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Josh Green, M.D.
Governor

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Statement of
JOHN DE FRIES
Hawaii'i Tourism Authority
before the
COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

February 2, 2023
10:00 a.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL NO. 592
RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION

Aloha Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hussey-Burdick, and members of the Committee on Tourism,

The Hawaii'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on HB592, which would modify the existing declaration form for inbound travelers to ensure travelers acknowledge state laws, federal laws, and individual responsibility to protect the environment and agriculture of the State.

Hawaii'i's environment is a treasure, and it is our collective kuleana to protect it for the generations to come. The intent of HB592 is in alignment with HTA's work to educate visitors about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors while in Hawaii'i, including compliance with laws and local customs. The ethic of mālama – care and stewardship – is the core of those efforts.

Current avenues used to communicate these educational messages include targeted digital advertisements, videos on in-flight entertainment systems, physical signage at Hawaii'i airports, and partnerships with the visitor industry to further the reach of these messages.

The existing mandatory plant and animal declaration form is an important tool used by the Department of Agriculture in their efforts to protect Hawaii'i's biosecurity and defend against threats posed by invasive species. As such, we defer to DOA's position on this matter.

Should this measure be adopted, HTA stands ready to assist with implementation, including the development of language, utilizing our digital platforms like GoHawaii.com, and assisting with outreach to airlines and other visitor industry partners.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments on HB592.