



TESTIMONY OF DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO, HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM
Thursday, February 1, 2024 10:30 a.m.
In consideration of
HB 2735
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY

Aloha Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hussey-Burdick, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) offers the following comments on HB2735 for your consideration. HTA understands the intent of this measure to change the structure of HTA to be lead by a Chief Tourism Officer reporting to the Governor, replacing the HTA board with a nine-member steering committee, and transfer certain community programs to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA).

A study is in progress to examine various models of tourism governance so that HTA may return to the Legislature with recommendations for the future of Hawai'i's tourism governance, including recommendations on funding mechanisms and organizational structure. A report is expected this summer. We have also incorporated feedback received from the Legislature in previous sessions into our operations and organization.

HTA's community funding programs – Community Enrichment, Kahu 'Āina, Kūkulu Ola, the Resort Area Hawaiian Culture Initiative, and Signature Events – are partnerships with organizations to execute programs with a tourism nexus, a form of community-based tourism product development with careful oversight by HTA staff and Kilohana on HTA's behalf. Should the responsibility for one or more of these programs be transferred to SFCA, we recommend continued HTA involvement to assist SFCA through the transition of the program and continue to advise on visitor industry matters.

On behalf of our dedicated volunteer board members and our hard-working staff, HTA appreciates the opportunity to offer these comments on this measure.