Written Testimony for Public Comment on the Management of Mauna Kea and the Proposed TMT Project.

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To: bor@hawaii.edu  
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To: University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents

Subject: Written Testimony for Public Comment on the Management of Mauna Kea and the Proposed TMT Project.

Aloha to you, the members of the Board of Regents of this University. My name is No'eau Peralto, and I was born and raised here in Waï‘akea Uka, and my ‘ohana comes from Koholālele in Hāmākua on the slopes of our sacred mauna, Mauna a Waï‘kea. I am currently a second year PhD student in the Indigenous Politics Program at UH Mānoa, and I stand before you today as a Kanaka, a descendant of this ‘āina who loves it deeply, and a student at this University, to respectfully urge you to listen to the voices of our people and immediately halt all construction activities of the TMT project on the summit of Mauna Kea, and to stop all arrests of and other interferences with those who are standing now on Mauna Kea for the protection of our sacred mauna. The egregious actions, and inactions, of this University and your partners, the TMT Corporation, over the past few weeks, and over the past 55 years have brought us all to this point of contention, but that is not why I submit my testimony to you today. I stand here before you because I love our Mauna, and I stand with all our po‘e aloha ‘āina (people who love this land) who envision a future in which our Mauna is treated with the proper respect and reverence that it necessitates—a future in which all our sacred places are no longer subject to desecration and exploitation disguised as “progress” the “sacred pursuit of knowledge.”

As you may or may not already know, the summit region of Mauna Kea is located in the ahupua‘a of Ka‘ohe, in the district of Hāmākua. Mauna Kea, from its piko (peak) to its mole (taproot) embodies the hā-makua, the parent stalk of our nation, and it is ka-‘ōhe, the bamboo water container that nourishes our island. These place names carry with them the wisdom of generations of our ancestors from the past, and they guide us in our actions for the future. It is for this reason, and many others, that we hold this mountain sacred and will continue to stand for its proper care and protection for as long as we, Kānaka, as a people fiercely loyal to this land shall live. We as a people were born of this land long before this University was founded, and we will continue to thrive on this ‘āina long after the walls of this institution have fallen. Our call is one of aloha ‘āina, and it is an urgent call to align your actions with those who seek pono for this ‘āina so that your legacy may be one of benefit to Hawai‘i and its people, not one of degradation.

As you have committed this University to being a Hawaiian place of learning that “embraces its unique responsibilities to the indigenous people in Hawai‘i and to Hawai‘i’s indigenous language and culture,” I am just one of the many students, alums, and community members of this University who have and will continue to hold you accountable to these responsibilities. This University cannot continue to claim to be a “Hawaiian place of learning” as long as it continues to lead the desecration of one of our true Hawaiian places of learning, Mauna Kea, and as long as it continues to prevent our people from fulfilling our responsibilities to the ‘āina upon which this University sits and to the future generations of our nation who will pray to and stand with our Mauna, as we have for generations, as a divine
source of life and well-being.

Mahalo nui for this opportunity to voice my concerns and call to action. I urge you once again, along with the nearly 45,000 others from around Hawai‘i and the world who have signed a petition, to halt all construction activities of the TMT project on Mauna Kea, stop the arrests of our people standing now on Mauna Kea for its protection, and align your actions, as a purported “Hawaiian place of learning,” with those of us who seek pono for our Mauna and for all our ‘āina in Hawai‘i.

Me ke aloha ‘āina pa’a mau loa,

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