

Public Testimony

By Jennifer Sabas, Inouye Family Spokesperson

BOR Meeting Oct. 17, 2013

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Board. My name is Jennifer Sabas and I represent the Daniel K. Inouye Institute, a fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation. I am joined today by Mrs. Irene Hirano Inouye and Ken Inouye. They submitted a letter of appreciation to the Board earlier in the week.

However, after much soul searching and thinking about the Senator's legacy to the people of Hawai'i and our nation, and about what he would have wanted, on behalf of the family, I reached out to the UH leadership to respectfully request that we slow the project down to allow for a longer period of time for the design process and to receive additional input and comment.

Not long after the Senator's passing, leaders at UH in good faith and with much emotion, put together this building project proposal. It was heartfelt and sincere. The \$25 million and 20,000 square foot requirements were an engineer's best estimate.

Questions were raised because the process was so fluid, and there were not ready answers, which in turn led to additional questions of transparency and accountability. This has begun to give rise to still another round of questions that are becoming rather hurtful and are questions the Senator would never have wanted or asked, and didn't ask for the many, many projects he delivered, whether at UH or throughout the State.

So with all of this, we need to pause, take a breath, and slow down the design process to allow for more input and thoughtful discussion, and with that, provide for a more accurate dollar figure and square footage requirements.

I also need to take responsibility for the "time sensitivity" request. We made the request because as we raise private funds nationally, it is very important to be able to demonstrate a significant commitment by the university and state. As you can imagine, it would be difficult to ask for large private gifts when the Senator's own state and alma mater have not yet made a substantial contribution to preserving his legacy and telling his story. So, while there is a risk involved in slowing down the effort, on balance, it is the right thing to do.

Later, on the agenda, a modification to the budget request will be submitted for your consideration. I hope you will approve it.

In closing, Irene, Kenny and I were on Molokai last evening for our final DKI legacy campaign gathering to thank our supporters for their years of aloha and kindness. It was a beautiful grassroots talk story time at the old Pau Hana Inn overlooking the ocean with Maui in the background. Dear friends took the mic to talk about how the Senator believed in them and never forgot their little island – topside and Kalaupapa. There were tears of both joy and sadness. It was one of the Senator’s favorite places. We returned home invigorated and hopeful.

That beautiful, heartfelt feeling needs to be infused into this project so that he would be pleased and proud of our efforts to honor his legacy and to carry forward lessons on leadership.

Thank you for your time.