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Governor

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Statement of
JOHN DE FRIES
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Wednesday, March 29, 2023
3:00 p.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL NO. 304 SD2 HD2
RELATING TO VISITOR IMPACT FEES

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

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments in support of the intent of SB304 SD2 HD2, to collect fees to fund the protection and increased resilience of Hawai'i's natural and outdoor recreational resources.

The ethic of mālama – care and stewardship – is the core of our visitor education efforts. HTA's work is framed by four interacting strategic pillars: Natural Resources, Hawaiian Culture, Community, and Branding – the last of which is dependent upon the strength of the first three.

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 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.

We have consistently been supportive of site-specific user fees as our preferred model, and no matter the model of collection, we advocate the reinvestment of those collections into improving the experience for kama'āina and visitors alike at public parks and trails.

We support the intent of SB304 SD2 HD2. We stand ready to assist in educating visitor industry stakeholders and visitors, and we defer to our colleagues at the Department of Land and Natural Resources on matters related to the implementation of this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments.