

EDB Committee

From: Kauwila Hanchett <kauwila3@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 15, 2019 9:46 AM
To: EDB Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of EDB-175
Attachments: EDB-175 Support Testimony Kauwila Hanchett.pdf

TO: Economic Development and Budget Committee

Chairwoman Keani Rawlins-Fernandez
Vice Chair Kelly King
Council Member Riki Hokoma
Council Member Tasha Kama
Council Member Alice Lee
Council Member Michael Molina
Council Member Tamara Paltin
Council Member Shane Sinenci
Council Member Yuki Lei Sugimura

Date: May 15, 2019

From: Kauwila Hanchett
HC01 Box 250
Hāna, HI 96713

SUBJECT: Please approve EDB – 175 to fund critical infrastructure for the Kaupō School Restoration Project.

Welina me ke Aloha,

More than twenty years ago my mom asked me to do a welcome chant for the Maui county council members who were visiting the old Kaupō School property upon the invitation of the newly-formed Kaupō Community Association. As an impressionable high school student, I remember listening to my mākuā and kūpuna share their vision for restoring the school building with the council. For an instant I could see the picture so clearly in my mind, the building restored, families gathering, kūpuna telling stories, musicians jamming, children playing in the wide-open yard, ono food being shared, laughter, joy, and the underlying warmth of shared understanding and connection, of community. Although I wasn't aware of it at the time, that day a seed was planted in my heart.

Perhaps the vision I saw was so clear because I had grown up listening to stories about parties at the old Kaupō School—the most notable of these in my mind being my younger brother's one year old baby lu'au in the early 1980s. Old photos show the school building beautifully bedecked with rich green foliage and beautiful flower arrangements; guests dressed in their best mu'u, or outfits of the vibrant prints and colors of that era; several musicians playing Hawaiian music accompanied by impromptu hula dancers; old timers laughing. The photos and the stories tell of a close-knit community that loved and cared for one another. During the party it rained and rained, the rivers flash flooded and guests were trapped in Kaupō for two weeks before roads reopened.

I was busy with hālau and school in Hāna during the early years when KCA formed and had very little involvement with their efforts. I graduated and went off to college on O'ahu and at the same time my family moved to Molokai so holidays, summer, and school breaks were spent on Molokai.

It was several years before I returned home to Kaupō to share this special place with Kahualaulani, the man I knew would someday be my husband. Fortunately for me, he fell in love with Kaupō, with our 'āina and home here, with this way of life. We were both busy working full-time and so we came to Kaupō for a week that first time, the next year it was two weeks, the next year three weeks, then a month, then two months, then three months, no matter how long we stayed we were never ready to leave. No matter where we went, or what other endeavors we were involved with, the land kept calling us back.

On October 14, 2006, we chanted our vows to one another in a simple Hawaiian wedding ceremony in the presence of family and friends at Mokulau Point. Our pa'ina was held on the Kaupō School grounds, and in the weeks leading up to that day we visited the school many times to clean, plan, prepare. Entering the school grounds for that first time after so many years felt like coming home. The gentle breeze in the ironwood trees whispered welcome as the presence of kūpuna wrapped around me like a warm embrace. Once again families gathered, children played, musicians sang *nahenahe* songs accompanied by hula dancers, ono food was shared, people enjoyed just being together. The next morning a large earthquake had us hurrying up to the school to check on the many family members and guests camping there. The single lane road on both sides of Kaupō was closed by rock and landslides, the integrity of bridges and cliffs were compromised. Miraculously there was a brief window where the road to town was open and most of our guests were able to get out of Kaupō and return home safely. Just in time as later that morning it rained and rained causing rivers to flash flood as we were once again cut off from the outside world. Remembering the events following my brother's lu'au, Uncle Chunga, one of Kaupō's most beloved old timers, drove into the school yard that day in the pouring rain and told my dad "No moa Hanchett parties Kaupō!"

In 2014 when the KCA reorganized under new leadership we were living in Kaupō part-time with our 5-year old daughter and became members. I was excited that the old dream to restore the school had not died and that there was a core group of dedicated residents that were working so diligently to bring this vision to fruition. When I was asked to fill a vacancy on the board in 2016 I took some time to pule and consider this commitment.

During this time of pule I remembered the kūpuna of my childhood, the aunties and uncles that cared for us, scolded us, fed us, took us into their homes, helped to raise us. So many of these kūpuna have since passed—they were the cornerstones of our Kaupō community and their absence is keenly felt. These kūpuna had close ties to the Kaupō School as they either attended school there, enjoyed community gatherings through the years, and/or were a part of KCA's early years and efforts. They helped to inspire and forge a vision they would not see bear fruit in their lifetimes. In my mind the fate of the school property and the legacy of our kūpuna are inextricably tied. Will we remember and honor the old ways? Will our community remain rooted in the values that have defined our way of life for generations?

I also reflected on how being raised in tight-knit, rural Hawaiian communities like Hāna, Kaupō, and Molokai shaped my life in such beautiful and meaningful ways. I saw how the KCA meetings were beginning to recapture that loving, 'ohana-style, nurturing sense of place and community that I hoped my child, and all of Kaupō's children, could grow up with. I knew that Kaupō's past held the keys to Kaupō's future, and that the next generation had much to learn from the generations that had gone before leading the way. How then do we ensure our keiki learn of the life-sustaining ways of their ancestors?

I thought of Kaupō's wild and untamed landscape dominated by the sweeping slopes of Haleakalā; its dark starry sky unmarred by electric lights; its peaceful quiet accompanied only by the symphony of wind,

rain, river, wave; its ancient sites that bear evidence of a long and rich cultural history; its strong and driving elements, *ka ua Pe'epāpōhaku* and *ka Moa'ekū*; its life giving waters—the *wai* of our rivers and the *kai* of our ocean. For countless generations this landscaped has shaped our kūpuna, our language and cultural practices, our daily life and our very way of life. This land has fed, nourished, and taught us, generation upon generation, and our identity and well-being remain tied to this place still. The health of the land is reflected in the health of the people, in like manner, the health of a community is reflected in the abundance of the land, they are but mirrors of one another.

I emerged from this period of pule and reflection with a clear and resonant “yes!” I embraced the kuleana, not just to serve on the board, but the greater kuleana to carry on the legacy of my kūpuna, to bring to fruition the vision that they had forged and cherished, to nurture the seed that was planted within my heart more than two decades ago until it bears fruit, and to reclaim the ancestral abundance inherent with this *'āina aloha o Kaupō*. Thus honoring generations past, bringing together generations present, and ensuring an abundant and joyful future for generations to come

Thank you for allowing me to share in this unique way how intimately interwoven are the histories, stories, hopes, and dreams of Kaupō's people with the project to restore the Kaupō School. I share my own story only because it is the one I know best but there are so many other stories you will never hear, except perhaps those that need no words and can be felt within the heart.

Past, present, and future converge in this endeavor that holds the collective aspirations of so many generations of Kaupō's people. The heart of this project is about so much more than restoring buildings and creating infrastructure. This is about holding on to a way of life that is quickly vanishing from Hawai'i, and indeed from our Planet, with the understanding that this way holds keys that will in time unlock answers for our future. This is about remembering our kinship with 'āina and our rootedness to place, honoring our kūpuna, and building a hopeful future for our children and those yet unborn. This is about protecting our remaining rural kīpuka, not just for those who live there, but for all of Hawai'i's residents and visitors—knowing that these places hold the very soul of old Hawai'i.

The support from EDB – 175 is critical to our community's ability to bring this endeavor to fruition. It has been a long journey that has brought us to the very cusp of realizing our kūpuna's and community's long-cherished dream. We understand that our restoration project will bring to an end a decades-long vision, yet it is truly just a beginning. Like the building of a *wa'a kaulua*, the facilities and place is but a vessel that makes the voyage possible. How we bring together our community to forge a new vision that will mobilize and empower Kaupō's people to protect and care for this special place in perpetuity remains our ultimate undertaking.

Mahalo,
Kauwila Hanchett
Lineal Descendent of Kānaka Maoli of Kaupō, Land Steward, Kaupō Resident

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