

RES26-201

Testimony

MISC. COMM. 398

*INTERNATIONAL & LEGAL AFFAIRS (ILA)

***INTERNATIONAL & LEGAL AFFAIRS (ILA) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Sep 24, 2026 @ 02:30 PM

Support: 7

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 1

Name: Josh Tengan	Email: josh@puuhonua-society.org	Zip: 96813
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 22, 2026 @ 01:53 PM

Testimony:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Josh Tengan, and I have worked in the arts and culture sector in Honolulu for over a decade. I currently serve as Director of Curatorial Initiatives at Pu'uhonua Society (2026-present), and I am also a commissioner on the Commission on Culture and the Arts (2024-present. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of RES26-201, which would formally establish the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts within the City Charter.

I have seen firsthand the value MOCA brings to Honolulu through both my work on the commission and through direct partnership. At Pu'uhonua Society, we worked closely with MOCA on the exhibition and programming for I OLA KANALOA: 50 years of Aloha 'Āina (2026) at Honolulu Hale. In my previous role as Associate Director of Hawai'i Contemporary (2022-2025), we also partnered with MOCA on 'Umeke Lā'au (2025) by Meleanna Meyer and its related programming part of the Hawai'i Triennial 2025: ALOHA NŌ. Both collaborations showed me how much MOCA's staff, relationships, and institutional knowledge matter to the success of arts programming across O'ahu, connecting artists, organizations, and City resources in ways that wouldn't happen otherwise.

Right now, MOCA exists only as a program administratively attached to the Mayor's Office, without a permanent foundation in the City Charter. This resolution would change that by adding MOCA to the Charter, placed within the Managing Director's Office and led by an executive for culture and arts appointed by the Mayor. In practical terms, this means MOCA's core work — honoring Native Hawaiian traditions, supporting local artists, coordinating the Art in City Buildings Program and the care of the City's public art collection, and managing the Sister City Program — would no longer depend on the priorities of any single administration. It would have a lasting place in how the City is organized, protecting it from being scaled back or eliminated as leadership changes over time.

As someone who has partnered with MOCA from both a community-organization role and now as a commissioner, I can attest that this stability matters. Arts and culture programming works best when it can build relationships over years, not just election cycles. Giving MOCA a permanent place in the Charter affirms that the City sees culture and the arts as a lasting civic responsibility, not a discretionary program.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support RES26-201.

Mahalo nui,

Josh Tengan

Director of Curatorial Initiatives, Pu'uhonua Society
Commissioner, Commission on Culture and the Arts

Name: Kaua Neumann	Email: sneumann@hawaii.edu	Zip: 96789
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 22, 2026 @ 09:14 PM

Testimony:

I strongly support this important initiative for the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA). MOCA has been instrumental in their leadership and organization of many cultural significant events throughout its time. I have worked with MOCA with a few culturally powerful and important events myself: 2022 Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders PICL at Mānoa; FESPAC Festival of the Pacific; Solomon Enos 'Ewa Mahikō Mural; Lester McCoy Pavilion mural restoration, along with several community events at Kapolei Hale involving story and cultural sharing. All of these events centered and uplifted Hawaiian culture and language not only for Hawaiians but for the many diverse communities of O'ahu as a whole. MOCA has shown to uplift, raise awareness, revitalize, educate, and connect artist, the diverse communities, and Hawaiians and has brought a unique and Hawaiian era to the community which in turn positively affect the beauty of O'ahu and its artistic and economic vitality.

Name: Hinaleimoana Wong	Email: taahine.hina@gmail.com	Zip: 96817
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 23, 2026 @ 11:36 AM

Testimony:

Sept. 23, 2026

Honolulu City Council
Committee on International and Legal Affairs
City and County of Honolulu

RE: SUPPORT FOR CHARTER AMENDMENT FORMALLY ESTABLISHING THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hialeimoana Wong, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of the proposed charter amendment formally establishing the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA) within the Charter of the City and County of Honolulu.

Although much of my advocacy these days comes from my position as Cultural Ambassador for Hawaiian Council, today I

submit my testimony not just as a private citizen, but also as a Native Hawaiian educator, cultural practitioner, and advocate, and community leader.

I understand firsthand the importance of ensuring that culture is not treated as an afterthought but rather recognized as an essential component of our community's well-being, identity, and future. The preservation and perpetuation of our cultural heritage require meaningful institutional support and long-term commitment.

The work of MOCA is especially important because it creates opportunities for Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and artists to share, preserve, and perpetuate 'ike Hawai'i through hula, 'ōlelo Hawai'i, traditional navigation and wayfinding, fiber arts, storytelling, music, and other cultural practices that connect us to our ancestors and strengthen our communities. These traditions are not simply artistic expressions; they are living repositories of knowledge, history, and values that continue to shape Hawai'i today.

Formal recognition of MOCA within the City Charter will provide organizational stability, continuity, and visibility across future administrations. It will affirm the City's commitment to supporting Native Hawaiian culture, local artists, and the many community partners who work tirelessly to preserve and celebrate the cultural heritage of our islands.

By establishing MOCA as a permanent office within City government, Honolulu sends a clear message that arts, culture, and the stewardship of our shared heritage are fundamental public responsibilities worthy of ongoing support and investment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee and the Honolulu City Council to approve this charter amendment.

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

Respectfully,

Kumu Hinaleimoana Wong

Name: Christopher Yim	Email: baba_yim@anuenue.org	Zip: 96816
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 23, 2026 @ 12:19 PM
Name: Brandy McDougall	Email: brandynm@hawaii.edu	Zip: 96816
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 23, 2026 @ 01:36 PM

Testimony:

Aloha mai,

My name is Brandy Nālani McDougall and I am a mother, teacher, and artist/writer living in Mānoa in the City and County of Honolulu. I write this testimony to offer my full and enthusiastic support for Resolution 26-201, the initiative to provide greater visibility, organizational stability, and continuity for the Mayor's Office on Culture and the Arts across future administrations. It is my understanding that this initiative would also affirm the City's commitment to arts, culture, and the many community partnerships that help enrich the lives of O'ahu residents.

As a poet, cultural practitioner, teacher, mother, and the creator behind the Wahi Pana poetry installation at Lē'ahi (Diamond Head), I am deeply invested in the long-term structural health of our city's ongoing creative infrastructure. Formalizing the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA) within the Revised City Charter is an integral step toward ensuring that Honolulu's support for the arts and the education the arts provide remain protected, permanently visible, and structurally stable across future administrations. I can attest personally that MOCA's support has been completely transformative for my poetry, its development, and its public visibility. But more importantly, it has been transformative for the ongoing cultural fabric of Lē'ahi itself. Lē'ahi is a beloved, iconic place on O'ahu, yet the stories overwhelmingly told about it are surface-level—framing it purely as a postcard touristic icon or an exclusive neighborhood where very wealthy people live. These superficial stories persist at the devastating absence of the true, deep mo'olelo of Lē'ahi. Through MOCA's backing via the Wahi Pana Public Arts project, my installation across 3 parks around Lē'ahi has been able to reclaim and highlight the deep foundational roots shaped by Kānaka 'Ōiwi, its history as a place of royalist resistance where Hawaiians actively fought to reinstate Queen Lili'uokalani following the overthrow, and its subsequent transformation under the United States, where military batteries and heavy weapon installations were built directly into the volcanic crest.

I am not alone in this work. In fact, the Wahi Pana project brought many artists together to do similar work around O'ahu, of finding and sharing invisibilized stories that should be known and taught and discussed within our communities. That we use art as a medium adds to the ways that our communities can learn and discuss the issues raised by these histories and stories openly and take the time to think about them as they encounter them is a special experience that people living on O'ahu get to have because of this project and other MOCA-supported art and artists. Without a dedicated, structurally protected agency like MOCA, these vital public counter-narratives lose their institutional anchor.

I urge the committee to pass this measure for several essential reasons. First, the initiative will secure the continuity for critical public art programs. Amending the charter pursuant to the Mayor's executive reorganization authority moves MOCA beyond temporary administrative trends. It establishes a permanent safeguard for groundbreaking, multi-media public art like the Wahi Pana: Storied Places initiative, ensuring that our city continues to honor indigenous knowledge and complex community histories.

Second, it elevates the living cultural infrastructure of our island, and by extension, Hawai'i. As outlined in RES26-201,

codifying MOCA ensures the City's movable and permanent art collections—and the local practicing creators who build them—remain a civic priority with the Council's backing. It guarantees that upcoming generations of Native Hawaiian and other local Hawai'i-based storytellers and artists will always have an official, charter-protected advocate in city government.

Third, it fosters inclusive civic education through the arts. By embedding art and poetry directly into public spaces like parks, beaches, and city transit, MOCA transforms our everyday island environment into an accessible classroom. Charter protection solidifies these frameworks, ensuring that creative education and cultural equity are permanently recognized as essential public services. RES26-201 provides the necessary institutional stability to protect Honolulu's creative economy, empower Hawaiian and other local voices to create their own art to represent their communities, and honor the true and complicated history of these islands for generations to come. For these reasons and more, I strongly urge the Committee on International & Legal Affairs to approve this resolution.

Mahalo for your time, leadership, and continued commitment to the arts, culture, and histories of our communities.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

Brandy Nālani McDougall

Name: Emma Broderick	Email: emma@puuhonua-society.org	Zip: 96819
Representing: Young of Heart Workshop dba Pu'uhonua Society	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 23, 2026 @ 04:39 PM

Name: Brandon Makaawaawa	Email: brandon@nohgov.com	Zip: 96795
Representing: Nation of Hawai'i	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 23, 2026 @ 09:41 PM

Testimony:
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF FORMALLY ESTABLISHING THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS IN THE CITY CHARTER

September 24, 2026

To: Honolulu City Council
Committee on International and Legal Affairs

From: Brandon Maka'awa'awa

Vice President, Nation of Hawai'i

Re: Support for the Proposed Charter Amendment Establishing the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA)

Aloha e Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brandon Maka'awa'awa, and I serve as Vice President of the Nation of Hawai'i. I submit this testimony in strong support of the proposed charter amendment to formally establish the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA) within the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu.

As an advocate for the inherent rights of the Hawaiian people to self-determination and the protection of our ancestral lands, waters, and cultural practices, I recognize the importance of ensuring that Hawaiian culture has a permanent and meaningful place within the institutions that serve our communities.

For the Hawaiian people, culture is not simply art, music, or performance. It is our identity, our language, our history, our relationship with 'āina and kai, and the knowledge and responsibilities passed down from our kūpuna. It is how we understand who we are, where we come from, and our kuleana to the generations yet to come.

Our culture cannot be separated from our land, our waters, or our right to determine our own future.

The preservation of Hawaiian culture requires more than recognition during special events or celebrations. It requires a lasting commitment to the people and communities who continue to practice, protect, and perpetuate it.

MOCA plays an important role in this work by honoring Native Hawaiian traditions, supporting local artists and cultural practitioners, and creating opportunities for our communities to share their stories and knowledge.

Through public art, cultural programming, community partnerships, and international cultural exchange, MOCA helps ensure that the history and identity of O'ahu are reflected in the places where our people live, gather, and connect.

These efforts are especially meaningful when they uplift the voices of Native Hawaiians and recognize that our traditions are not relics of the past, but living practices that continue to shape our communities today.

The proposed charter amendment would provide MOCA with greater organizational stability and continuity across future administrations. This is important because the protection and perpetuation of culture cannot depend solely on the priorities of any one mayor or administration.

Our cultural responsibilities extend beyond election cycles. They are intergenerational.

Formal recognition in the City Charter would help establish a lasting institutional foundation for MOCA to continue building relationships with cultural practitioners, artists, community organizations, and the people of O’ahu.

I also believe that MOCA’s work must continue to recognize the unique relationship between the Hawaiian people and our ancestral homeland. Cultural preservation must include meaningful engagement with Native Hawaiian communities, respect for traditional knowledge, and recognition of the importance of protecting the places from which our culture originates.

As Hawaiians, we understand that our relationship with ‘āina is one of reciprocity. We have a responsibility to care for the land and waters that sustain us, just as they have sustained our ancestors for generations.

When we protect our culture, we must also protect the places, resources, and relationships that allow that culture to thrive.

The formal establishment of MOCA is an opportunity to strengthen the City’s long-term commitment to these responsibilities while ensuring that arts and culture remain accessible to all communities across O’ahu.

On behalf of the Nation of Hawai’i, I respectfully urge the Committee to support the proposed charter amendment and advance the formal establishment of the Mayor’s Office of Culture and the Arts within the City Charter.

May this commitment serve not only to preserve our cultural heritage, but also to empower the next generation of Hawaiian artists, cultural practitioners, and community leaders to carry our traditions forward.

Our culture is our identity. Our ‘āina is our foundation. And our responsibility is to ensure that both endure for generations to come.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your consideration.

Aloha,

Brandon Maka’awa’awa
Vice President
Nation of Hawai’i

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Keola Naka’ahiki Rapozo	fadsstudy@gmail.com	96814
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	I wish to comment	Sep 23, 2026 @ 10:22 PM

Testimony-Support RES26-201

Aloha kākou,

My name is Christopher Babā Yim and I am the Po'okumu (Principal) of Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'O Ānuenue, Hawaiian Immersion K-12 DOE school located in Pālolo Valley.

I am submitting testimony in support of the amendment that would formally establish MOCA as an office under the Office of the Mayor, administratively managed through the Managing Director's Office within the City Charter. I believe that this amendment would provide greater visibility, organizational stability, and continuity for MOCA across future administrations. It would also affirm the City's commitment to arts, culture, and the many community partnerships that help enrich the lives of O'ahu residents.

As a community partner of MOCA, they have sponsored and supported activities with our students and for our community that:

- Honor Native Hawaiian traditions, supporting local artists, and uplifting diverse communities.
- Develop inclusive programs, community partnerships, and accessible public engagement.
- Coordinate and provide liaison between the Commission on Culture and the Arts and various City agencies, departments, and offices related to the Art in City Buildings Program, including the inspection, inventory, and maintenance of the City's public art collection.
- Manage the Sister Cities Program to facilitate cultural exchange and enhance international relationships.

Please consider the amendment as it is important to support MOCA in continuing it's work for our communities.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

C. Babā Yim

Po'okumu

Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'O Ānuenue



September 23, 2026

To: Honolulu City Council, International and Legal Affairs Committee

RE: Testimony in Support of Charter Recognition for the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

Pu'uhonua Society is pleased to offer our strong support for the proposed resolution formally establishing the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA) within the City and County of Honolulu.

For more than 50 years, Pu'uhonua Society has cultivated space(s) where Native Hawaiian and Hawai'i-based artists, cultural practitioners, and those rooted in the archipelago can continue creative practices for the collective transformation of Hawai'i. During that time, we have had the privilege of partnering with MOCA on initiatives that demonstrate the essential role arts and culture play in strengthening our communities and deepening our connection to place.

Most recently, Pu'uhonua Society has collaborated closely with MOCA through Wahi Pana (Storied Places), an ambitious island-wide initiative that brings together artists, cultural practitioners, historians, educators, community organizations, and City agencies to share the layered histories and cultural significance of O'ahu's most beloved places. Through public art installations, artist activations, docent-led tours, workshops, performances, and educational programming, Wahi Pana invites both residents and visitors to engage more thoughtfully with the stories, people, and places that shape Hawai'i's identity.

What has impressed us most is not simply the scale of the project, but MOCA's ability to bring diverse partners together around a shared purpose. The office has demonstrated a unique capacity to convene government agencies, cultural practitioners, artists, nonprofit organizations, educators, and community members in ways that build trust, foster collaboration, and ensure that public programs are grounded in meaningful community engagement.

Our partnership with MOCA began before Wahi Pana and continues beyond Wahi Pana. We are currently working together on *I Ola Kanaloa: 50 Years of Aloha 'Āina*, a current exhibition honoring the legacy and ongoing work of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. Through public programs and events taking place at Honolulu Hale alongside several other venues, MOCA continues to create opportunities for residents and visitors alike to engage with the stories, histories, and cultural values that define our islands. These collaborations exemplify how arts and culture can serve as a bridge between communities, generations, and institutions.



Importantly, MOCA's work extends far beyond event production or public art administration. The office serves as a steward of cultural relationships and public trust. It creates space for 'ike Hawai'i, supports local artists and cultural practitioners, fosters civic engagement, and ensures that Honolulu's public spaces reflect the histories and values of the communities they serve.

The proposed resolution would provide the organizational stability and continuity necessary for this work to thrive across future administrations. Arts and culture are not temporary initiatives; they are essential components of a healthy, vibrant, and connected city and 'āina. Formal recognition within the City Charter affirms the importance of preserving and advancing this work for generations to come.

We respectfully invite the City's International and Legal Affairs Committee to support this amendment and ensure that MOCA has a permanent and visible place within City government.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mau ke aloha no Hawai'i, With undying love for this place that we call home,

Emma Broderick

Emma Broderick
Executive Director
Pu'uhonua Society



September 23, 2026

Chair and Members
International and Legal Affairs Committee
Honolulu City Council

Re: Testimony in Support of RES26-201 — Charter Amendment Establishing the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA)

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Keola Naka'ahiki Rapozo, Creative Director of F.A.D.S., a design consultancy based in Hawai'i working at the intersection of Hawaiian cultural practice and contemporary brand identity. I write in strong support of RES26-201, which would formally establish the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts (MOCA) as an office under the City Charter.

F.A.D.S. is currently under contract on a City of Honolulu public art restoration project, work that moves through review with the Department of Design and Construction, the Commission on Culture and the Arts, and MOCA. That experience has shown me firsthand MOCA's role stewarding the Art in City Buildings Program and coordinating between city agencies and the artists and cultural practitioners doing the work on the ground.

Formalizing MOCA in the Charter would give it the organizational stability and continuity that a program surviving purely at the discretion of successive administrations cannot guarantee. Projects like ours run for years and depend on consistent institutional partners; MOCA's current status as an administrative program, rather than a chartered office, puts that continuity at risk in ways that don't serve the artists, cultural practitioners, and communities the office exists to support. I am convinced that depriving the arts of robust support would undermine our community's quality of life and diminish vital opportunities to shape our shared identity.

I urge the Committee to pass RES26-201 and give MOCA the permanent, chartered place in city government its work has already earned.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Keola Naka'ahiki Rapozo
Creative Director, F.A.D.S.
ola@fittedhawaii.com