



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 606 HD1
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOMELANDS

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hawai'i State Capitol

April 3, 2025

10:01a.m.

Conference Room 211

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the Committee:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB606_HD1**, which would provide critical support to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) by: (1) extending the Act 279 Special Fund to June 30, 2028, (2) depositing funds into and appropriating funds out of the Act 279 Special Fund to increase DHHL lease awards to waitlisted beneficiaries, and (3) requiring DHHL to submit a plan and report on its use of Act 279 funds.

As detailed in a recent study published by the Economic Research Organization at the University of Hawai'i (UHERO), as of 2023, the consequences of unaffordable housing continue to show up in out-migration, homelessness, and more families being priced out of the local market."¹ For example, in 2022, more than 67,000 former Hawai'i residents moved to other states, with the high-cost of housing identified in surveys as a leading cause of out-migration.² **As a result of the cost driven out-migration, more Native Hawaiians now live outside of Hawai'i than in Hawai'i.**³

DHHL plays a vital role in addressing the housing needs of Native Hawaiians and reversing this disturbing trend of Native Hawaiians being priced out of their ancestral homelands. Historic underfunding and marginalization of DHHL has led to today's contemporary crisis where the number of qualified beneficiaries vastly outnumbers the agency's ability to provide habitable land and housing. However, Act 279 is an important step towards meeting the State's trust responsibilities to Native Hawaiians under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and the Hawai'i Constitution to return land to and provide housing for Hawai'i's first peoples.

¹ UHERO Report at p. 1.

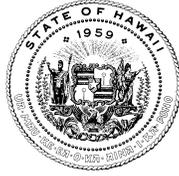
² UHERO Report at 7.

³ OHA Press Release, *New census data confirms more Native Hawaiians reside on the continent than in Hawai'i* (Sept. 22, 2024), <https://www.oha.org/news/new-census-data-more-native-hawaiians-reside-continent/>.

OHA stands in strong support of HB606_HD1 and urges the Committees to **pass** this bill. Mahalo nui loa for considering this testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina
'o Hawai'i*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRPERSON, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. LAMBERT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIR
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawai'i

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
DECISION MAKING ON APRIL 3, 2025 AT 10:01AM IN CR 211

HB 606, HD 1, RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

April 3, 2025

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **strongly supports** this bill which extends the Act 279 Special Fund to 6/30/2028, 2) deposits funds into and appropriates funds out of the Act 279 Special Fund to eliminate its waitlist, 3) requires DHHL to submit a strategic plan detailing the anticipated uses of the funds appropriated, 4) requires an annual report, and 5) sunsets 6/30/2028.

DHHL continues to make progress regarding the encumbrance of funds, the expenditure of funds, and the delivery of lots pursuant to Act 279, SLH 2022. Please see the attachment. HB606, HD1, provides sustained legislative action to fulfill the State's trust obligations under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, as amended, and the Hawaii State Constitution. This bill will ensure that DHHL has adequate time to encumber and expend the necessary funds and will secure additional funds that will allow DHHL to continue to address the DHHL applicant waiting list.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.



HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION · DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

FY2025 Update

eff March 20, 2025



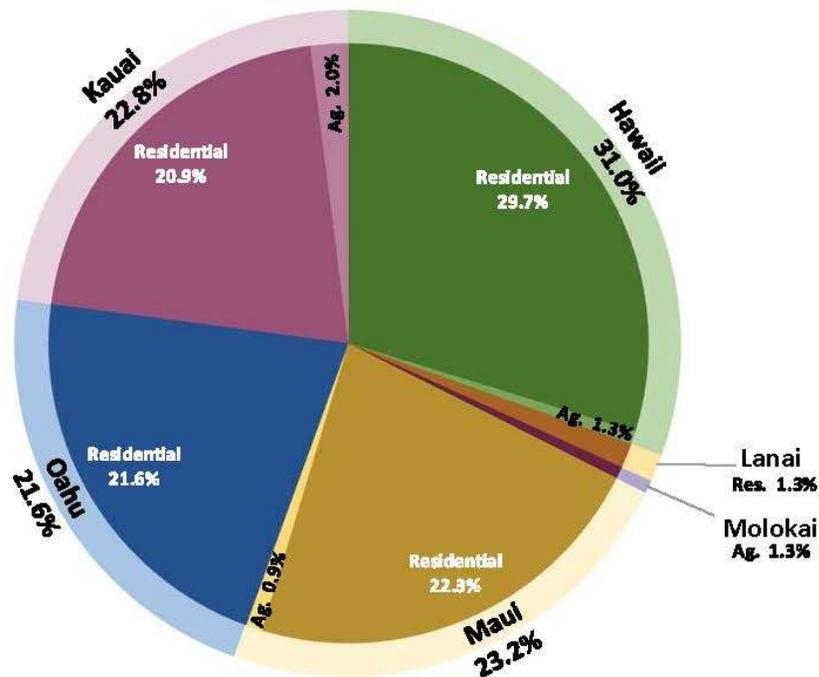
HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

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Overview of ACT 279: \$600m

DEVELOPMENT BY ISLAND AND TYPE

Development by Island and Type – Pie Chart



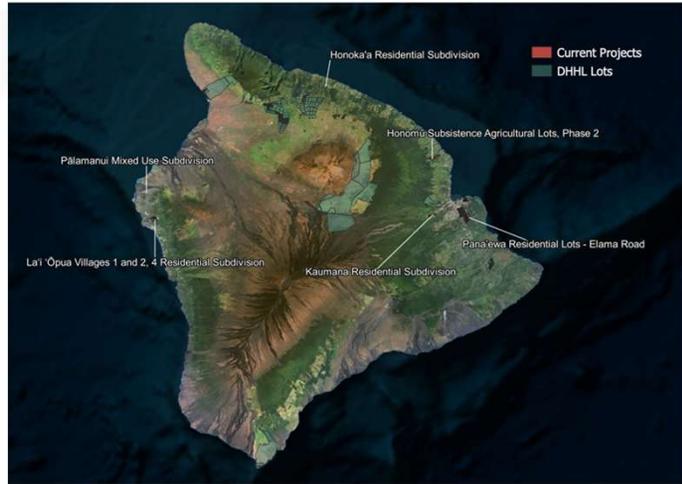
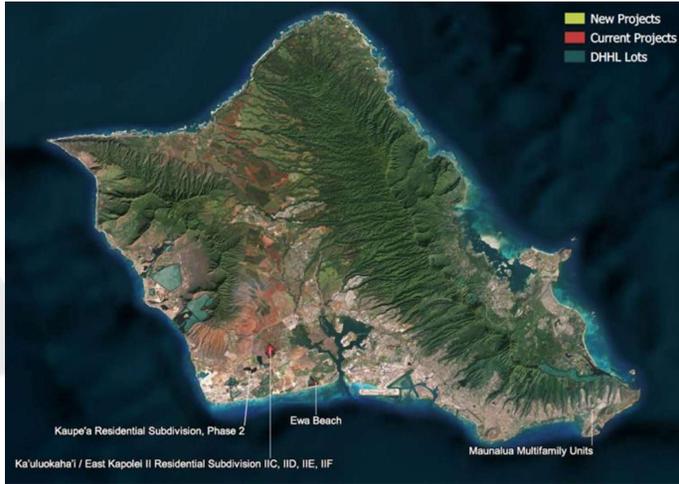
- **Past 100 Years:** DHHL delivered approximately **10,000 leases**.

- **Next 10 Years:** DHHL is on track to **reduce the waitlist by approximately 6,000**.

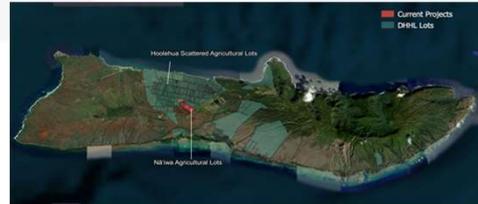
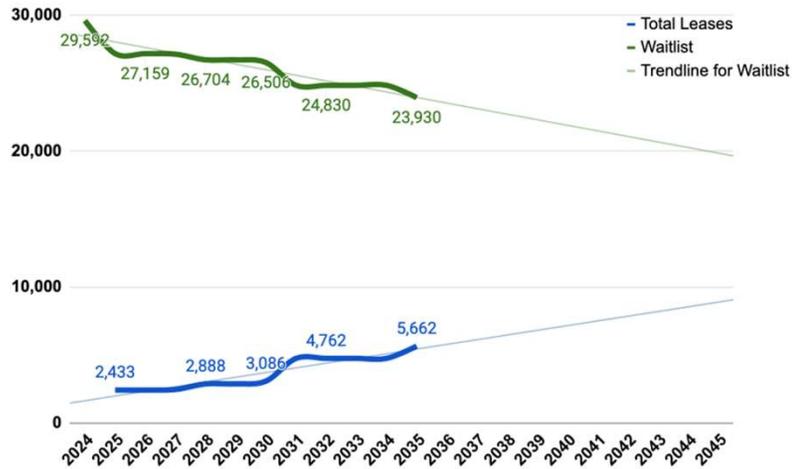
- **Since Act 279 Passage:** More than **\$600 million** obligated to **develop 29 projects**.

			ACT279: \$598,000,000			ADDTL REQUEST: \$ 584,878,296		
			\$193,141,367	\$196,938,481	\$207,920,152	2283	2749	\$ 584,878,296
Island	Site	Plexos Site Name	Encumbered FY23	Encumbered FY24	EncumberedFY25	ACT279Lots	Addl\$s Lots	Future Cost Estimates
Hawaii	Homesteads/Lehua Villages Land Acquisition and EIS/AIS/Infrastructure/Ph	Honoka'a		\$8,750,000	\$1,258,000	0	296	\$ 59,113,200
Hawaii	Kaumana (Avalon Development)	Kaumana	\$2,000,000			0	168	\$ 25,200,000
Hawaii	Villages of LaiOpua V.4 Hema/V2 EST	La'i 'Ōpua Villages			\$39,240,696	280	300	\$ 45,000,000
Hawaii	Palamanui	Palamanui			\$7,000,000	0	40	\$ 22,800,000
Hawaii	Panaewa Residential Lots (FY25 Phase2)	Panaewa, Elama Road			\$1,000,000	0	600	\$ 147,000,000
Kauai	Anahola Kuleana Phase 1	Anahola			\$5,000,000	115	0	\$ -
Kauai	Grove Farm Isenberg parcel Land Acquisition (FY25 Phase 2)	Grove Farm Isenberg		\$20,684,160		100	140	\$ 71,042,400
Kauai	Hanapepe Residence Lots, Phase 2	Hanapēpē	\$17,800,126			82	0	\$ -
Lanai	Lanai Residence Lots Offsite Infrastructure	Lanai	\$2,000,000			0	75	\$ 11,250,000
Mauai	Honokowai Subsistence Ag Ph. 1	Honokowai	\$1,470,000			0	50	\$ 7,500,000
Mauai	Kamalani Land Acquisition / Phase 1 infrastructure (FY25 Phase 2)	Kamalani		\$10,500,000	\$24,622,129	200	200	\$ 33,972,696
Mauai	Villages Of Leialii Subdivision	Leialii			\$83,000,000	181	0	\$ -

			ACT279: \$598,000,000		ADDTL REQUEST: \$ 584,878,296			
Island	Site	Plexos Site Name	Encumbered FY23	Encumbered FY24	Encumbered FY25	ACT279 Lots	Addl \$s Lots	Future Cost Estimates
			\$193,141,367	\$196,938,481	\$207,920,152	2283	2749	\$ 584,878,296
Maui	Pu'uhona Homestead Subdivision	Pu'uhona	\$22,680,944			161	0	\$ -
Maui	Waiehu Mauka	Waiehu Mauka	\$93,868,417			311	0	\$ -
Maui	Wailuku	Wailuku	\$45,038,800			207	0	\$ -
Molokai	Hoolehua Scattered Lots	Hoolehua			\$3,500,000	20	0	\$ -
Molokai	Naiwa Ag Subdivision	Naiwa			\$6,000,000	16	0	\$ -
Oahu	East Kapolei IIA	East Kapolei IIA			\$1,000,000	0	500	\$ 75,000,000
Oahu	East Kapolei Masterplanned Community	East Kapolei IIC, IID, IIE	\$33,080	\$140,813,000	\$2,299,327	500	200	\$ 60,000,000
Oahu	Kaupea Phase 2	Kaupea	\$8,250,000	\$13,691,321		60	0	\$ -
Oahu	Marina Lot 10A	Marina 10A		\$2,500,000		0	80	\$ 12,000,000
Other	Contingencies	Contingencies			\$5,000,000	n/a	0	
Other	Individual Assistance	Individual Assistance			\$2,000,000	n/a	0	
Other	Project Financing/Partnerships	Project Financing/Partnerships			\$25,000,000	n/a	0	
Other	Scattered Lots (kalani contracts)	Scattered Lots			\$2,000,000	50	100	\$ 15,000,000



Waitlist Burndown



PROJECT CONSTRUCTION DETAIL

Location/Site	Project	Cost	Developer	Construction (FY)		Occupancy (FY)		Develop Master Plan	% Project Completion	
				Start	End	Start	End			
Hawaii County	Sub-Total	7 Projects	\$75.0M							
	Laiopua Villages	Residential Subdivision	\$39.2M	Kalaniana'ole Development	2022	2028	2026	2028	HHFDC Master Plan	25%
	Honomu	Subsistence Agricultural Lots		n/a	2025	2026	2028	2028	DHHL Regional Plan	20%
	Kaumana	Residential Subdivision	\$2.0M	n/a	2026	2030	2030	2030	DHHL Regional Plan	5%
	Honokaa	Land Acquisition	\$8.8M	n/a	2026	2031	n/a	n/a	none	100%
		Residential Subdivision	\$1.3M	n/a	2026	2031	2029	2031	none	20%
	Palamanui	Mixed Use Subdivision	\$22.8M	Kalaniana'ole Development	2025	2027	2027	2027	Palamanui Master Plan	0%
Panaewa	Residential Lots	\$1.0M	n/a	2026	2031	2031	2031	DHHL Regional Plan	5%	
Maui County	Sub-Total	12 Projects	\$270.5M							
	Lanai	Residence Lots	\$2.0M	Ikaika Ohana	2026	2028	2028	2028	DHHL Regional Plan	5%
	Hoolehua	Scattered Agricultural Lots	\$3.5M	n/a	2025	2027	2027	2027	DHHL Regional Plan	100%
	Naiwa	Agricultural Lots	\$6.0M	n/a	2025	2027	2027	2027	DHHL Regional Plan	100%
		Acquisition	\$5.5M	Dowling Development	2023	2026	n/a	n/a	none	100%
	Pu'u'hona	Residential Subdivision	\$17.2M	Dowling Development	2023	2026	2025	2026	none	100%
		Subsistence Agricultural Lots	\$1.5M	n/a	2025	2027	2027	2027	DHHL Regional Plan	100%
	Leialii	Offsite Water Development	\$15.0M	Dowling Development	2024	2026	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%
		Residential Subdivision	\$68.0M	Dowling Development	2025	2029	2027	2029	HHFDC Master Plan	100%
	Wailuku	Residential Subdivision	\$12.3M	Dowling Development	2026	2031	2029	2031	none	100%
	Waiehu Mauka	Residential Subdivision	\$93.9M	Dowling Development	2027	2032	2030	2032	none	100%
	Kamalani	Land Acquisition	\$10.5M	Gentry Development	2024	2025	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%
Residential Subdivision		\$35.1M	Gentry Development	2026	2031	2029	2031	A&B Master Plan	50%	
City and County of Honolulu	Sub-Total	6 Projects	\$166.3M							
	Kaupea	Acquisition	\$8.3M	Mark Development	2024	2025	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%
	Kaupea	Residential Subdivision	\$13.7M	Mark Development	2026	2030	2028	2030	DHHL Regional Plan	50%
	East Kapolei	Mixed-Use Subdivision	\$1.0M	n/a	2027	2032	2032	2032	Campbell Master Plan / HHFDC Master Plan	100%
	East Kapolei	Residential Subdivision	\$140.8M	Gentry Development	2026	2031	2026	2031	Campbell Master Plan / HHFDC Master Plan	75%
	Ewa Beach	Residential Subdivision		n/a	2026	2031	2029	2031	DHHL Regional Plan	0%
	Maunaloa	Land Acquisition & Multifamily Units	\$23.0M	n/a	2026	2027	2027	2027	KS Maunaloa Management Plan	100%
Kauai County	Sub-Total	4 Projects	\$43.5M							
	Hanapepe	Residential Subdivision	\$17.8M	Mark Development	2022	2029	2026	2029	DHHL Regional Plan	100%
	Anahola	Agricultural Lots	\$5.0M	n/a	2025	2027	2027	2027	DHHL Regional Plan	100%
	Lihue	Land Acquisition	\$-	n/a	2024	2025	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Residential Subdivision		\$20.7M	n/a	2026	2035	2029	2035	Grove Farm Master Plan	25%	
Total	24 Sites	33 Projects	\$555.3M							



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Lot Development Projects: New Funding

	Location/Site	Total Cost	Project and Previous Funding Notes	Requested Funding Notes
Hawaii County	7 Projects	\$393.81M		
	La'i 'Ōpua	\$120M	Appropriation used for partial onsite infrastructure & for off-site infrastructure (water system development)	Additional monies required to complete infrastructure
	Lāiāmilo	\$51M	Anticipated cost for future increment to develop 132 lots is \$17M.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete partial infrastructure on Increment No. 1 (80 lots) To complete infrastructure on Increment No. 2 (71 lots) To complete wastewater system
	Honoka'a	\$49.3M	Appropriation used for acquisition & preliminary studies	For onsite & offsite infrastructure
	Honomū Phase 2	\$25M	Completed 16 lots in Phase 1, providing a total development of 66 sub-ag lots at a cost of \$25M.	To prepare sub-ag lots, paving of internal roads, and constructing street lights.
	Pi'ihonua	\$7M		Will be used to fully develop 48 lots within the Pi'ihonua-Kaumana Region.
	Keaukaha & Pana'ewa	\$1.5M		Will be used to subdivide larger lots to double the count
	Panaewa Elama Road	\$140M	Appropriation used for preliminary studies. Additional NAHASDA funding also used for more studies.	To develop the Phase 1 Project
Maui County	2 Projects	\$20M		
	Kamalani	-	Appropriation used for acquisition, preliminary reports, offsite infrastructure, and onsite infrastructure for Phase 1	Request for onsite infrastructure for remaining 250 lots.
	Keokea-Waiohuli Phase 2	\$20M		For well construction (\$7.5M) and Development of Phase 2 (\$6.5M)
City and County of Honolulu	2 Projects	\$0M		
	Ka'uluokaha'i	-	Appropriation used for preliminary reports, infrastructure of IIC, and the backbone of the entire development.	Projected cost to build out 250 lots at IID
	Marina 10A	-	For acquisition & preliminary reports	
Kauai County	3 Projects	\$283.5M		
	Hanapēpē Phase 2	\$33.5M	For preliminary reports	To complete full development of Phase 2
	Līhu'e	\$250M	For acquisition & preliminary reports	\$96M for offsite infrastructure (wastewater, water, and roadway improvements) *\$24M for on-site infrastructure for Phase 1
	Wailua	-		Projected expense to design lots for sub-ag (1 to 2 acres lots)
Statewide	5 Projects	\$82M		
	Engineering Studies	\$23M		
	Awards Program	\$5M		
	Individual Assistance	\$9M		
	Developing Project Financing	\$25M		
	Scattered Lots Development Program	\$20M		
Total		\$779.3M		

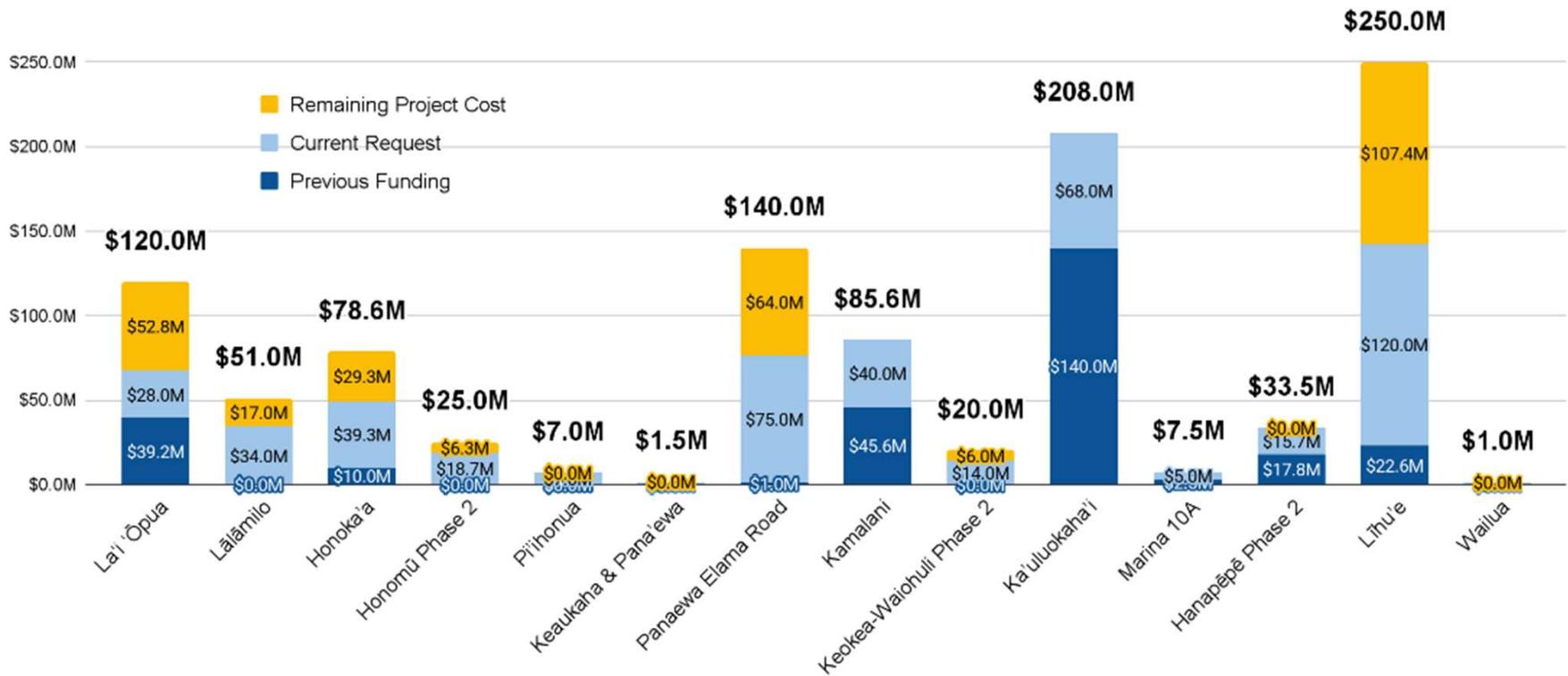
\$779 million to advance **12 projects statewide**, accelerating homestead development and infrastructure expansion:

•**Hawai'i County: \$393M | 7 projects**
– Large-scale infrastructure to open new lands

•**Maui County: \$20M | 2 projects** – Targeted site readiness and lot development

•**Kaua'i County: \$283M | 3 projects** – Major water and utility investments
This funding will drive sustainable, long-term housing solutions for Native Hawaiian beneficiaries.

Act 279 Funding Allocated, New Funding Requested and Amount Remaining to be Funded





HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

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Lot Development Projects: Additional Info

DATA DISPLAYS: TARGETED BASIC DATA TABLE

1. Simple Table showing lots by island, type, and housing.
2. Answers most of the direct questions:
 - a. How many lots are developed?
 - b. How many homes are built?
 - c. How many leases are issued?
 - d. How many waitlisted beneficiaries given a home?
 - e. Waitlist Categories Impacted?

	Planned	Housing	Developed	Leased	Waitlist	Planned	w/Housing	Developed	Leased	Waitlist	Planned	Developed	Leased	Waitlist	Planned	Developed	Leased
	Total Lots				Residential					Agricultural			Pastoral				
Hawaii	1,724	1,684	200	380	5,991	1,684	1,684	200	380	7,354	40	0	0	2,017	0	0	0
Lanai	75	75	0	0	69	75	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Molokai	36	0	36	36	815	0	0	0	0	1,133	36	36	36	201	0	0	0
Maui	1,310	1,229	1,110	1,110	3,947	1,260	1,229	1,060	1,060	4,813	50	50	50	620	0	0	0
Oahu	1,220	1,220	510	510	11,370	1,220	1,220	510	510	4,137	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kauai	1,297	882	397	397	1,726	1,182	882	282	282	2,311	115	115	115	338	0	0	0
Total	5,662	5,090	2,253	2,433		5,421	5,090	2,052	2,232		241	201	201		0	0	0

DEVELOPER SUMMARY

	Sites	Total
Dowling Development	6	\$211,888,161
Gentry Development	3	\$186,468,209
Ikaika Ohana	1	\$2,000,000
Kalaniana'ole Development	2	\$61,990,696
Mark Development	3	\$39,741,447

**Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement
91-1270 Kinoaiki St., Bldg. 1
Kapolei, HI 96707**

**Hawai'i State Senate
Committee on Ways and Means**

HB606 – Relating to the Department of Hawaiian Homelands

RE: Strong support of HB606

April 3, 2025

The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA) writes in **strong support of HB606** in alignment with the State's trust obligations under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and the Hawai'i State Constitution. HB606 proposes an extension of the Act 279 Special Fund in furtherance of eliminating the waitlist of applicants for residential, agricultural, or pastoral leases for trust land managed by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL). It is imperative for the State to continually work towards housing its people and HB606 is a necessary step in the right direction.

As a Native Hawaiian organization, we deeply understand the importance of land, particularly when there is an ancestral or familial connection to it. For decades, we have seen more and more Native Hawaiian families priced out of their ancestral land. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act plays a crucial role in addressing the longstanding housing needs for native Hawaiians, persevering despite decades of underfunding and numerous bureaucratic challenges. The current waitlist of over 29,000 individuals is a reminder of the unmet promises made to native Hawaiians, and the urgency to address this issue cannot be overstated.

HB606 provides critical funding to fulfill DHHL's fiduciary duties to native Hawaiians. Additional resources will ensure necessary housing access, economic security, and cultural revitalization for its beneficiaries. Providing native Hawaiians with housing on their ancestral lands fosters stronger communities, family stability, and success for future generations.

Extending the sunset date of the Act 279 Special Fund and appropriating additional funds to be used by DHHL will address the urgency of the unmet housing needs of native Hawaiians. This measure is a critical step towards fulfilling the State's trust obligations and ensuring that native Hawaiians have the opportunity to build a future on their land in Hawai'i. For these reasons, we humbly ask that you **PASS HB606**.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Madelyn McKeague
Director of Advocacy, CNHA



Hawai'i

Committee: Ways and Means
Hearing Date/Time: April 3, 2025 at 10:01am
Place: Conference Room 211 & via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in support of HB606 HD1 Relating to the Department of Hawaiian Homelands**

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Committee Members:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i ("ACLU of Hawai'i") supports **HB606 HD1** that extends the Act 279 Special Fund to June 30, 2028 and appropriates additional funds for the Department of Hawaiian Homelands to eliminate its waitlist.

The ACLU of Hawai'i is committed to protecting the civil liberties and civil rights enshrined in our federal and state Constitutions, and advancing our campaigns to Decriminalize Houselessness, and enact Smart Justice policies.

As part of our efforts to Reimagine Public Safety, we advocate for the State to shift spending priorities away from mass criminalization and incarceration that disparately impacts Native Hawaiians, towards investments in education, housing, health care. human services and restorative justice in our communities.

Over the years, the Legislature has created multiple task forces and supported initiatives for the purpose of examining and improving the state's criminal legal system and reducing the carceral population. These include:

- Justice Reinvestment Initiative (2011)
- Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force (2012)
- H.C.R. 85 Task Force (2018)
- Criminal Pretrial Task Force (2018)
- The Hawaii Correctional Oversight Commission (2020)
- Criminal Justice Research Institute

Additionally, numerous reports and literature have highlighted the racial bias and disparities that exists within Hawai'i's criminal legal system – and disparately targets Native Hawaiians.

- *Crime and Justice Related to Hawaiians and Part-Hawaiians in the State of Hawai'i*, Dr. Gene Kassebaum, A Report Prepared for Alu Like, Inc., Study supported by a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Development, Administration for Native Americans (April 1981)

- *Racial Tensions and Public Concern about Crime Control in Hawaii*, Dr. Gene Kassebaum, Department of Sociology, University of Hawaii at Manoa (1981)
- *The Colonial Carceral and Prison Politics in Hawai'i*, Dr. RaeDeen Keahiolalo Dissertation (2008)
- *The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System*, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Justice Policy Institute, Georgetown Law, University of Hawaii at Manoa and Georgetown Law, 2010.
- *Understanding Women's Pathways into Crime and What Works to Improve Outcomes Among Women in the Criminal Justice System*, Criminal Justice Research Institute, Dr. Erin Harbinson and Aerielle Reynolds, MS. (2021-2022). **In 2019, Native Hawaiian women were 19% of the female general population in Hawai'i. However, they comprise 44% of the female incarcerated population in Hawai'i.**

While these Commissions and initiatives have issued a plethora of recommendations to reduce the jail and prison population, and eliminate racial disparities within our criminal legal system, these recommendations have been ignored, underfunded and rarely implemented.

Simultaneously, the State has spent millions of dollars incarcerating Native Hawaiians instead of investing increased funding into data-driven strategies, including stable housing, that would reduce the number of Native Hawaiians entangled in our criminal legal system.

To date, the State has already spent over \$20 million dollars and is requesting another \$30 million on consultants to construct an expanded 1,300 bed jail to replace OCCC. The projected total cost for this proposed public-private-partnership jail is \$1 billion – money that could be spent on providing Hawaiian Homelands to Native Hawaiians on the waitlist.

Due to limited data collection within our criminal legal system, it is unknown just how many Native Hawaiians under community supervision or incarcerated are on the waitlist for Hawaiian Home Lands or eligible for Hawaiian Home Lands. However, given the stark racial disparities within Hawaii's criminal legal system, the State should track this data. Determining the number of Native Hawaiians involved in the criminal legal system who are current beneficiaries on the waitlist, or are eligible for Hawaiian Home Lands, is an important data point to inform public policies, including appropriations for diversion, rehabilitation and re-entry programs.

Numerous studies confirm that housing can determine education, health and economic opportunities, and exposure to crime. Research also shows that people returning from jails and prisons face many barriers to successful re-entry. Often, the most serious challenge is securing stable housing. In turn, housing has long been recognized as a prerequisite for stable employment, access to social services and other aspects of individual and family functioning.

Nationally, statistics show that formerly incarcerated people are almost 10 times more

likely to be homeless than the general public.¹

Closer to home, the 2020 O'ahu Point in Time Count noted that over half of all houseless individuals identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.² The Touchpoints Report also estimated that 25-50% of the homeless in Hawai'i have a history of incarcerated and that an estimated 30% of people released from our jails and prisons are exiting to houselessness.³

This measure is a significant step towards fulfilling the State's fiduciary duties to beneficiaries under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and Hawai'i Constitution, and providing critically needed housing for Native Hawaiians disparately impacted by Hawai'i's criminal legal system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of **HB606 HD1**.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ann Shiota
Policy Director
cshiota@acluhawaii.org

The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i since 1965.

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i
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¹ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>

² <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/01/its-time-to-acknowledge-native-hawaiians-special-right-to-housing/>

³ <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Touchpoints-of-Homelessness-Report-Final.pdf>

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 4:49:03 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malia Marquez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kākou,

This is THE closest bill to helping kanaka get homes here in Hawai'i. Remember, No Hawaiians, No Hawai'i. Please support HB 606!!

Mahalo

Malia Marquez

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 5:46:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Fully support.

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:28:27 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blaine De Ramos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB606.

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:44:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Noelani Robbins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB606 to house Native Hawaiians and to honor Prince Kūhiō's legacy. Keep Hawaiians in our homeland. Vote yes. Mahalo.

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 11:39:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

support

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 12:38:49 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mai Hall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Mai Hall, and I'm testifying as a Kanaka Maoli. I support HB606 Relating to Hawaiian Home Lands.

Too many Hawaiians have died waiting on the DHHL list. My mother put her name on the Hawaiian Homestead List in 1985, making this her 40th year waiting for a home. She is still waiting. She turns 70 years old this year. She deserves a little piece of 'āina, a home with a yard to grow a little garden with ti leaves and 'ōlena. She had always dreamed of leaving behind something, anything to give to her children, my sisters and I. Please make her dream a reality by allowing her to take care of us. By passing down this little piece of land. Mahalo

**TESTIMONY OF ELIZABETH PA NAKEA
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
IN SUPPORT OF HB 606, HD1**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committees,

I am Elizabeth Pa Nakea, an attorney who was part of the legal team in *Ka'ai'ai v. Drake*, a case that affirmed the need for an Independent Representative to protect Native Hawaiian beneficiaries. I offer my testimony today in **strong support** of HB 606, HD1, because the promises made to Native Hawaiians must finally be fulfilled.

For too long, our people have waited.

For too long, our families have remained on a waitlist, watching opportunity after opportunity slip away.

For too long, the state has acknowledged its obligation but failed to deliver.

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) was created to return Native Hawaiians to their lands, a commitment enshrined in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920. That commitment became a **condition of statehood**, written into the Admission Act when Hawai'i joined the Union in 1959. In accepting statehood, Hawai'i accepted a **solemn duty** to administer the Hawaiian Home Lands trust **for the benefit of Native Hawaiians—not for the convenience of the state.**

Yet, for decades, this duty has been undermined. The state has controlled the funding. The state has controlled the land use. The state has controlled the trust itself—while Native Hawaiian beneficiaries have been forced to fight in court for what was already promised. *Ka'ai'ai v. Drake* revealed the inherent conflict of interest that has long obstructed progress: DHHL, a state agency, was placed in a position where it had to negotiate against its own beneficiaries. That is why an Independent Representative was needed, and that is why oversight and accountability are needed now.

HB 606, HD1, is not just about funding. It is about **correcting decades of neglect.**

It is about fairness. Beneficiaries should not have to fight legal battles just to receive what was promised at statehood.

It is about justice. Thousands remain on the waitlist—not because they lack the will, but because they lack the means to develop the land that is rightfully theirs.

It is about trust. The state's fiduciary duty to Native Hawaiians is not optional. It is a binding obligation that must be upheld.

The \$600 million appropriated by Act 279 in 2022 was a **historic step**, but it was **not enough**. The funds addressed only a fraction of those in need. We cannot claim to uphold the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act while allowing tens of thousands to remain in limbo. If the Legislature truly recognizes the kuleana that comes with managing these trust lands, then it must ensure that funding continues, that resources are allocated, and that **Native Hawaiians are no longer forced to wait another generation for justice.**

HB 606, HD1, extends the funding mechanism that was established for this purpose. It ensures that unexpended Act 279 funds are protected, not lost to the general fund. It keeps the promise alive.

I urge you to pass this bill, not as a favor, not as a political gesture, but as a **fulfillment of a long-overdue obligation.**

No more delays. No more excuses. No more broken promises.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Pa Nakea

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 7:02:29 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alfred Medeiros	Testifying for Kuleana Ka 'Aina	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou 'o Alfred Keaka Hiona Medeiros kou inoa no Wai'anae mai au...mahalo nui chair, vice chair and committee for taking our testimony on this very important bill HB606 in which would keep us Kānaka Maoli and Hawaiians in Hawai'i. As we know in 2022 Act 279 was pushed through, which allocated funds to remove Hawaiians waiting on the DHHL waitlist and help put them in homes and within the past 3yrs over 2000+ Kānaka Maoli have been placed on Hawaiian land and in homes. As we continue displaced in our own home of Hawai'i and priced out of paradise, it is essential that we continue to do all that we can to keep our people here in our homelands. Because what is Hawai'i without Hawaiians? It wouldn't be what it is today! Please pass HB606 and please give the full amount of what was asked for by DHHL to continue to build homes and put our people back on our 'Āina where they belong, as this is one of the only ways our Kānaka that no longer live here anymore, could return. Mahalo nui for your time and I hope you're able to listen to the numerous testimonies in support of HB606. E mālama pono.

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2025 8:12:58 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanani Higbee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am Kanani Higbee, Maui 'oiwi, waitlister on Hawaiian Homeland List. I **strongly support** HB 606. However, I do feel this bill needs to be amended. There need to be hundreds of Hawaiian homeland lots developed for Lahaina since we lost our housing in the fire and went through horrific trauma. I spoke to Maui commissioner Archie Kalepa. He told me that even though I have waited on this list for 20 years, I still won't get a lot in 10 more years. So I will have waited 30 years without a lot. In a few more years, I will be living homeless in my car because housing is unaffordable on Maui.

I've tried so hard to attain housing, but when I go to my kuleana lands, the Hawaiians next to my kuleana lands refuse to let me access my lands via their roads and I must walk across ravine, climb boulders, and cross a raging river that's taken human lives in order to access my kuleana land. It's just so unbelievable how Native Hawaiians are exploited and treated. We should just be able to live on our Hawaiian Homeland and our kuleana land too. We shouldn't be told to wait and pay endless rent.

My suggestion is to develop enough lots needed to get all the Lahaina fire survivors who are also Hawaiian homeland waitlisters to go from the interim and temporary fema housing directly to Hawaiian homelands. I mean, my grandparents died on the list and never got their lot. No one was even able to claim my grandparents' spot on the list and we had to start at the back of the line. My grandparents waited on the Hawaiian homeland list for nothing.

It would be best if I can be Director of Hawaiian Homeland Dept and the DHHL Commission Chair because I'm a waitlister and can advocate the best to reduce the waitlist. Currently, we are moving at a snail's pace. I know I would get us moving so much faster. My whole life's work has been to get Hawaiians on the land. I have been involved with nationwide movement of parent leaders to advocate for Hawaiians to get on the land. That's how passionate I am about it. None of the Directors of Hawaiian Homelands Department knows what it's like to raise children and be homeless even though I work 2-3 jobs and even my children must work as young as age 6 to put food on the table. There were many times my kids and I were couch surfing, living out of my car, living in homelsss shelters. And it wasn't because I didn't work. That's how hard the life is in Hawaii. I'm the kind of person you need running Dept of Hawaiian Homeland because we know

firsthand the hardship of living in Hawaii nei.

I also feel Hawaiians must reconnect to their kuleana lands too though because that's where they can find peace. Since their ancestors are there and they will help show them the way to peace. However, not all 300 descendants can fit on the kuleana land parcels so that's where Hawaiian Home Commission Act come in. As well as other ways for Hawaiians to get on the land like Hawaii Community Assets if they don't have enough blood quantum for DHHL.

All we have is HB 606, so we will have to vote that through and hopefully with amendment to get all the Lahaina fire survivors into Hawaiian homes as soon as they must vacate the interim and fema housing. I mean, so much of that \$600 million was used to help all the Lahaina fire survivors with recovery and they were not Hawaiian. Since DHHL was so generous and helping all the Lahaina fire survivors by giving them funds for their hubs, I hope they can extend the generosity and get us Lahaina fire survivor and Hawaiian homeland waitlisters on the land as soon as we vacate the fema and interim temporary housing.

With Aloha,

Kanani Higbee



Testimony in Strong Support of HB606
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing Date: Thursday, April 3, 2025
Submitted by: Kupa‘a Lāhui Alliance

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Kupa‘a Lāhui Alliance, I submit this testimony in strong support of HB606, a measure that offers a critical step toward addressing the housing crisis for Native Hawaiians.

While the original version of the bill proposed a \$600 million appropriation to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), the current draft reflects a significantly reduced amount of \$50 million. We understand the fiscal pressures the state faces, but we respectfully urge the committee to consider this funding not as a solution—but as a starting point in what must be a sustained and strategic investment in Hawaiian housing.

Today, over 29,000 Native Hawaiians remain on the DHHL waitlist, with an average of 50 new applicants added every month. This number represents not just individuals, but entire ‘ohana who have waited for generations—and some who have passed without ever receiving the land promised to them under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act.

Meanwhile, Native Hawaiians are being priced out of their homeland. Houselessness, overcrowding, and economic displacement are all too common. Native Hawaiians now make up the largest segment of Hawai‘i’s houseless population, despite comprising just over 20% of the state’s residents.

This displacement is more than a housing issue—it’s a cultural crisis. As more Native Hawaiians leave Hawai‘i, we lose language, practice, ‘ike kūpuna, and connection to ‘āina. The lifeblood of what makes Hawai‘i, Hawai‘i is eroding.

Let us also be clear: Hawaiian land and identity are foundational to the state’s economy. From the use of ‘āina for military bases to the marketing of Hawaiian culture in the visitor industry, the economic backbone of Hawai‘i rests on the contribution of Native Hawaiians—yet far too many continue to struggle for basic housing security.

We mahalo the Legislature for the bold action taken in 2022 with Act 279, which appropriated \$600 million to DHHL. Those funds have already been allocated across more than two dozen housing developments statewide, with roughly 6,000 homes in progress. But it’s not enough. Experts estimate \$6 billion is needed to fulfill the full waitlist, and HB606 represents the necessary next step forward.

Investing in DHHL is not just a Native Hawaiian issue—it is a Hawai‘i issue. These homes will relieve pressure on the overall housing market, boost the construction economy, support working families, and honor the commitments made over a century ago.

We urge you to pass HB606 and affirm your commitment to housing justice, cultural survival, and a better future for all of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo nui loa for your leadership and consideration.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Shane Pale

Shane Pale

Kūpa‘a Lāhui Alliance

Tel. 808.457.2350 | www.kupaalahuialliance.org

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 12:34:48 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melinda Healani Sonoda-Pale	Testifying for Ka Lahui Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i strongly supports HB606, which allocates \$600 million to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) to provide long-overdue housing for Native Hawaiians.

Founded in 1987 by and for Native Hawaiians, Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i is a Hawaiian nation created to address Hawai‘i’s long history of colonization and to ensure that Native Hawaiians secure their rights of selfdetermination.

As a Native initiative for self-determination, Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i stands firmly in support of efforts like HB606, which seek to uphold the rights and well-being of the Hawaiian people. The State of Hawai‘i has a clear obligation to the Native Hawaiian community. When Hawai‘i became a state, it accepted the kuleana to administer the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), which was meant to return Native Hawaiians to their ancestral lands. Yet today, 29,000 Native Hawaiians remain on the DHHL waitlist, many having waited decades for a homestead.

This housing crisis is only worsening as the Native Hawaiian population continues to grow. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the total Native Hawaiian population has already reached 680,442, with 53% now living outside of Hawai‘i. This number now exceeds earlier projections, such as those outlined in the 2009 Kamehameha Schools report, underscoring the urgent need for housing solutions. Without adequate housing, the DHHL waitlist will continue to grow, pushing more Native Hawaiians out of their homeland. (Source: Kamehameha Schools, “Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment Update,” 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020.)

This ongoing failure is especially unjust given that Hawaiian lands and culture fuel the state’s largest industries—tourism and the military. According to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), approximately 98% of state-owned lands are ceded lands—former Hawaiian Kingdom lands held in trust. Tourism profits off Native Hawaiian identity, while the U.S. military occupies vast areas of Hawaiian lands, often under leases as low as \$1 per year. These industries thrive on Native Hawaiian resources, while too many Native Hawaiians remain houseless and displaced in our own homeland.

HB606 is not just about housing—it is about justice. Fully funding DHHL is the state’s responsibility, and it is long past time to fulfill the promise made to Native Hawaiians. We respectfully urge this committee to pass HB606 and uphold the state’s obligation to the Native Hawaiian community. Mahalo for your time and consideratio

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 4:07:33 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaylene Sheldon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Kaylene Kauwila Sheldon, and I am writing to express my support for HB606.

Before the illegal overthrow, the Hawaiian Kingdom government ensured that every Kanaka Maoli 'Ōiwi, or Native Hawaiian, had a home, 'āina, and recorded their crops as mentioned in the mahele database.

According to a Stanford medical article written by Noah Jordan Magbual, "Hawai'i is currently ranked the second highest in rates of homelessness per 10,000 people." The article also states that "Hawai'i's past of unwarranted Western contact and illegal annexation under U.S. imperialism has undeniably contributed to the current plight of homelessness."

HB606 addresses the houseless situation and provides opportunities for Kanaka access to long-term shelter, ensuring healthy conditions for Native Hawaiians. Homeless individuals suffer from numerous diseases; Queen's Hospital saw 8,228 visits by 2,850 homeless people before the pandemic, according to Jessica Terell (2023).

On a personal level, I have experienced the devastating impact of homelessness. My uncle, Douglas Hiu, and his son, Douglas Hiu Jr., passed away while waiting for housing. My nephew, their family member, was denied housing due to not meeting the 50% Hawaiian blood quantum requirement, despite being on the waiting list.

I urge you to support HB606 and continue actively supporting the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL). This bill is crucial for addressing the housing crisis affecting Native Hawaiians.

Mahalo,
Kaylene Kauwila Sheldon

References:

Magbual, N. J. (n.d.). Policy Brief. Retrieved from

https://med.stanford.edu/content/dam/sm/schoolhealtheval/documents/Noah_Policy-Brief.pdf

Terell, J. (2023, March). Hawaii Hospitals Are Struggling To Meet The Needs Of The Chronically Homeless. Civil Beat.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2023/03/hawaii-hospitals-are-struggling-to-meet-the-needs-of-the-chronically-homeless/>

HB-606-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2025 7:12:17 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leonard Nakoa III	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Give the money that is owed to Hawaiians.