable difference between the English and Hawaiian version of any of the laws of the State. This statute derives from section 1493 of the 1859 Civil Code of the Kingdom of Hawai'i and the Act of January 10, 1865, *Construction of Statutes Where the English and Hawaiian Versions Do Not Agree*. In 1892, the Supreme Court of the Kingdom of Hawai'i stated that: "though the Hawaiian language is the original language of this people and country, the English language is largely in use. Of necessity the English language must be largely employed to record transactions of the government in its various branches[.]" *In re Ross*, 8 Haw. 478, 480 (Haw. Kingdom 1892).

Broadly amending section 1-13, HRS, to allow a Hawaiian version of law to supersede the English version may lead to ambiguities in the application and interpretation of laws. In situations where two versions of law were promulgated at the same time, such ambiguities may lead to questions over which version of the law was

the original, the answer to which could be unknowable. Further, laws originally drafted in Hawaiian could have been later amended over time in English. The effect of this bill on such laws is unclear, but could be interpreted to create a patchwork of binding language in both English and Hawaiian within the same law.

To mitigate these uncertainties, we recommend amending the proviso at page 3, lines 2-5, of the bill to define the bill's application to laws originally drafted in Hawaiian that have not been later amended, codified, recodified, or reenacted in English, as follows:

provided that if the law in question was originally drafted in Hawaiian and the English version was translated based on the Hawaiian version, and if the law has not been later amended, codified, recodified, or reenacted in English, the Hawaiian version shall be held binding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N.S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Tuesday, January 28, 2025
1:00 PM

State Capitol Conference Room 224 and Videoconference

In Consideration of
SENATE BILL 109
RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE

Senate Bill 109 provides that if a law was originally drafted in the Hawaiian language, and the English version is a translation of the Hawaiian text, the Hawaiian version shall be held legally binding. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

This measure signals the Legislature's commitment to joining the growing international movement to protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples. By recognizing the primacy of Hawaiian in laws originally written in the language, Senate Bill 109 honors the cultural and historical significance of 'ōlelo Hawai'i and preserves the intent of those who drafted such laws during the Kingdom of Hawai'i, the Territorial era, and beyond.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i

Testimony to the Thirty-Third State Legislature 2025 Regular Session

Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs
Senator Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, III, Chair
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

by:

Johanna K. Chock-Tam
‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Program Administrator

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill 109, Relating to the Hawaiian Language.

Purpose: Requires that the Hawaiian version of a law be held binding if the law in question was originally drafted in Hawaiian and then translated into English.

Judiciary’s Position:

Kāko‘o ka ‘Oihana Ho‘okolokolo i ka Pila ‘Aha Kenekoa 109, ka mea e koi mai nei ka mālama ‘ana i ka mana ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i o kekahi kanawai inā kākau mua ‘ia ia kanawai ma ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i a laila ‘unihi ‘ia i ka ‘ōlelo Pelekānia.

Mea mai ‘o HRS § 1-13, i kona kākau ‘ia ‘ana i kēia lā, inā he mea ‘oko‘a a hiki ‘ole ke ‘ae ma waena o ka mana ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i a me ka mana ‘ōlelo Pelekānia o kekahi kanawai, mālama ‘ia ‘ana ka mana ‘ōlelo Pelekānia. Noi ‘o SB 16, e mālama ‘ana ka mana ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i o kekahi kanawai inā kākau mua ‘ia ‘o ia ma ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. ‘Oni kēia ho‘ololi ‘ana i ka mea ma‘amau, ‘o ia ho‘i ka mālama ‘ana o ka mana ‘ōlelo Pelekānia i luna o ka mana ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. Eia na‘e, nānā ‘o ia i ka mana mua no ka huli ‘ana i ke kumu ma ka nānā hou ‘ana i ke kanawai i ka ‘ōlelo āna i kākau mua ‘ia ai, inā ‘ōlelo Pelekānia a i ‘ole ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, a mālama i kēlā mana. Ho‘okō hou ‘o SB 16 i ko ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i kūlana ‘ōlelo kūhelu ma ka hō‘oia‘i‘o ‘ana, hiki nā kanawai i kākau ‘ia ai ma ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i ke kūlike me nā kanawai i kākau ‘ia ai ma ka ‘ōlelo Pelekānia.

Mahalo i ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo no ka holomua ‘ana i ka hō‘oia‘i‘o ‘ana i ke ko‘iko‘i o ka ‘ōlelo

Hawai‘i ma kona kūlana ‘ōlelo kūhelu. Mahalo mākou iā ‘oukou no ka manawa no ka ha‘i mana‘o ‘ana i ko kākou kāko‘o o SB 109.

* * * * *

The Judiciary supports Senate Bill 109, which requires that the Hawaiian version of a law be held binding if the law in question was originally drafted in Hawaiian and then translated into English.

HRS § 1-13, as it is written today, states that if there is an irreconcilable difference between the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and English version of a law, then the English version will be binding. SB 109 proposes that the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i version of a law be held binding if it was originally drafted in Hawaiian. This change shifts the paradigm of holding the English version over the Hawaiian. Instead, it looks to the original draft to find intent by reviewing the law in the language it was originally drafted, whether English or Hawaiian, and holding that version as binding. SB 109 reinforces ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i’s status as a co-official language by recognizing that laws drafted in Hawaiian can stand alongside laws written in English.

Mahalo to the Legislature for taking steps to further recognize the importance of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i as a co-official language. We thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 109.

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 1:26:03 PM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kenneth R. Conklin, Ph.D.	Testifying for Center for Hawaiian Sovereignty Studies	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill requires that the Hawaiian version of a law be held binding if the law in question was originally drafted in Hawaiian and then translated into English.

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION My dear legislators: Would you vote to pass a bill that's written in a language you are not fluent in? Would you be willing to rely on an English translation of it provided by someone (a) who stands to benefit greatly by getting you to vote for it; and (b) who gives you an English translation which changes or distorts what the bill actually means in its original language as written, knowing that the inaccuracies in the English version will cause you to like what you're reading even though you would dislike what was actually stated in the original version; and (c) who intentionally fails to remind you that the bill's meaning in its original language is the meaning that really counts? The only way you can logically vote in favor of this bill is by saying "Yes" to all three (a), (b), (c). If enacted, this law immediately becomes a "sleeper agent" affecting all bills in the future that are written in Hawaiian first before being translated into English -- even years after this bill itself is forgotten, legislators will vote on bills whose Hawaiian-language meaning is the official one even though they do not understand Hawaiian and they mistakenly think they are voting on what it says in English (which could be very different from how it will actually be interpreted by attorneys and judges who are certified as having expertise in Hawaiian).

In your desire to vote in favor of this bill because you wish to honor and display respect for Hawaiian language during "Hawaiian language month", please do not allow that emotion to sway you into making a very unwise decision. I speak Hawaiian with moderate fluency -- probably better than anyone on this committee. 33 years ago when I came to live permanently in Hawaii I immediately enrolled in night school courses in Hawaiian language, history, and culture for three years precisely because I had fallen in love with the language, people, and culture of my hanai homeland. Thereafter I have continued to learn further and more deeply. I have also discovered the existence of attitudes and political goals which are extremely divisive and dangerous to the Aloha Spirit and to Hawaii's future as a multiracial, multicultural society. This bill aligns with those negative goals.

Please bear with me as I explain what's really happening with this bill

I'm asking you to do two things before you vote. (1) Try out the little experiment I propose where you will read an actual bill that was written first in Hawaiian and then in English -- where

I want you to read only the Hawaiian version that comes first and then stop and explain to yourself what it means, before you read the followup English version to discover how bad your understanding was. (2) Read my analysis of how an extremely important short Hawaiian-language phrase in the Mahele law of 1848 has become twisted to a very different meaning in the English-language interpretation of it that was relied upon in the PASH decision and continues to shape the way "Native Hawaiians" are mistakenly given special race-based benefits deriving from the mutant interpretation.

EXPLANATION

First let's note that this bill is written entirely in English. Now, why in the world would that happen in view of the main purpose of this bill? It seeks to establish that if a bill is written first in Hawaiian and then translated into English, the Hawaiian version shall take priority as the official version. So why not write this bill first in Hawaiian and then provide an English translation? Indeed, why not write this bill solely in Hawaiian with no English at all? Would the members of this committee feel comfortable with that?

Would you feel confident that you understand what you are enacting? No? Then why in the world would you even so much as fool around with the idea of making the Hawaiian version of a bill take priority over the English version in case of a dispute later on over how it should be interpreted or implemented? This bill is so poorly written, and lacking in detail -- it's surprising that the bill is getting a hearing (or perhaps that's not so surprising after all, considering that hearing the bill is a virtue signal to celebrate "Hawaiian language Month"). But there were bills two years ago and four years ago along the same lines. Those bills failed, and were also poorly written, but at least they had more detail. The best thing about SB701 and SB195 from year 2019 was that they were written in Hawaiian language first, and then had English translations of their various sections. Thus those bills give us an opportunity to do a thought-experiment. Let's put the members of this committee to a test where you can judge for yourselves whether you could possibly be serious about enacting the concept "that the Hawaiian version of a law be held binding if the law in question was originally drafted in Hawaiian and then translated into English." Here is a link to full text of SB701 from year 2019:
https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2019/Bills/SB701_.pdf

Go ahead now. Read the first part of that bill, which is in Hawaiian, and then stop the first time you encounter the subordinate English translation. Did you understand it? Even if you as an individual are one of the rare legislators who speaks Hawaiian fairly well, do you understand what you read with sufficient confidence to vote for it even if it was highly controversial? More importantly, do you seriously believe that your colleagues in the legislature are competent to vote on it? If necessary, continue this thought-experiment by reading only the Hawaiian portion of each subsequent part of the bill, and then summarizing its main concepts in whatever language you prefer, before you read the English translation. A majority of your fellow legislators whose fluency in Hawaiian language is moderate or even non-existent will be relying entirely on the English translation, but they will actually be voting on what the Hawaiian version says, according to the injunction "that the Hawaiian version of a law be held binding if the law in question was originally drafted in Hawaiian and then translated into English."

If you'd like another example, run the thought-experiment with SB195, also from year 2019:
https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2019/Bills/SB195_.pdf

Giving priority to Hawaiian language is a political stunt to bolster ethnic pride and get votes from a constituency that demands visible tokens of validation and status; but it has no practical usefulness. It seems likely that every person outside Ni'ihau who speaks Hawaiian also speaks English with greater fluency. Hawaiian activists, following the lead of Princess Ruth Ke'elikolani (hoo dat?), sometimes insist on speaking Hawaiian in the courtroom or when giving speeches, interviews, or testimony; but they are perfectly capable of speaking and understanding English. Nobody NEEDS to speak or hear Hawaiian to express himself or to understand what someone is saying -- the activists demand it to score a political point; and sometimes to simply "gum up the works" when there is testimony on an environmental impact statement regarding telescopes on Mauna Kea or construction on a military base. Please see a large and detailed webpage "Hawaiian Language as a Political Weapon" at <https://www.angelfire.com/big09/HawLangPolitWeapon.html>

Kaleikoa Kaeo is a community college instructor who speaks English fluently. In fact he teaches classes using English as the language of instruction, makes fiery political speeches in English, and has also learned to speak Hawaiian fluently. He demanded to give court testimony in Hawaiian, not because he is unable to speak English, but merely as a stunt -- a form of Hawaiian sovereignty street theatre or political activism.

Kaleikoa Kaeo took his inspiration from the wealthiest person in Hawaii in the 1860s and 1870s, Princess Ruth Ke'elikolani, who could speak perfectly good English but refused to do so when politicians or journalists visited her -- she took great pleasure in humiliating them by forcing them to hire translators. She felt she was having a political and "moral" victory by forcing them to use Hawaiian. Is that what legislators and Hawaiian language zealots doing with this bill?

Hawaii is filled with the Aloha Spirit. Our people are kind and generous, and show our good will to people who cannot speak English by allowing them to give testimony in their own language and by providing them at our own taxpayer expense with interpreters who have been certified by the court to be fluent in both their own language and English. But Kaleikoa Kaeo's political stunt was neither kind nor generous. It did not display good will, let alone the Aloha Spirit. He could easily have spoken English, but he chose to speak Hawaiian as a way to FORCE everyone else to either learn Hawaiian or to spend taxpayer dollars to hire speakers of Hawaiian. That's what today's bill in our legislature is all about -- a political stunt that would inconvenience everyone and cost a lot of money over time merely for the sake of cultural/ linguistic chauvinism.

Hawaii has large numbers of people from many ethnic backgrounds who speak different languages in their homes; but we all come together in shared spaces where we are expected to speak English. Inability to speak English is treated as a disability or handicap. People who cannot speak English are given special accommodation to help them communicate in their own language, just as someone who is deaf gets a sign-language interpreter, someone who is blind is allowed to use a seeing-eye dog even in places where dogs are not normally allowed, and someone who cannot walk is allowed to use a wheelchair and elevator. Kaeo who is fluent in

English but insists on speaking Hawaiian is like a marathon runner who might demand just for fun to come to court in a noisy wheelchair with a taxpayer-supplied assistant to push it for him.

If this bill were enacted into law, the Hawaiian language content of a bill would be the official law even though your comprehension of its meaning came only from the English-language version. And you can be quite sure that Hawaiian-language zealots would give top priority to writing many important bills in Hawaiian before getting them translated into English, thereby invoking the new rule that the Hawaiian version takes priority. Would your expertise in Hawaiian be sufficient to enable you to detect kaona (wat dat?) -- subtle double meanings that you would never vote for if you knew they were in the law you just finished enacting? Kaona were widely used orally in ancient times and later in Hawaiian language newspapers, as a sort of secret code, so that insiders "in the know" about obscure cultural metaphors would understand hidden social or political meanings in poetry or songs. For example, a hula might seem to be about a bee spreading pollen while flitting from flower to flower sipping nectar; but in reality one of its hidden meanings was about a man "spreading his seed" while engaging in intimate activities with one after another young ladies. On a more serious note, a phrase that seemed to be celebrating a needle piercing a white plumeria flower while stringing a lei might actually be an incitement to hurl a verbal or actual spear at a haole opponent.

Perhaps you're aware that there are some Hawaiian sovereignty activists who would love to get you to enact laws whose legally binding meaning in Hawaiian language would undermine or even overthrow the [fake!] State of Hawaii and replace it with a rejuvenated Kingdom; even though the merely advisory subordinate English translation being relied upon to solicit votes appears to pertain only to plowing on a farm as a way to turn over the soil. ("Huli" is to turn over, whether it refers to plowing the soil on a farm or inciting to violent political revolution.)

TRANSLATING HAWAIIAN INTO ENGLISH: THE MAHELE PHRASE "KOE NAE KE KULEANA O NA KANAKA."

I conclude this testimony by citing an extremely important example from Hawaiian history illustrating how a single phrase, and especially an individual word in that phrase, has been subjected to deliberate distortion over time because of what the word meant in Hawaiian when proclaimed into law seventeen decades ago and what it has come to mean in English since then. The phrase in the Mahele laws beginning in 1848 and culminating in the Kuleana Act of 1850 is: "koe nae ke kuleana o na kanaka." The individual word whose meaning has morphed is "kanaka."

When private land ownership was created by granting royal patent deeds during the unfolding stages of the Mahele, chiefs were given huge swaths of land, while peasants living on and farming individual parcels were given the right to have fee-simple ownership of their parcels. The problem was that the chief's land completely surrounded the peasant's small parcel, thus making it necessary for a peasant to trespass through the chief's land in order to gather materials necessary for daily life, or to go to the ocean for fishing. So in the interest of what we today might call "social justice", the chief's royal patent deed gave him ownership "but reserving the rights of the people" [for gathering or shoreline access]. That Hawaiian phrase "koe nae ke kuleana o na kanaka" today is always translated to mean "reserving the rights of the native

tenants." However, there was nothing racial about the word "kanaka" back in 1850, although today it has come to refer to so-called "Native Hawaiians." The word "kanaka" simply meant person, or human being, with an implication that it might be referring to a servant or peasant. If you look up "kanaka" in the big Pukui/Elbert dictionary you will find no racial terms. Furthermore, the word "kanaka" does not mean "tenant" -- that word is "hoaina." Although non-natives made up only a small percentage of Hawaii's population in 1850, the rights reserved to the "kanaka" in the Kuleana Act were reserved for ALL the "people" regardless of race and regardless whether they were tenants under a particular chief.

The Hawaii Constitution Article 12 Section 7, and also the PASH decision by the Hawaii Supreme Court, include racial restrictions which are modern distortions and simply do not grow out of the Mahele or the Kuleana Act. "The State reaffirms and shall protect all rights, customarily and traditionally exercised for subsistence, cultural and religious purposes and possessed by ahupua'a tenants who are descendants of native Hawaiians who inhabited the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778, subject to the right of the State to regulate such rights." The traditional and customary rights of native Hawaiians from before 1778, and still possessed under the Kuleana Act of 1850 -- those terms describe what rights are being referred to, but those terms should NOT be construed as limiting those rights to members of any particular racial or ethnic group. By interpreting those rights to be possessed by ALL Hawaii's people, we would ensure equality under the law for everyone including ethnic Hawaiians. The fact that my interpretation of "koe nae ke kuleana o na kanaka" is so unusual should serve as an important illustration of why it is dangerous to give primacy to a language which very few people understand with sufficient fluency -- especially when the only people who do have sufficient fluency have been trained by teachers and institutions which are politically active; and the students mastering the language under their tutelage have been indoctrinated with their political views and will interpret the meaning of laws in a manner that facilitates their political agenda.

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 1:17:29 PM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this bill

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 1:12:16 PM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If an example is not provided on why this bill is needed, how can I truly know what this law is meant to achieve for the citizenry?

Therefore, I oppose the passage of this bill.

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/24/2025 10:43:54 PM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kāko‘o (support).

- U‘ilani Naipo

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:28:16 AM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kawaiohawaiki Anakalea	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Require that the Hawaiian version of a law be held binding if the law in question was originally drafted in Hawaiian and then translated into English.

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:22:41 AM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronnie N Inagaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of SB 109 Relating to the Hawaiian Language

****Monday, January 27, 2025****

Aoha mai kākou,

My name is Ronnie Inagaki, and I am submitting this testimony in ****strong support of SB 109 Relating to the Hawaiian Language.****

The Hawaiian language, or ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, is not just a means of communication but a vital cornerstone of Hawaiian culture, identity, and heritage. As one of the official state languages of Hawai‘i, recognized under the Hawai‘i State Constitution, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is preserved, promoted, and integrated into our daily lives. ****SB 109 represents a meaningful step toward advancing these goals by including critical measures to elevate the status and use of the Hawaiian language in state functions and daily life.****

****Provisions of SB 109****

This bill includes key provisions that will have a lasting impact on the revitalization of the Hawaiian language, such as:

- **Requiring Bilingual State Documents:**** Mandating that state agencies include Hawaiian alongside English in official documents, letterheads, and communication materials, which would normalize the use of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i in government operations and increase public exposure to the language.
- **Promoting Hawaiian in Public Signage:**** Ensuring the inclusion of Hawaiian on road signs, public facilities, and other state properties, which not only honors the language but also contributes to its visibility and normalization in everyday settings.
- **Funding Hawaiian Language Programs:**** Allocating funding for Hawaiian language education initiatives, including immersion schools, teacher training, and community programs, to ensure that the language is passed down to future generations.

****Importance of Supporting SB 109****

The provisions outlined in SB 109 address critical areas where the Hawaiian language can be celebrated, normalized, and preserved. For decades, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i faced suppression and marginalization, leading to a sharp decline in native speakers. Today, while significant progress has been made through immersion schools, cultural programs, and grassroots efforts, the language remains endangered.

By implementing these measures, the state would build on its responsibility to restore and protect the language for future generations.

****Benefits of SB 109****

1. ****Cultural Preservation:**** The Hawaiian language is deeply intertwined with the history, traditions, and values of Hawai‘i. By promoting its use in public and government spaces, this bill ensures that the language remains a living, thriving component of Hawai‘i’s cultural identity.
2. ****Visibility and Normalization:**** Requiring bilingual state documents and signage ensures that ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i becomes visible and normalized in daily life, making it accessible to both residents and visitors.
3. ****Educational Impact:**** Increased funding for Hawaiian language programs strengthens immersion schools and community efforts to train educators and support students in learning the language.
4. ****Legal Obligation:**** As one of Hawai‘i’s official state languages, the government has a clear responsibility to protect, promote, and use ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i in meaningful ways.

****Why This Issue Is So Important: A Personal Perspective**

As a Native Hawaiian, born and raised in Hawai‘i, the preservation and promotion of the Hawaiian language, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, is deeply personal and profoundly important to me. My connection to this issue is not just intellectual—it’s rooted in the lived experiences of my family and my cultural identity.

My great-grandparents shared firsthand accounts of the oppression they endured during the period when the Hawaiian Kingdom was overthrown, and the language and culture were systematically suppressed. The 1896 ban on using Hawaiian as a medium of education in schools was particularly devastating. It erased opportunities for generations of Hawaiians to learn and communicate in their own native tongue, severing them from the cultural practices, values, and knowledge embedded in the language. What they were forced to endure still resonates in the lives of their descendants, including myself.

As a hula practitioner, I have come to understand that the Hawaiian language is the key to fully experiencing and sharing our culture. The mele (songs), oli (chants), and other forms of traditional expression in hula cannot simply be translated into English without losing their depth and nuance. ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is the heartbeat of hula, and by revitalizing the language, we are also

breathing life into our cultural traditions, ensuring they are preserved and passed down to future generations.

The depletion of the language and culture during the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom created a void in Hawaiian identity—one that we are still working to heal. Yet, despite the pain and loss, the resilience of the Hawaiian people shines through. The revitalization of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is not just about preserving our past; it is about reclaiming our future. It is about ensuring that our children and grandchildren can speak, chant, and sing in the same language as their ancestors.

SB 109 is more than a policy; it is a statement of recognition, respect, and justice. It acknowledges the historical wrongs committed against the Hawaiian people and seeks to make amends by promoting the very language and culture that were once nearly eradicated. It is a way to ensure that the stories of our kūpuna (ancestors) will live on—not just as memories but as a living, breathing part of who we are today.

For me, this bill represents hope. It represents a future where the Hawaiian language is not relegated to history books but is spoken in homes, taught in schools, and seen and heard in public spaces across the pae ‘āina (islands). It is about restoring pride, connection, and identity for all Native Hawaiians and fostering a sense of belonging for everyone who calls Hawai‘i home.

This issue is not just about language; it is about healing, resilience, and the survival of a people and their culture. It is about honoring our ancestors and empowering future generations. It is about ensuring that the spirit of Hawai‘i, embodied in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, continues to thrive.

****Call to Action****

I urge you to pass SB 109 and demonstrate your commitment to the revitalization and normalization of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. This bill represents more than just policy—it is a statement that the Hawaiian language and culture are valued and cherished, now and always.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Ronnie Inagaki

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 11:17:20 AM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha mai i ke Komike Hawai‘i, Lunahoomalu Richards a me Hope Lunahoomalu San Buenaventura mā,

‘O wau Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai a kāko‘o au i ka **Pila SB109 - Pili i ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i**. Pono e ho‘opa‘a ‘ia ka mana Hawai‘i o ke kānāwai inā i kākau mua ‘ia ke kānāwai i nīnau ‘ia ma ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i a laila unuhi ‘ia i ka ‘ōlelo Pelekania.

He kūpono kēia.

Me ke aloha,

Greetings to the Hawaiian Committee, Chair Richards, and Vice Chair San Buenaventura and associates.

I am Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai and **I support Bill SB109 - Relating to the Hawaiian Language**. The Hawaiian version of a law should be binding if the law was originally written in Hawaiian and then translated into English.

This is appropriate.

With regards,
Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai

Note: I’m still learning to ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i and utilize translation assistance from [Nā Puke Wehewehe ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i](#), [Google Translate](#) and [AI Ōlelo Tools](#).

LATE

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 4:03:14 PM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Piialoha Callahan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of this bill. Mahalo for continuing to acknowledge and recognize our language

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 7:20:59 PM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dana Keawe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support SB109

LATE

SB-109

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 12:58:21 PM

Testimony for HWN on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimmer Horsen (Bighorse)	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Olelo Hawaii is NOT a foreign language and has different meanings, connotations, meanings, interpretations and pronounciations than English. The ka na wai or law could possibly lose its significance, meaning, connotation, context and purity in translation.

Mahalo

Kim