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January 15, 2024

From: Kepā & Onaona Maly, Ethnohistorians
HC 2 Box 6958
Kea'au, Hawai'i 96749

To: Chair Alex Kelepolo and the Commissioners of the Public Access, Open Space
& Natural Resources Preservation Commission
25 Aupuni Street, Suite 1101
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-4252

**RE: SUPPORT FOR COUNTY ACQUISITION OF THE JOSEPH ROCK ARBORETUM
(Ma ke Kula 'Āpa'a-Nahelehele 'o Honokōhau Iki, Kekaha Wai 'Ole 'o Kona—
Situated in the Dry-Forest Region of Honokōhau Iki, in the Waterless District
of Kona)**

Aloha 'oukou e nā Luna (*Dear Commissioners*):

Please accept this letter, written in support of your favorable action in setting aside funding and development of the Conservation Easement for the Joseph Rock Arboretum. This legacy program provides an important service for our island home—seed banking threatened and endangered species of Hawai'i—and also supports similar initiatives in the preservation of critical habitat species from other locations.

As ethnographers, who have conducted extensive research, oral history interviews, and produced hundreds of cultural-historical studies, we can tell you that protection of our biocultural landscape is a high priority for kānaka Hawai'i, community, and scientists. Honokōhau Iki is part of the larger wahi pana (storied and sacred landscape) of Kekaha Wai 'Ole 'o Kona (*The arid-waterless district of Kona*). While this region evolved with a diverse and rich assemblage of endemic Hawaiian species, over the last 225-years, the 'āina has been detrimentally impacted by land use practices and the introduction of ungulates and other invasive species. Each species lost—resulting from a lack of care—has diminished the diversity, and impacted the living cultural attachment of kānaka Hawai'i.

The tireless work and contributions of Ms. Jill Wagner in establishing and building the Joseph Rock Arboretum is a priceless gift to Hawai'i. The arboretum and work of Ms. Wagner is necessary to ensure that the honua ola (*living environment*) and resources banking—our unique Hawaiian landscape—will be passed on to future generations

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Establishing the Joseph Rock Arboretum Conservation Easement in perpetuity for the people of Hawai'i is the right thing to do. Please act on this important initiative to save the open spaces now, while we can, "E mau ke 'ea o ka 'āina i ka pono!"

Māua nō me ke aloha kau palena 'ole,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kepā & Onaona Maly". The signature is written in a cursive, fluid style with some loops and flourishes.

Kepā & Onaona Maly