



SACRED LIGHT 'OHANA

March 12, 2026

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued service to our communities. I respectfully submit testimony in **strong support of SB2578 SD1**.

My name is La'akea Ching. I am a Hawai'i-based creative producer, filmmaker, and the Founder and Executive Director of Sacred Light 'Ohana, an organization dedicated to building global pathways for Hawai'i's creative community through workforce development, education, and culturally grounded creative programming. Our work helps local creatives access global-level opportunities while remaining rooted at home and grounded in their identity.

Through my work in film production and documentary storytelling across Hawai'i and international markets, I have seen what separates states and regions that successfully build film industries from those that remain dependent on outside decisions. Most recently, our team worked on *In Whose Name*, which was ranked among the top 10 films of 2025 by the Los Angeles Times. The difference is almost always structural: dedicated governance, coordinated incentive administration, and sustained investment in workforce and infrastructure. Hawai'i has the locations, the talent, and the cultural richness that productions seek. What has been missing is the centralized, empowered institutional structure to fully activate those assets.

SB2578 SD1 addresses this directly. Establishing a dedicated Hawai'i Film Commission within DBEDT creates the infrastructure needed to administer incentives, manage studio facilities, coordinate statewide permitting, and drive workforce development in a coordinated and accountable way. The bill's explicit inclusion of Indigenous and cultural storytelling expertise on the Commission is particularly meaningful. Ensuring that a seat at the table is reserved for those perspectives means that as the industry grows, it grows in a direction that reflects Hawai'i's identity, not just its scenery.

Much of Sacred Light 'Ohana's work is focused on exactly what this Commission is designed to support: creating structured pathways for local creatives to enter the industry, building connections between emerging talent and professional opportunities, and ensuring that the next generation of Hawai'i storytellers does not have to leave home to find a career. A Commission with the authority and resources to coordinate workforce development statewide would meaningfully expand what organizations like ours can accomplish in our communities.

Mahalo again for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important measure. As this Commission is established, I would encourage the Legislature to ensure that the separation of film and creative industries funding continues to support the full breadth of Hawai'i's creative economy, so that infrastructure gains in film translate to rising capacity across all sectors rather than a reallocation away from them. With that in mind, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB2578 SD1.

With appreciation,

La'akea Ching

Founder & Executive Director