

To: Councilman Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
From: George Kon, ADE  
Hearing: May 18, 2009  
RE: RESTORE MOCA'S BUDGET CUTS FOR ARTS

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CITY CLERK  
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Thanks so much for your willingness to consider reinstating funding for the arts. On Monday, May 18, while you are voting to restore MOCA's funds for the arts, our students in Kalihi's T-Shirt Theatre will be hard at work after a full day of school, rehearsing from 3-5:30pm. Their work on "Manners Matter" this past spring rode in part on the funding support of the City's Culture and Arts Program.

After school hours are prime mischief-making time for many adolescents. Programs like ours give the youth at Farrington, Kalakaua and Dole schools a place to focus their energy, channel their creativity and share it with a wider, appreciative audience. Last week we had over 110 students try out for a place in the company.

It is challenging to interest youth and to sustain their participation in culture and arts activities over an extended timeframe. ADE has been successful at employing the arts to create a rehearsal lab for students to practice and perform "life skills" for over a quarter of a century.

T-Shirt Theatre has been a multi-year recipient of the Mayor's Culture and Arts grants. City funds have helped 4,500 Kalihi students since 2005 to be entertained and enlightened by "Mabuhay" ('06) – a teen's celebration of the Filipino experience in Hawaii, "Bully?" ('07) – there is no "innocent bystander," "Tree'd" ('08) – what one kid can do to help keep Honolulu green and "Manners Matter," ('09) making kindness and courtesy renewable resources.

If the Mayor's Culture and Arts support is cut, it would slash our resources at a time when contracts, donations and other financial support are shrinking. This is a time when Kalihi youth need our services even more urgently. Please vote decisively to restore full funding for culture and arts support.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.