



*Kailua*

**HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB**

P.O. Box 1123

Kailua, Hawai'i 96734

desilvak009@gmail.com

Written testimony of

**KĪHEI DE SILVA**

**Director, Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club**

submitted to the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION**

Friday, April 9, 2021

10:30 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room #211 & Videoconference

In consideration of

**HOUSE BILL NO. 862, HD2, SD1: PROPOSED SD2**

**RELATING TO STATE GOVERNMENT**

---

Aloha kākou, Chairs Dela Cruz and Baker, Vice Chairs Keith-Agaran and Chang, members of the Committee on Ways and Means, and members of the Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection:

I write on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors of the Kailua Hawaiian Civic who wish to express their unanimous and adamant opposition to those sections of Proposed SD2 for House Bill 862, HD2, and SD1 that affect the mission, work, and future of HTA. We offer no opinions on the other subject matter in the Proposed SD2.

Established in 1959, the Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club (KHCC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the perpetuation of our Hawaiian people, culture, and natural resources. We have held fast to the same threefold mission in the nearly six decades of our existence; we strive to: 1- advance the appreciation, study, and practice of Hawaiian culture, 2- enrich the lives of Hawaiians and our Kailua community, and 3- care for the lands, waters, and storied places of our ahupua'a.

As curators and co-curators of Ulupo Heiau since 1987, we are regularly engaged in supporting ‘āina restoration and ‘āina-based educational activities at Ulupō and its surrounding lands, and we enjoy very close relationships with the Kailua-based non-profit organizations Hika‘alani and Kauluakalana whose missions also align with our dedication to culture and community.

As a result of our combined efforts, Ulupō has become something of a right-off-the highway anachronism, a step back into a much older time of order and carefully managed abundance, a time before the place became overrun with head-high guinea grass, shrimp plant, all manner of choking vines, African tulip trees, acid-leaching common mangoes, impenetrable hau thickets, monster monkeypods, and scattered homeless camps.

Today, the ‘āina unfolds from heiau to marsh in a corridor of well-tended lawns and ‘auwai (water courses), shaded kukui and pandanus groves, neatly planted mounds of almost 20 varieties of native ‘uala (sweet potato), stands of native sugar cane, banana, and wauke (paper mulberry), newly constructed dry-stack rock walls that define pathways and planting areas, thriving native lei plants (‘ilima, ti, ‘ōhi‘a lehua, and ‘a‘ali‘i), and – above all – our spring-fed taro fields. By our most recent count, the two functioning lo‘i of 2015 have now become 40; more than 30 are in various stages of cultivation (some in their third and fourth generation of harvest) and the remainder in a soon-to-be-implemented soil remediation project. As we and our partners, currently under the leadership of Kauluakalana, have expanded this kīpuka (oasis; a safe, healthy, regenerative space) of thriving, ancestral land, we have also begun to offer ‘āina- and culture-based learning experiences to the community through the hosting of school field trips, monthly community work days, service learning projects for groups and individuals, etc.

Among the most significant these efforts has been Pili Mai, a program – now in its fourth iteration – that allows us to have a deep, ongoing impact on our home community by engaging a cohort of Kailua families in a year-long commitment to family-centered taro instruction. Families make (and name) their poi pounding stones and boards, and learn how to plant, tend, harvest, clean, cook, and pound the taro of Ulupō. They are introduced to stories of Kailua’s abundant past and are asked to reflect on the significance of taro to our people. They are taught by some of the most knowledgeable taro practitioners of our time, and they celebrate their entire journey at Kū‘oko‘a Kūkanono, a day of sharing at Ulupō whose focus is on teaching extended family members the process that will help put Ulupō poi back on their tables on a regular basis.

The summary of accomplishments and activities provided above barely touches on the transformation of land and people at Ulupō, particularly in the last five years. **Little of it would have happened without the support of HTA.** Since 2016, HTA has consistently funded our stewardship and educational efforts here: from new trash cans and benches at the park entrance, to invasive tree removal, to dry-stack wall building, to native-bird habitat restoration, to Pili Mai, to Kū‘oko‘a Kūkanono, to the transcription and publication of “Makalei ka Laau Pii Ona a ka I‘a” (a Hawaiian language mo‘olelo of seminal importance to Kailua’s identity) – to the upcoming May Day 2021 Maka‘ika‘i, a virtual celebration of three storied places on O‘ahu (Ulupō,

Lanikūhonua, and Helumoa) and their potential for establishing a healthy dynamic of kama‘āina-malihini relationships.

We view the sections of HB 862, HD2, SD1, and PROPOSED SD2 that affect the mission, work, and future of HTA as an attempt to gut the agency of all that makes it valuable to us, our allies, community, and lāhui.

- HB 862, HD2, SD1, and PROPOSED SD2 would gut the HTA of its ability to support Hawaiian culture, natural resources, and community programs.
- HB 862, HD2, SD1, and PROPOSED SD2 would gut the HTA of its ability to support projects and programs that work to manage, improve, and protect of Hawaii's natural environment and other areas frequented by visitors.
- HB 862, HD2, SD1, and PROPOSED SD2 would gut the HTA of its ability to support the perpetuation of Hawaiian culture and community including the work it has done to ensure that the Hawaiian culture is accurately portrayed by the visitor industry, that Hawaiian language is supported and normalized as our official language of the State, that Hawaiian cultural practitioners and cultural sites are supported and nurtured, and that a native Hawaiian cultural education and training program exists for the visitor industry workforce.

We view these sections as an insidious effort to return to the “good old days” of a tourism industry intent on raking in money at all costs, one with little regard for the health of our lands, people and culture. In recent years, HTA has been the gate keeper and conscience of the industry. It has operated on the enlightened belief that a thriving lāhui must come first and always take precedence. There is no way that we can support legislation that would put an end to HTA’s brave attempt at serving something other than short-sighted greed.

‘O au nō me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Kīhei de Silva  
Director, KHCC