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Humbly submitted testimony by Kanoa Withington of Honoka’a, Hawaii on April 14 2015

I was born on Maunakea. I live and work on Maunakea. I eat, drink and love Maunakea. Growing up on Maunakea it was my dream to get an education that would allow me to one day work for a Maunakea observatory. At that time it meant I had to leave Hawaii and study on the mainland. I returned saddled with massive student loans and no way of repaying them with the meager job opportunities in the Waimea-Kohala area. I worked on a farm and went further into debt searching for an opportunity until I was finally offered a part-time temporary job as an assistant at the Canada-France-Hawaii-Telescope. Sixteen years later I am an engineering manager with a team of nine of the best software engineers on earth. Three of us grew up on Hawaii Island. We are involved in some of the most incredible world-changing research anyone could dream of and we are treated with respect by our international collaborators. It is literally a dream come true.

I am committed to making it easier for future generations of Hawaii students to find roles in Hawaiian astronomy. They should not have to do what I did to find good jobs that challenge them and make the best possible use of their skills. This process takes time but it is truly working and TMT’s commitments to Hawaii Island education and workforce development are transformational breakthroughs for people like me. Right now I am sure you are hearing a lot of testimony from people who don’t see any future in Hawaii for astronomy so I wanted to share my perspective: the future of astronomy on Maunakea means everything to people like me.

That being said I also believe that the Astronomy community and the UH system can do better at engaging the spiritual and cultural values of the people of Hawaii. Some of the protestors are calling the event an "awakening" and I propose that we join them and awaken too. We can have observatories on Maunakea and also have a vibrant culture, strong economy, and clean environment. That is a powerful future for Hawaii nei.

Mahalo for your consideration,

-Kanoa