



Representative Andria Tupola  
STATE CAPITOL, Room 317  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**“Minority Leader Opening Day Remarks”**

HONOLULU, HAWAI‘I (January 18, 2018) – Representative Andria Tupola (District 43 – ‘Ewa Villages, Kalaeloa, Honokai Hale, Nanakai Gardens, Ko Olina, Kahe Point, Nānākuli, Lualualei, and Mā‘ili) addressed the State of Hawaii House of Representatives on Opening Day of the 2018 Legislative Session.

In her speech, Representative Tupola hoped to inspire the legislature to reconnect with their communities, counties, and keiki. Her remarks were as follows:

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my caucus - Rep Ward, Rep McDermott, Rep Thielen, and Rep Matsumoto for their continued support and collaboration. I really want to thank those who are here in the gallery today and possibly connected via Olelo or social media.

With the events of this past weekend, it really made everyone stop and think about how disconnected we are. The events of today help us to remember how important it is to reconnect to our history, our people, and this place we call home. My hope this 2018 legislative session is that we find new ways to reconnect with our community, with our committee members, and with the concerns that are plaguing our communities and affecting our quality of life.

We all represent geographic areas throughout Hawaii with very distinct needs and characteristics. It was created this way so that we could connect on a very personal level to the needs and struggles of our communities. Connection is the energy that exists between people when their voice are heard and their opinions are valued. As the minority caucus we are proposing that we connect better to our communities, our counties, and our keiki.

We should start by connecting to our communities by allowing remote testimony and more live feeds of our hearings for neighbor islanders and even some remote areas on our island. Our caucus chose this as a priority and put forth a bill to address this issue. I recently visited the city building in Kona and where they now allow remote testimony from other locations on the island. Last night, our director of highways asked me to get community feedback to improve the contraflow and via social media I got hundreds of great suggestions to pass on so we can see improvements today.

Some of these solutions to allow remote testimony or involvement from our community members can be little to no cost and start this year. The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen and we can definitely improve to create equal access for all people in Hawaii.

We can also better connect to one of the most pressing county issues that we have which is addressing the absorbent length of time it takes to get a permit in this state. Our caucus chose this as a priority because it's not enough to talk about affordable housing. We need to find doable solutions now to close the affordable housing gap. The biggest concern people have is that the price for housing goes up every day, every month, and every year when a permit is delayed. Our counties have been crying out that they need more of our support and the 2015 report to the legislature from the State County working group gives us great pointers on where to start. We believe by strengthening some of our vital county services it will in turn strengthen our whole state.

Lastly, we need to better connect to the ever changing needs of our families and keiki. We are starting to see new forms of public education that ten years ago we would have never understood. The minority caucus made it a priority to propose equal public school funding because it is our responsibility to connect our keiki to opportunities for growth and development. We have some schools that closed down and are abandoned. We have some schools that are desperately looking for space. Just this past year we saw an under enrolled public school partner with a charter school to share space. They found a win win solution using our existing inventory because we don't equally fund CIP or all public schools. I have no doubt that as we equally fund all public schools we will see that creativity really does thrive through making connections.

A true community is not just about being geographically close to someone. It's about feeling connected and responsible for what happens. Auamo Kuleana - may we all shoulder the burden for the responsibility that is ours. I hope that we can find ways to reconnect with each other, our house members, our counties, and especially our communities. We can not keep doing the same thing and expect different results. We

can not keep doing the same thing ten times or twenty times harder because that won't work either.

If we decide to increase these connections, we will see an increase in resources, an increase in public involvement, and in events like the one that happened this past weekend our connections could make the difference in saving lives. Our generation is tasked with creating a new vision for Hawaii built on some of our oldest values. We can't create this vision without improving our connections. We shouldn't demand unreasonable things of ourselves but we should always demand improvement. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

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