



TESTIMONY OF DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO, HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND
Friday, February 9, 2024 1:10 p.m.

In consideration of

SB 2810

RELATING TO THE POLOLŪ VALLEY MANAGEMENT EFFORTS ON HAWAII ISLAND

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is in **support** of SB2810, appropriating funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to improve management of Pololū Valley in Kohala.

Pololū Valley is one of the hotspots community members and stakeholders identified as part of HTA's Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan (DMAP). Issues include access, impacts to community and environment, safety, and cultural sensitivity. Action A in the Hawai'i Island DMAP calls to protect and preserve culturally significant places and hotspots.

HTA funded the Pololū Trail Steward Program in 2021 and 2022, a pilot project in collaboration with KUPU, DLNR, and the lineal descendent community of Pololū, Makanikahio and neighboring ahupua'a. The goal was to utilize local stewards to assist with interpreting the natural and cultural history of the area, as well as mitigate unwanted behaviors and ensure safety.

During the pilot project, four part-time stewards who were from the area assisted with visitor management, safety, and trail maintenance as well as sharing their knowledge of the Pololū area with visitors. During the months of August 2021-April 2022, data was collected daily from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m, including:

- 92,055 hikers present with an average of 219 hikers per day
- 14,378 vehicles
- Peak visits between 8:00 through 11:00 am.

To continue to provide safe and exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities for both our residents and visitors, it is important to fund management efforts at Pololū Valley.

We respectfully 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 offer these comments.