



TESTIMONY OF DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO, HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON TOURISM AND WATER & LAND
Thursday, February 8, 2024 11:15 a.m.
In consideration of
HB 2081
RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

Aloha Chairs Quinlan and Ichiyama, Vice Chairs Hussey-Burdick and Poepoe, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on HB2081, to increase the Transient Accommodations Tax rate, set a minimum tax, and appropriate funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the protection, management, and restoration of Hawai'i's natural resources.

The ethic of mālama – care and stewardship – is the core of our 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. Whichever model this Legislature decides upon to facilitate visitor contributions to the care of our natural resources, we advocate the timely and transparent reinvestment of those collections into improving the experience for kama'āina and visitors alike enjoying 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 the Department of Land and Natural Resources on matters related to its implementation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments.