



## Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce

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October 21, 2020

Board of Trustees  
Office of Hawaiian Affairs  
560 North Nimitz Highway, Suite 200  
Honolulu, HI 96817

RE: Testimony Supporting Resolution Honoring the Contributions of Dr. Claire Hughes to the Native Hawaiian Community and the State of Hawai'i (Action Item BOT #20-09)

Aloha e Chairperson Machado a me Board of Trustees:

The Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce (NHCC), founded in 1974, is a 501(c)(6) organization whose mission is “*to mālama Native Hawaiians in business and commerce through leadership, relationships and connections to economic resources and opportunities.*” Dr. Claire Ku‘uleilani Hughes has been a long-time member of our Chamber (since 1991) and an active member of our Board of Directors for many years. To that end, we were pleased to learn of this item on the Board of Trustees’ Meeting agenda, and it is with great pleasure that we provide the following testimony in support of the Resolution Honoring the Contributions of Dr. Claire Hughes to the Native Hawaiian Community and the State of Hawai‘i (hereafter the “Resolution”).

In addition to her numerous contributions to NHCC over the years, Dr. Hughes oversees the Chamber’s scholarship program, which provides scholarship funds for Native Hawaiian students pursuing a degree in business. As a lifelong student (at the age of 63, she returned for her doctorate in public health) combined with her deep understanding of the power of education, this role has been a great fit for Dr. Hughes and under her leadership, the Scholarship Committee has provided the Chamber with an opportunity to touch the lives of countless students. In that regard, she has been a champion for and strong advocate of our scholarship program, including constantly looking for ways to expand and reach more students, with the knowledge that the need in our community for such assistance is great. In discharging her responsibilities as Chair of our scholarship committee, Dr. Hughes’ great respect for education and love of students has never been more apparent.

The tremendous impact Dr. Hughes has had on Native Hawaiian health is without question and her accolades in this regard have been outlined in detail in the subject Resolution. With respect

to the larger Native Hawaiian community, Dr. Hughes' contributions and accomplishments are significant and her steadfast commitment to the overall betterment of Native Hawaiians is truly inspirational. A few of Dr. Hughes' more recent notable awards and recognition include:

- In 2012, Dr. Hughes was a recipient of our Chamber's prestigious 'Ō'ō Award which honors outstanding Native Hawaiians who have made significant contributions toward advancement and increased vibrancy within the Hawaiian community.
- In 2015, Dr. Hughes was a recipient of the Annual Hawaiian Health Award presented at the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Native Hawaiian Convention.
- In 2015, Dr. Hughes was a recipient of the Kalani Ali'i Award sponsored by 'Aha Hīpu'u, which honors the achievements and contributions of our "priceless cultural treasurers."
- In 2017, Dr. Hughes received the Rotary Club of West Honolulu's David Malo Award, which cognizes a leader of Hawaiian ancestry who has made a difference in Hawaii; someone whose accomplishments have epitomized the idea of high achievement in such fields as art, music, dance, education, science, government, religion, business or sports.

On a more personal note, over the past few years, I have had the privilege of getting to know "Aunty Claire." She speaks often of her mother, Violet Hughes and the example the elder Hughes set and positive impact she had on Claire's own life. Aunty Violet grew up in a time when Hawaiian culture was not something to be celebrated, when speaking our own language was certainly frowned upon, if not prohibited and when our people were on the decline. Today, the picture for Native Hawaiians is very different and there is little doubt that Aunty Violet would be incredibly proud of the prominent role and contributions her Claire has had in effecting positive changes for Native Hawaiian health and the Hawaiian community as a whole.

I have witnessed the deep love Dr. Hughes has for her 'ohana and they for her – she speaks often and with pride about her children and mo'opuna. I have observed her generosity and genuine concern for those around her. On many occasions, I have turned to her for historical knowledge, cultural perspective and overall counsel. As the relatively young leader of an organization that has been in existence for decades, it is important to me that we continue to adapt and progress, while remaining grounded in where we came from and why we were formed – for this reason, Dr. Hughes has been and continues to be an important part of our organization. During this pandemic, it has been a pleasure to witness Dr. Hughes adapt to the "new normal" and race from one Zoom meeting to another – even virtually, she continues to lead by example.

In 2001, Dr. Hughes was described with an 'Ōlelo No'eau that, for those that know her, know that these words continue to apply to this day:

***Hānau 'ia ka pō Lā'au, lā'au na iwi, he koa.***

***Born was she on a Lā'au night for her bones are hard and she is fearless.***

The following quote taken directly from the Resolution provides an excellent summary of why this Resolution and recognition is so important.

*“Dr. Hughes is a lifelong, dedicated and tireless advocate, a beloved member of our community, who has been critical in advancing Native Hawaiian health care initiatives, impacting the lives and health of countless Native Hawaiians for decades.”*

For these reasons and more, the Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce proudly and strongly supports the Resolution Honoring the Contributions of Dr. Claire Hughes to the Native Hawaiian Community and the State of Hawai‘i. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon H. Edie". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Shannon H. Edie  
President  
Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce