

We foster awareness, appreciation, understanding and stewardship of Hawai'i's environment by educating children with an interactive and immersive approach.

June 1, 2022

Suzanne D. Case
Chairperson Board of Land and Natural Resources
Commission on Water Resource Management
P.O. Box 621 Honolulu
Hawai'i 96809

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Todd Cullison
Executive Director

Re: June 9, 2022, BLNR Agenda Item E-1: Hawaii Nature Center Renewed Lease

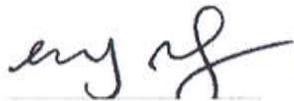
Dear Chairperson Case,

We submit this letter to express our support for the extended lease for Hawai'i Nature Center (HNC) at our current location on State Park's property in Makiki Valley, O'ahu. Since 1981, we have connected kids and adults to nature via School Programs, week long Nature Adventure Camps during school intersessions and weekend Community Programs. In this time, we have connected over 1-million keiki and adults to nature, covering topics such as forest ecology, wetland ecosystems, native flora and fauna, exploring topics in conservation and emerging lessons in sustainability. Each year we educate upwards of 17,000 students on O'ahu, with half of these students coming from underserved Title I schools.

Most recently during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, we experienced a 100% reduction in school programs, dropping from an average of 260 school visits per academic year to zero. However, because of our commitment to environmental education and conducting our programs outdoors, HNC was able to pivot, create new programs and meet customer needs in a safe and educational environment. The pandemic only emphasized the power of environmental education, benefits of being outdoors and using the natural world as our classroom. To this end, HNC has plans to develop more programs to increase the impact of our work, including more weekend offerings for our youngest keiki, opportunities to engage more adults and bolster our support for keiki in lower socio-economic situations.

For the past 41 years, Hawai'i Nature Center grown to become an important community asset that connects kids to nature and prepares them as future leaders and environmental stewards for the Hawaiian Islands and beyond. We appreciate the Board's support for this request to allow our impactful work to continue for generations to come. If you have any questions about our work, please do not hesitate to contact either of us as your schedule allows.

Mahalo,



Lacey Nakaguma
Board President
lnakaguma.gb@gmail.com



Todd Cullison
Executive Director
todd@hawaiinaturecenter.org
808-792-2607

April 10, 2022

Suzanne D. Case
Chairperson Board of Land and Natural Resources
Commission on Water Resource Management
P.O. Box 621 Honolulu
Hawai'i 96809

Re: April 22, 2022 BLNR Board Meeting Agenda Item E-1: Hawai'i Nature Center Lease

Dear Chairperson Case,

I am writing to express support for the Hawai'i Nature Center (HNC) and their request for an extension on their lease at their current location on State Park's property in Makiki Valley, O'ahu. Since 1981 HNC has connected kids and adults to nature with School Programs, week long Nature Adventure Camps during school intersessions and Weekend Programs.

I have been an elementary teacher for almost 30 years, and I've taught 2nd and 3rd graders for the last 20 years at Kapalama School and Mililani Uka Elementary. Each year I/we are excited to take our students on a Hawaii Nature Center Field Trip: Grade 2-Cycles in Nature which is hosted right at the Makiki Height's property and Grade 3-Discover the Wetlands. These programs are tied to state science standards. For example, Grade 3-Discover the Wetlands supports that: Plants and animals that are dispersed to Hawaii naturally are native. Some of these native species evolved to become unique and are endemic. Plants and animals in the wetland have undergone adaptations (physical and behavioral traits) that help them survive in their environment. Plant and animal species especially endemic ones are vulnerable to predation by introduced species, environmental changes, habitat loss. The interaction of the plants and animals of the wetland create a complex and interdependent food web. These field trips are the highlight of the school year!

Unfortunately, with the Pandemic negatively impacting our community and limiting contact, our students were not able to experience these rich hands on activities the last 2-3 years. But, I am pleased to say, 2 weeks ago, Our 3rd graders at Mililani Uka Elementary, were able to once again, participate in the 3rd grade wetland program. The students could not wait to be outdoors with their peers! They were led by Hawaii Nature Center Docents to explore the wetlands: Do a walkabout to find insects in a real wildlife refuge, muck in the mud to fish for native opae and oopu, and bird watch to see the endemic Alae Ula, Alae Keokeo, Koloa, and Aeo. The students learn that native wetland, marshes protect our community from tidal surges and storms, they naturally filter water, and are habitats for native species. Students see the need to conserve Hawai'i's natural resources and Kokua our Aina. They are inspired and empowered to do their part as educated citizens.

I appreciate the consideration for this request and view the Hawai'i Nature Center as an important entity to connect kids to nature, prepare them to be future leaders and environmental stewards. Our students rarely get to explore Hawai'i's native forests and wetlands. The general public would never be able to safely access some of these areas. It is only through the continued cooperation of the State Department of Land and Natural Resources and the Hawai'i Nature Center that we can continue to provide these invaluable experiences for our keiki.

Sincerely,
Rhonda Masuda
Grade 3 Teacher
Mililani Uka Elementary

April 19, 2022

Suzanne D. Case
Chairperson Board of Land and Natural Resources
Commission on Water Resource Management
P.O. Box 621 Honolulu
Hawai'i 96809

Re: April 22, 2022 BLNR Board Meeting Agenda Item E-1: Hawai'i Nature Center Lease

Dear Chairperson Case,

My husband, John McGuire, and I are writing to express our strong support for the Hawai'i Nature Center (HNC) and their request for an extended lease at their current location on State Park's property in Makiki Valley, O'ahu. Since 1981 HNC has connected kids and adults to nature with School Programs, week-long Nature Adventure Camps during school intersessions and Weekend Programs.

As with many Hawai'i families, in March of 2020, we were suddenly thrown into a very scary time full of abrupt changes and isolation. Our daughter, Stella, who was six years old at the time, was just about to finish up her first year as a Kindergartner at 'Iolani School. We are both full-time working professionals, and found ourselves unexpectedly serving a dual role as teacher with our daughter at home (and for those "real" teachers out there, we cannot express how much we truly appreciate all they do). Stella has always been fascinated with nature, often naming the birds that make their homes in the many birdhouses she has built and painted for them outside our house, 'rescuing' caterpillars from her milkweed plant outside, and watching them daily as they transform into beautiful butterflies (she names all of these butterflies too), and we have a rescue dog and a pair of rescue guinea pigs (all Stella's pets) at home.

Stella, as with the other children during the COVID shutdown, participated in remote learning with her school through Zoom. As wonderful as 'Iolani was in making this as smooth and engaging as possible, we started to see a sadness in our daughter that was not there before her world had changed. In fact, the only time we really saw that spark back in her eyes and spirit was when she was outside, gardening with us (our home garden really took off during the shutdown), planting seeds, pointing out new types of lizards and geckos, listening to different bird calls (and of course, naming the variety of birds she'd see).

It got us thinking about a place outdoors that had always made her happy before the pandemic. Those fun weekend family workshops like Happy Habitats, Art in Nature, and Something Fishy, that Hawai'i Nature Center offered for its members and to the public. Back then, it gave us an opportunity to spend time as a family together, to get away from the office, from school, and to engage in quality time outdoors, exploring the stream, going on a hike, listening for different bird calls.

All at a place that's magical in and of itself, HNC, with nurturing, engaging teachers and assistants, led by its Executive Director, Todd Cullison, who truly listens to all of the families and knows each student by name.

We reached out to Mr. Cullison as the shutdown continued, to see if HNC could also offer something similar to its weekend family workshops, during the week day, even if just for a few hours, to allow students like Stella who were doing remote learning with their school during the day, have a much-needed respite outdoors, away from screen time, and back where she is happy. Mr. Cullison promptly responded to our inquiry, and made us feel like our input was highly welcomed, and told us that there was a lot of interest he was hearing from other families in similar situations.

Once we were informed that HNC would be offering the opportunity for kids to 'drop in' for a few hours, we were ecstatic, but not more than Stella was. On the first day we picked her up from HNC after one of these sessions, we found her happily following a monarch butterfly (they have so many of these beautiful creatures flying around at any given time on campus), lost in this special world, with a huge smile on that face again. The next day, when we picked her up, she was chatting excitedly with her new friends at HNC, perched against a tree trunk which overlooks the stream, laughing about something they had built together using natural materials that day. She started being engaging again at home, laughing more, being the happy, carefree kid we knew from before, which we thought we had lost due to her being stuck in front of a screen all the time for school, and having this scary pandemic turn her world upside down.

Even as the pandemic restrictions have relaxed everywhere and children have returned to campus at their schools, including our daughter, she and her friends have continued to enjoy participating in the Nature Camps offered by HNC during school breaks. We are constantly astounded by all that Stella learns during these camps, and what she has to share with us when she comes home, tired and happy. She has continued to share her experiences at HNC with her classmates at 'Iolani and have encouraged them to join her with upcoming HNC camps.

We were loyal supporters of HNC before the pandemic hit in 2020, but are lifetime supporters of this magical place, after seeing how it pivoted to serve the needs of Hawaii's keiki and families during a scary time when we needed support the most, on all levels. So much of the unique services that HNC provides to the keiki stem from the special area that it sits upon in Makiki Valley. We have had our daughter's birthday party there, which included a fun hike for the families right in back of the pavilion, catching and releasing shrimp in the nearby stream, and catching crickets in the meadow area in front. No other organization can offer these types of memorable experiences, and it is so vital that HNC continues to operate from its current, unique location.

We cannot put a value on our daughter's well-being and happiness. We are not alone in being highly supportive of HNC, what it stands for, and the many ways it provides much-needed services and experiences for families in Hawai'i.

We appreciate your consideration of their request for an extended lease at their current unique location and our view of HNC as a vital place which inspires and connects kids like our daughter, Stella, to nature, and to prepare them to be future leaders and passionate environmental stewards.

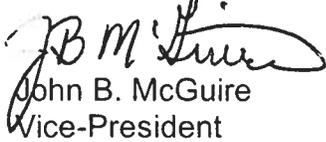
Mahalo,



Sofia Hirosane McGuire

Attorney

Devens, Nakano, Saito, Lee, Wong & Ching



John B. McGuire

Vice-President

Wasa Electrical Services, Inc.

April 11, 2022

Suzanne D. Case
Chairperson Board of Land and Natural Resources
Commission on Water Resource Management
P.O. Box 621 Honolulu
Hawai'i 96809

Re: April 22, 2022 BLNR Board Meeting Agenda Item E-1: Hawai'i Nature Center Lease

Dear Chairperson Case,

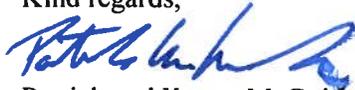
We are writing to express support for the Hawai'i Nature Center (HNC) and their request for an extended lease at their current location on State Park's property in Makiki Valley, O'ahu. Since 1981 HNC has connected kids and adults to nature with School Programs, week long Nature Adventure Camps during school intersessions and Weekend Programs.

In November 2020, Patrick accepted a position as an executive of Bank of Hawai'i and we moved our family to Honolulu, which coincided with the state's emergency response to the pandemic. In order to smooth the transition mid-school year, we decided to continue remote schooling with our home state's virtual school program for our daughters, Katie (9 years old) and Keira (5 years old). With most of the state in a closed or restrictive status, we had very little opportunity for the girls to acclimate to their new home. At the time, HNC had created a homeschooling program, which provided our girls twice a week the opportunity to immerse themselves in nature, learn about native plant and animal species and make lasting connections with friends. This was truly a pivotal educational and developmentally critical experience for our girls.

We enrolled the girls in the homeschooling program from February 2021 through May 2021, continued with the summer Nature Adventure Camp from May 2021 through July 2021, the afterschool program in the fall 2021 and finally, spring Nature Adventure Camp in March 2022. By taking advantage of the quality programming at HNC, our children now have specific knowledge of the incredible ecosystems and biodiversity of their new home. My oldest daughter can rattle off the Hawaiian names and behavioral facts of many of the bird and fish species we encounter on a daily basis. My youngest child recently told me how important it was to reduce garbage so that it does not go into landfills and harm the plants and animals that depend on a clean and healthy environment.

We are proud to support the consistent high level of programming offered to the community by HNC's Makiki Heights location. We feel that the programming not only continues the strong traditions of the past 50 years but is also a source of innovative educational programming that is both culturally and environmentally specific. Most importantly, we hope that the extended lease can allow the HNC staff to continue to be responsive and passionate about their purpose in the community. We appreciate the consideration of this request and view the Hawai'i Nature Center as an important entity to connect kids to nature, prepare them to be future leaders and environmental stewards.

Kind regards,



Patrick and Kyeng McGuirk
2314 Maile Way
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(917) 403-6803