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Josh Green, M.D.
Governor

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Statement of
JOHN DE FRIES
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Tuesday, February 14, 2023
8:30 a.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL NO. 1237, HD1 (HSCR119)
RELATING TO GREEN USER FEE PROGRAM

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments in support of the intent of HB1237 HD1, to collect user fees to support the maintenance of our state parks.

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 to facilitate visitor contributions to the care of our natural resources. As we maintain GoHawaii.com and the GoHawaii app as visitor interfaces, we stand ready to collaborate with the Department of Land and Natural Resources on this effort.

We also recommend additions to this bill. As one of the two official languages of the State of Hawai'i and the native language of this land, 'Ōlelo Hawai'i should be included in the list of languages to be available on the platform. Additionally, to support more international visitors, we recommend adding French, German and Spanish languages.

We support the intent of HB1237 HD1, 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.