

January 16, 2024

From: Laura Nelson
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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

Aloha Commissioners:

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the conservation easement application submitted by Jill Wagner for the Joseph Rock Arboretum property. As a resident and nature enthusiast, I have witnessed the dedicated efforts and passion invested by Ms. Wagner in transforming this piece of land into a potential haven for the community.

The establishment of the Joseph Rock Arboretum serves as a testament to Ms. Wagner's commitment to environmental stewardship and community well-being. This arboretum not only represents a personal dream but, more importantly, embodies the vision of a shared green space in the heart of Kona for generations to come.

The proposed conservation easement, if granted, will play a crucial role in preserving this invaluable arboretum for perpetuity. Given the increasing challenges posed by predicted ocean level rise and global warming, the importance of maintaining areas with trees and shade cannot be overstated. The Joseph Rock Arboretum has the potential to become a vital green space, providing not only aesthetic beauty but also essential respite for the community.

I particularly appreciate Ms. Wagner's vision of creating walking and biking corridors that link the arboretum to other nearby green spaces, aligning with the Kona Open Space Network's goals. This interconnected network of green spaces is essential for fostering a sense of community, promoting outdoor activities, and addressing the environmental challenges we face.

It is my sincere hope that the County of Hawaii recognizes the significance of this conservation easement in preserving the Joseph Rock Arboretum's unique contribution to the community. Without such protections, the risk of the property falling into private hands and losing its communal value is a real concern.

I urge you to consider the long-term benefits that the conservation easement would bring to the people of Hawaii and future generations. Your support in granting this easement will contribute to the

realization of a sustainable and vibrant community space that aligns with the principles of environmental conservation and public accessibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to witnessing the continued growth and positive impact of the Joseph Rock Arboretum for the benefit of our community.

Sincerely,

Laura Nelson

Laura Nelson is an environmentalist and has worked in restoration in Hawaii for several decades. She is an authority in ecosystems management and is highly respected in the community for her work.