



# BIG ISLAND SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNCIL

Inspiring Change, Reclaiming Lives

Inspiring individuals to reclaim and enrich their  
lives by utilizing innovative resources and  
harnessing the strengths within each person.

## Kea'au Administrative Office and Treatment Center

16-179 Melekahiwa Street  
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## Hilo Outpatient Treatment

297 Waiānue Avenue  
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December 3, 2025

To the Honorable Judges of the United States District Court for the District of  
Hawai'i:

Re: Support for Kamehameha Schools Admissions Policy and the Will of  
Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop

On behalf of the Big Island Substance Abuse Council (BISAC), I write in strong  
support of Kamehameha Schools' long-standing admissions policy, which gives  
preference to applicants of Native Hawaiian ancestry in accordance with the will  
of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop.

BISAC has provided substance use and behavioral health treatment, prevention,  
and recovery support services to Hawai'i Island for sixty years. Our work brings  
us face-to-face every day with the impacts of historical trauma, colonization, and  
systemic inequities on Native Hawaiian individuals and families higher rates of  
poverty, health disparities, and overrepresentation in child welfare and criminal  
legal systems. These realities are well-documented and persist despite the  
resilience and strength of our lāhui.

Kamehameha Schools was created precisely to respond to these harms. Princess  
Pauahi's will directed that her private lands and wealth be used "for the support  
and education of orphans and others in indigent circumstances, giving preference  
to Hawaiians of pure or part aboriginal blood." Her directive was not accidental  
or incidental; it was a focused response to the devastating decline of her people  
and the loss of their land, language, and political power. Kamehameha Schools'  
current policy, giving preference to Native Hawaiian students "to the extent  
permitted by law," is a faithful implementation of her trust and a targeted remedy  
to ongoing, measurable inequities.

Importantly, Kamehameha Schools is a private institution funded by the  
Princess's trust, not by taxpayer dollars. The decision of how best to serve Native  
Hawaiian children, consistent with her will, is a matter of trust law, Indigenous  
self-determination, and remedial justice. The Ninth Circuit has previously  
recognized that Kamehameha's preference for Native Hawaiians in admissions  
does not violate federal civil rights law when understood in its historical and  
remedial context.





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From BISAC's vantage point, Kamehameha Schools plays a critical, irreplaceable role in advancing educational equity and community wellness. Many of our staff, partners, and clients' family members are Kamehameha alumni. They are teachers, social workers, physicians, cultural practitioners, and frontline behavioral health professionals. Their education at Kamehameha did more than prepare them academically; it rooted them in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, mo'omeheu, and a deep sense of kuleana to uplift their communities. Those protective factors cultural pride, strong identity, and access to high-quality education are exactly what research and practice show can buffer against substance use, trauma, and despair.

If Kamehameha Schools is forced to abandon its admissions preference, the direct and foreseeable consequence will be fewer Native Hawaiian children accessing this high-quality, culturally grounded education, and a further erosion of an already fragile pathway of hope for Indigenous youth in their own homeland. This is not an abstract concern for us it would reverberate through the families we serve and the future workforce our communities desperately need.

We recognize that the court must weigh complex legal questions. We respectfully urge the court to consider the unique history of Hawai'i, the explicit intent of Princess Pauahi's will, the private nature of the trust, and the remedial purpose of Kamehameha Schools' mission. To treat this case as if it were simply about "race-based discrimination" divorced from that history and context would erase the very harms that the Princess sought to heal.

From the perspective of a community-based behavioral health provider working daily with Native Hawaiian children, adults, and 'ohana, BISAC firmly believes that Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy is not only consistent with justice—it is essential to it.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

Hannah Preston-Pita, Psy.D. Ed, D., CSAC, NCTTP  
Chief Executive Officer

