



[EXTERNAL] Expressing Opposition to the University of Nations Master Plans

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To DBEDT LUC <dbedt.luc.web@hawaii.gov>

Aloha Chair and Members of the Commission,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. My name is Deirdre Roney. I am a resident of Hōlualoa and this project is very near to my home. **I oppose** the University of the Nations' proposed Master Plan Update.

I'm appalled by the University of the Nations' **extractive, expansionist business model**. It's not about education but rather the expansion of a religiously driven institution resembling a cult, where absolute obedience (PreK-12), insular social structures and dependence upon the institution are expected. This model does not bring balance to Hawai'i's multicultural landscape. It threatens to overwhelm it.

A Pattern We Have Seen Before

Hawai'i has already lived through the devastating impacts of missionary control. Just like Native American communities, Native Hawaiians experienced the **systematic dismantling of culture, language, land ownership, and spiritual practice**. This project echoes that painful history:

- A single religious worldview seeking physical, economic, and ideological dominance
- Expansion onto lands reclassified away from agriculture
- A growing disconnect between the development and the community it impacts

We must not repeat this cycle.

Land Reclassification Was a Mistake — Don't Deepen It

The land in question was originally under the **State Agricultural Land Use District**. Under HRS §205-4.5, Bencorp was required to petition the Land Use Commission for reclassification. In 2003, the LUC approved a **boundary amendment** based on a completely different project:

- Market-rate condos
- A for-profit Pacific Cultural Center
- Retail, museum, performance arena

- A small educational facility

That approval does **not** justify the massive, faith-based campus expansion now being proposed. This new Master Plan — adding a PK–12 school, university classrooms, athletic facilities, meeting halls, and expanded housing — is **an entirely different development with an entirely different impact**. Why should a 20-year-old decision, based on a defunct project, allow this expansion today?

Water and Land Protection Are Not Optional

Water is a public trust. Yet somehow, the Water Commission allowed increased water commitments without adequate analysis of cumulative impacts — especially in West Hawai'i, where water availability is already strained.

This is not just bureaucratic oversight — it is a **breach of trust**.
'Āina and wai cannot be sacrificed so a religious institution can build a larger footprint.

We Cannot Ignore Public Safety

Kailua-Kona has **failed every tsunami evacuation in its modern history**.
Adding thousands more residents, students, staff, and visitors — many of them housed mauka and commuting makai — **increases the risk dramatically**.
Development in the wrong place is not just irresponsible — it is dangerous.

The Withdrawal of the FEIS Raises Serious Concerns

The Applicant has withdrawn its Final Environmental Impact Statement, citing an “omitted comment letter.”

But the explanation only raises more questions:

- How does a single missing comment justify withdrawing an entire FEIS?
- Why did this error only surface **after publication**?
- What else was overlooked?
- Why rush to resubmit instead of committing to true public accountability?

This withdrawal undermines trust in the process and highlights the fundamental instability of the proposal.

This Is Not the Project Our Community Was Told to Expect

The University of the Nations' plan is not:

- culturally grounded,

- environmentally safe,
- aligned with original zoning intentions, or
- in balance with our community's needs.

It is an **extractive, expansionist, religious business model** that concentrates land, power, water, and influence into the hands of one institution — at the expense of the people of Kona.

I urge you to reject this proposal.

Kona deserves development that:

- protects our 'āina and wai,
- honors Hawaiian culture, history, and especially its archeological sites,
- keeps our residents safe,
- respects zoning integrity, and
- strengthens our multicultural community — not replaces it.

Please do the right thing. Reject the University of the Nations Master Plan Update.

Mahalo for Your Time and Consideration,

Deirdre Roney

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