

nakashima1-Lesley

From: ahmedinhawaii@aol.com
Sent: Sunday, February 08, 2009 12:56 PM
To: HEDtestimony
Subject: HB 222

Dear House Committee on Education,

Aloha!

My name is Saleem Ahmed. I was born in India, raised in Pakistan, and have been living in Hawaii for the last 35 years. My wife is from the Big Island. I am also the founder-President of two Hawaii-based non-profit organizations, the All Believers Network (Belnet , which brings together individuals on the basis of shared spiritual commonalities) and Association for Promoting South Asian Culture (Milun, which brings together South Asians on the basis of shared cultural heritage).

I support HB 222.

Asia has the largest populations of the world's Bahai's, Buddhists, Confucians, Daoists, Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Shintos, Sikhs, Sufis, and Zoroastrians, as well as of the world's indigenous religions. With our historic ties with countries of the Asia-Pacific region, Hawaii is the logical place to house an institution which does research and education on promoting inter-faith harmony. And with supportive organizations such as Belnet and Milun -- along with The Interfaith Alliance of Hawaii and The Open Table -- already well-established, such an institution will find ready support and aloha in its work; work which will go a long way to reinforce Hawaii as the World's Interfaith Harmony Capital.

In this regard, I should also mention -- and thank -- the Hawaii Legislature for passing SCR 5/ SD 1 in the last legislative session supporting the All Believers' Network's plan to organize an International Interfaith Conference in Hawaii in 2011. I am happy to inform you that our broad-based committee has already started its task of planning this exciting event. HB 222 will potentially put in place another organization as an active fellow-traveller on that journey.

I realize the current economic situation increases your dilemma in deciding which organizations to fund among competing requests. Keeping in mind our country's long-term goal of promoting peace and interfaith harmony, however, I hope you will look positively on HB 222.

Saleem Ahmed
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