



TESTIMONY OF DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO, HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Friday, February 23, 2024 11:30 a.m.
In consideration of
HB 2406 HD 1
RELATING TO STATE FINANCES

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on HB2406 HD1, to establish the Climate Health and Environmental Action Special Fund in the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to minimize the impacts of, and respond to, climate crises funded by a \$25 tax on transient accommodations.

The ethic of mālama – care and stewardship – is the core of HTA's visitor education efforts. Hawai'i's environment is a treasure, and it is our collective kuleana to protect it for the generations to come. Fulfilling that responsibility takes funding. We agree with the intent of this legislation to fund natural resource stewardship as it is in alignment with our Strategic Plan priorities in the Natural Resources pillar, as well as action items in our community-generated Destination Management Action Plans.

There are several proposals before the Legislature this session for a green fee or tax, and we are continuing to solicit feedback and examine which model makes the most sense for the industry and for the traveling public. Whichever model this Legislature decides upon to facilitate visitor contributions to the care of our natural resources, we advocate the timely, transparent, and tangible reinvestment of those collections into our natural environment – the more direct the better.

We stand ready to assist in educating visitor industry stakeholders and visitors on the implications of this measure, and we defer to our colleagues at the Department of Taxation as well as DLNR on matters related to its implementation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments.