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TESTIMONY FOR NATIVE HAWAIIAN RECONCILIATION HEARINGS  
KAUANOE KAMANĀ

‘Auhea ‘oukou e nā luna aupuni pekelala i holo loa mai i Hawai‘i nei e ho‘olohe i ko mākou mana‘o, Aloha.

Members of the United States Departments of Justice and Interior who have come to Hawai‘i to conduct discussions on the reconciliation process for Native Hawaiian health and education, housing, culture and economic development, and land and natural resources, I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony before you. I am Kauanoe Kamanā, of the Kamanā and Ka‘ai families of Moloka‘i, Honolulu and Kohala, but have lived in Hilo the past twenty years. I am the mother of a son 18 and a daughter 16, the president of the statewide Pūnana Leo Hawaiian language preschool and model Hawaiian language school site program, and an associate professor of Hawaiian at Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I serve as director of the Hawaiian language laboratory school program of the College based at Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u School which you visited on your trip to the Island of Hawai‘i.

The issues and needs of our people are diverse and complex. I wish to concentrate on one of these, but one which is easily defined and rather clear in terms of the parameters of action needed to be taken. That issue is Hawaiian language education and the financial and legal support for every Native Hawaiian who so desires to use or relearn the language within the educational system and the provision of services through Hawaiian in the full range of programs made available through English.

As you may have heard, the introduction of the written form of our language during the Hawaiian Monarchy was greatly embraced by our people and much of our traditional knowledge and history was written in our own language by our own people. The Monarchy established a public education system through our own language that produced one of the highest rates of literacy in the world at the time. Our Hawaiian medium public school system was much advanced over the school systems in most of the United States at the time and Ke Kulanui ‘O Lahainaluna, which served as a teacher training center for the Monarchy, was the first educational institution above the elementary grades west of the Mississippi.

With the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy the use of the Hawaiian language in either public or private education was banned. This policy was also included in