



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Tuesday, March 25, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of
SCR121
**REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
AND TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A TOURISM AND GAMING WORKING GROUP.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the Committee.

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) offers its support with comments on SCR121, which requests the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism to establish a tourism and gaming working group.

The tourism and gaming working group provides an opportunity to all state entities involved to get much needed input from the community. Since gaming activities may impact all citizens in the state, it will be pertinent to gather input from as many communities and stakeholders as possible.

A clear line of communication with DBEDT will be key as the staffing for the working group needs to be defined to ensure that the necessary scheduling, management of logistics, and development of agendas can take place.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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TESTIMONY OF
CAROLINE ANDERSON
Interim President & CEO
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Friday, March 25, 2025
1:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 229

In consideration of
SCR 121
**REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND
TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A TOURISM AND GAMING WORKING GROUP**

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is pleased to provide comments on SCR 121, which requests the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish a tourism and gaming working group.

HTA recommends having a seat on the working group since it will examine “how gaming activities may support the work conducted by the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism and the Hawaii Tourism Authority.” Additionally, the legislature should appropriate funds to prevent this from becoming an unfunded mandate.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our comments.

DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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1060 RICHARDS STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
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STEVEN S. ALM
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LOIO HO'OPI'I



THOMAS J. BRADY
FIRST DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
HOPE MUA LOIO HO'OPI'I

THE HONORABLE LYNN DECOITE, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawai'i

March 25, 2025

RE: S.C.R. 121; REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A TOURISM AND GAMING WORKING GROUP.

Chair DeCoite, Vice-Chair Wakai, and members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development & Tourism, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following testimony in **strong opposition** to S.C. R. 121.

My name is Steve Alm and I am the Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu. My number one job is to protect the people of our county. This resolution, if passed, would promote an activity that would be harmful to the residents of Hawai'i. Gambling is illegal for good reasons.

The purpose of Senate Concurrent Resolution 121 is to request that the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism set up a gaming working group. One of the charges that this group will have is to "...[d]evelop a comprehensive tourism gaming policy framework that would serve as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation, capital investment, and a significant source of tax revenue for the State..." We stand in *strong opposition* to this resolution because it will open the door to legalize gambling in our state. One need only to look at some of the participants on the working group (Boyd Gaming, DraftKings, and BetMGM) to see the intent of this resolution. Legalizing gambling will not serve our community and will only increase the societal harms from gambling that citizens already suffer from because they partake in illegal gambling.

The societal costs are real for many people in our state despite gambling being illegal. In a 2016 article in the Hawai'i Journal of Medicine & Public Health, the estimated "social and

financial damage from problem gambling" was \$26,300,000.¹ This study found that each problem gambler could "cost society \$1200 each year." This was the cost in 2016. Since then these costs have risen which means that we are paying more, already. Problem gamblers also "suffer from other addictions, mental illness, and medical problems", all which "place a high burden on our healthcare system."²

Research from the University at Buffalo Clinical and Research Institute on Addictions found:

- An estimated 750,000 of America's youth — between the ages of 14 and 21 — are problem gamblers (they gamble more than intended or steal money to support gambling).
- 11% of youth gamble twice per week or more; 68% report gambling at least once in the past year.
- Frequent and problem gambling numbers rise as socioeconomic status (SES) declines; gambling involvement tends to decrease as SES rises.³

Recent research by the Rady School of Management (University of California San Diego) found that "legalization leads to more irresponsible gambling spending among lower-income consumers than many higher-income gamblers."⁴ Given Hawai'i's high cost of living, do we really want to do harm to our poorer residents?

Research has also found that legalized sports wagering increases intimate partner violence. "...[W]hen sports gambling is legalized, the effect of NFL home team upset losses on intimate partner violence increases by around ten percentage points."⁵

These statistics beg the question--Why do we need to study an activity that we already know will cause harm to our citizens? Some will pose the argument that people are already gambling, even though it is illegal. In fact, the illegality of this activity in our state is the very tool that is keeping many more from participating in it. Once we promote legalized gambling and put the societal stamp of approval on it, many individuals who are deterred from wasting their lives and finances away, will then participate. This is not worth the few extra tax dollars legal gambling would generate.

Finally, given the availability of gambling in other locations, no one will be coming to Hawai'i specifically to gamble. Any tourist who gambles means its money not spent on dinner at a local shop or restaurant or a visit to the Polynesian Cultural Center.

¹ Piliwaiwai: Problem Gambling in Hawai'i; Hawai'i J Med Public Health. 2016 Mar; 75(3):73-77; <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4795333/>

² Id.

³ RIA Expert Summary Gambling, published April 24, 2012; https://www.buffalo.edu/cria/news_events/es/es3.html#:~:text=An%20estimated%20750%2C000%20of%20America's,%2C%2030%25%20to%2012%25.

⁴ Legalized Gambling Increases Irresponsible Betting Behavior, Especially Among Low-Income Populations; Rady School of Management findings emphasize the high financial risk associated with legalized gambling; June 18, 2024; <https://rady.ucsd.edu/why/news/2024/07-23-legalized-gambling-increases-irresponsible-betting-behavior-especially-among-low-income-populations.html>

⁵ Sports Betting Legalization Amplifies Emotional Cues & Intimate Partner Violence; Kyutaro Matsuzawa and Emily Arnesen; August 2024; https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4938642

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu **strongly opposes** the passage of S.C.R. 121. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



Aloha Hālawā District Partners

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair

Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Date: Tuesday, March 25th

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229

**Re: SCR121 - REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
AND TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A TOURISM AND GAMING WORKING GROUP.**

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chairs Wakai, and members of the Committee,

We strongly support SCR121, which establishes a Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT). This measure seeks to explore a comprehensive gaming policy framework to drive economic growth, job creation, investment, and tax revenue for the State of Hawai'i. Notably, the resolution directs the working group to examine the potential for gaming activities at the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District (NASED).

Aloha Hālawā District Partners (AHDP) respectfully requests an amendment to SCR121 to include AHDP as a member of the Gaming Working Group. AHDP was selected through a competitive bidding process to partner with the State in developing NASED, a vibrant, community-focused mixed-use district anchored by a new sports and entertainment venue. Given our role in shaping this transformative project, AHDP's inclusion in the working group would ensure that any discussions on gaming align with NASED's long-term vision, infrastructure, and economic goals.

AHDP supports the formation of a working group to explore new revenue opportunities that can enhance the district's sustainability while balancing responsible development and community interests. A thoughtful and well-planned approach to gaming could provide significant economic benefits, but it is essential that any considerations complement NASED's broader goals and maximize public benefit.

Additionally, AHDP has been actively engaged in community outreach, hosting public meetings to gather input and address concerns regarding NASED's development. Ensuring AHDP has a seat at the table would help incorporate community voices into discussions on potential gaming activities.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to amend SCR121 to include Aloha Hālawā District Partners as a member of the Gaming Working Group.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this resolution. We appreciate your time and consideration.



Iron Workers Stabilization Fund

T. George Paris
Managing Director

March 21, 2025

1:00PM

Senate Committee on Economic Development & Technology and House Committee on Tourism
CR 229 & Videoconference

Re: SCR121- Relating to Economic Development Testimony in Support - Tourism and Gaming
Working Group

The Ironworkers Stabilization Fund in strong support of SCR121 which establishes a Tourism and Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT).

Creating this working group is a crucial step in understanding the complex relationship between tourism and the potential introduction of legalized gaming in Hawaii with proposed amendments. A comprehensive and thoughtful approach is essential when considering such a significant policy shift. This working group will provide a valuable forum for stakeholders to discuss the potential impacts – both positive and negative – of legalized gaming on our state's economy, communities, and existing tourism industry. The required report to the Legislature will ensure transparency and inform data-driven decision-making.

Furthermore, Labor organizations, like ours, have a unique understanding of the needs of our communities and the potential impacts of legalized gaming on working families. Our members are often the ones who build the infrastructure associated with such projects, and therefore have a vested interest in their responsible development. Including labor's perspective is vital for several reasons:

- **Workforce Development:** Labor organizations can provide valuable insights into the workforce needs of a potential gaming industry.
- **Community Impact:** Our members are deeply rooted in their communities and understand the potential social and economic impacts of gaming on local residents.
- **Responsible Development:** Labor organizations can advocate for responsible development practices that prioritize worker safety, fair wages, and community well-being.

Including labor's voice in this process will ensure that any decisions regarding legalized gaming are made with the best interests of Hawaii's workers and communities in mind. We believe that a balanced and inclusive approach, incorporating the perspectives of all stakeholders, is essential for the success of this working group. I urge the committee to approve SCR121.

“We are keeping the pennies and watching the dollars fly away, soon we’ll lose the pennies and end up with zero”

T. George Paris
Managing Director



Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Tuesday, March 25, 2025 – 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

RE: SCR 121 – Requesting the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to Establish a Tourism and Gaming Working Group – In Support

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

Boyd Gaming appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SCR 121, requesting the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) to establish a tourism and gaming working group.

Founded in 1975, Boyd Gaming is now a nationwide gaming company operating 28 casinos in 11 states, and has a presence in 19 distinct markets including our online presence in online gaming and sports wagering. Our perspective that we are sharing with you today has been shaped by 50 years of experience in the gaming industry, operating in all facets of gaming including brick-and-mortar casinos, sports wagering, online real money and social gaming, among others.

Our Company has strong ties to Hawai'i, as the state and its residents were a critical component of Boyd's foundational beginnings and continue to be an important part of the Company's success today. Boyd Gaming also owns and operates Vacations Hawaii, which has served over 1.5 million Hawai'i residents with convenient and affordable direct flights to Las Vegas since 1996. Vacations Hawaii is proud to be an established part of Hawai'i's local history, community and economy with employees based in both Hawai'i and in Las Vegas.

We strongly support SCR 121 and thank the introducer of this resolution for bringing this measure. We believe this resolution is an appropriate first step for the Legislature to take before passing any gaming policy legislation. Given that Hawai'i currently does not have any form of legalized gaming, the state has a unique opportunity to create a comprehensive gaming policy framework that is specifically tailored to Hawai'i's unique culture and tourism economy. The data, information and analysis done by the working group will be critical to help shape public policy for the Legislature to consider that will serve as a catalyst of economic growth, job creation, capital investment, and state and local tax revenue. Any gaming policy considered in Hawai'i

should be complementary and additive to Hawai'i's existing robust tourism and hospitality industry. However, if done correctly, the main focus of gaming policy should not be solely to authorize gaming, but drive significant private capital investment to build upon and enhance Hawai'i's existing tourism infrastructure while supporting local priorities. The working group established by SCR 121 could establish a comprehensive tourism framework to best position Hawai'i to take advantage of the intersection of tourism, sports, entertainment and gaming as part of the state's own "Fun Economy."

With this objective in mind, we believe that SCR 121 convenes a broad group of diverse stakeholders with specific experience and expertise to provide the data, information and research necessary to develop a comprehensive tourism and gaming policy framework as outlined in the measure. Additionally, the timeline set forth in SCR 121 allows for sufficient time for the working group to meet, research, develop findings, and prepare presentations in order to submit its final findings and recommendations to the Legislature for consideration.

Boyd Gaming respectfully requests that the Committee pass SCR 121 for the reasons outlined above. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

SCR-121

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 12:17:17 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/25/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Makaawaawa	Testifying for Nation of Hawaii	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Testimony of Brandon Maka‘awa‘awa

In Opposition to SCR 121
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
March 25, 2025

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brandon Maka‘awa‘awa, and I strongly oppose SCR 121.

We cannot build gaming policy for Hawai‘i by giving power to those who stand to profit the most. This resolution places gaming operators in a working group intended to shape regulations that will govern them. That is not responsible policy development. It is a conflict of interest.

This resolution gives the impression that the policy direction has already been set, rather than explored objectively. A true working group should reflect fairness, transparency, and community leadership, not corporate leverage.

Even House policymakers raised this concern just days ago. They questioned why gaming companies were specifically named when other industries, like labor and social services, were not. Having members say that the table has already been set is not only concerning but makes us question who is looking out for the best interest of not just Native Hawai‘ians but all of Hawaii. Several acknowledged that if industry experts are involved at all, they should be limited to providing data, not influencing decisions.

The Nation of Hawai'i is not opposed to discussions about gaming. But if we are going to have them, we must ensure Native Hawaiians and other key stakeholders have real influence. Any policy that affects our land, our people, and our economy should be built with us, not for us.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask this committee to reject SCR 121 and instead support a more balanced, community-first approach.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Brandon Maka'awa'awa
Vice President, Nation of Hawai'i

SCR-121

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 11:28:39 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/25/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pu'uhonua Bumpy Kanahele	Testifying for N ATION OF HAWAII	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Pu'uhonua Dennis B.K. Kanahele

In Opposition to SCR 121

Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

March 25, 2025

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

I strongly urge you to reject SCR 121.

Gaming is not just a policy conversation. It is a decision that will shape the future of Hawai'i, and the working group proposed in this resolution does not reflect the care and accountability that such a conversation demands.

History has shown us what happens when decisions are made without the voice of Native Hawaiians at the table. We have seen industries extract wealth, damage culture, and leave our communities behind. This cannot happen again. A working group of this nature must be community-driven, with Native Hawaiians holding meaningful leadership roles using the structures of government to assist. Corporations can share data as resources, but they must not shape the regulatory framework they will profit from.

The House discussion on this issue showed that even policymakers are questioning why gaming corporations are being invited to shape policy. No other industry is granted this level of access into setting the rules for themselves. Allowing these companies to participate as voting members

gives them influence over rules that should be designed to protect Hawai'i's people, not serve corporate expansion.

Gaming may be a conversation worth having, but it must be done the right way. Let us move forward with integrity, not rush into a process designed by those who have everything to gain and little to lose.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject SCR 121 and build a path that begins with the people, not corporations.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Pu'uhonua Dennis B.K. Kanahale

President, Nation of Hawai'i

INDEPENDENT & SOVEREIGN NATION STATE OF HAWAI'I



EXECUTIVE

Office of the Foreign Minister
41-1300 Waikupanaha Street Waimānalo, HI 96795

Testimony of John Kealoha Garcia

In Opposition to SCR 121

Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

March 25, 2025

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully urge you to reject SCR 121. This resolution grants corporate gaming companies direct influence in shaping the very policies that are supposed to regulate them. This approach puts private interests before public good and undermines the integrity of the policymaking process from the outset.

A working group of this importance should be rooted in fairness and transparency, not shaped by commercial operators who have a financial stake in the outcome. While industry input can be useful in a technical advisory capacity, it is not appropriate for those same companies to serve as decision-makers. This concern was shared by several members during the House debate, who questioned the inclusion of specific companies and the absence of voices from labor, social services, and other key sectors.

This is especially troubling given that some of the companies now seeking a role in this process have previously opposed the legalization of gaming in Hawai'i. The sudden interest in joining the conversation appears driven more by profit than by public policy, and it raises valid concerns about long-term intent.

INDEPENDENT & SOVEREIGN NATION STATE OF HAWAI'I



EXECUTIVE

Office of the Foreign Minister

41-1300 Waikupanaha Street Waimānalo, HI 96795

If gaming is to be studied or considered in Hawai'i, it must be through a process that is led by Native Hawaiians, public agencies, and trusted community stakeholders. It must prioritize cultural sensitivity, economic reinvestment, and strict regulatory oversight. Allowing companies to help shape the rules they may eventually profit from is not consistent with those goals.

The Nation of Hawai'i supports meaningful dialogue about the future of our economy, including whether gaming can play a role. This conversation must be led by those with a long-term commitment to Hawai'i's people, values, and future, not by outside interests seeking to expand their market.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject SCR 121 and instead pursue a process that puts Hawai'i's people first.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

John Kealoha Garcia

Second Vice President, Foreign Affairs & Commerce, Nation of Hawai'i

**Kehaulani Lum
Pelekikena
Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club
99-045 Nalopaka Place
'Aiea, Hawai'i 96701
aliiipauahi@gmail.com**

Statement before the
Senate Committee on Economic Development & Tourism

Tuesday, March 25, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

Comments relating to
SCR 121

Requesting the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to
Establish a Tourism and Gaming Working Group

Aloha Senator DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and the members of the Senate Committee on
Economic Development & Tourism.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to share our **comments** on SCR 121, a measure requesting
the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to Establish a Tourism and
Gaming Working Group.

My name is Kehaulani Lum, and I am the Pelekikena of the Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club, a
50-year-old Native Hawaiian organization chartered with the Association of Hawaiian Civic
Clubs in 1973. Our club was founded by esteemed elders in diverse fields, including education,
business, real estate, health, and cultural practice. We are located in 'Aiea, Hawai'i, the
community which sits in the epicenter of several developments of interest to the Legislature,
including, the NASED, OCCC, the Skyline, and the Pu'uwai Momi Public Housing projects.

Among other things, SCR 121 requests that the Tourism and Gaming Working Group, "(3)
Examine the potential for gaming activities at the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District."

Given that the bulk of the land that comprises NASED is primarily located in 'Aiea, we
respectfully request that a seat on the Working Group be made for a member of the 'Aiea
Community Association, to ensure thoughtful area representation. (The Stadium Authority set-
aside for 'Aiea is a good precedent.) ACA has a longstanding history and reputation for fairness
and caring for the well-being of the entire community.

Ali'i Pauahi believes wholeheartedly in full, open, pono, and transparent dialogue, particularly, when it pertains to a potential major public policy change as significant to the community as this. In this way, the working group's composition will ensure the holistic outcome intended by its authors, as well as in the Aloha Spirit Law, HRS 5-7.5.

We urge your serious consideration of this comment.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kehaulani Lum
99-045 Nalopaka Place
'Aiea, Hawaii



March 25, 2025

The Honorable Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair
The Honorable Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

**Subject: Comments and Proposed Amendments to
Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 121
Requesting the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to
Establish a Tourism and Gaming Working Group**

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism:

The 'Aiea Community Association is a non-profit community-based organization dedicated to serving the 'Aiea community, including the ahupua'a of Waimalu, Kalauao, 'Aiea, and Hālawā. We sincerely thank you for the opportunity to provide **comments** on Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 121, and to offer proposed amendments to address our concerns.

This measure requests the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish a Tourism and Gaming Working Group. Among other duties, the working group would be tasked with examining the potential for gaming activities at the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District. As this resolution is currently drafted, this district is the only geographic location that the working group is specifically requested to examine. Accordingly, it seems that this working group's mandate will most directly impact the Hālawā and 'Aiea communities.

Therefore, **we respectfully request that the Committees consider including as a member of the working group a representative of the 'Aiea Community Association to ensure that the 'Aiea and Halawa community is a part of this very important conversation**, especially in light of this measure's significance and the potential impact of gaming on economic, social, cultural, educational, and spiritual indicators affecting every member of society, much less our community.

We urge your serious consideration of this comment so that the original intent of the legislation is honored and in order to ensure that the life spirit of Hawai'i remains in the name and practice of the Stadium, and that the project may truly be a success.

As an organization dedicating to serving the community that is to be most affected by the Working Group's report, we would be deeply grateful to know that the voice of our community is heard, in the very foundation of the work. We appreciate your consideration of our comments and proposed amendments.



Thank you for your time and efforts representing your communities.

Claire J. Tamamoto
'Aiea Community Association, President

LATE

SCR-121

Submitted on: 3/25/2025 8:46:22 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/25/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dwayne Bautista	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

In strong support for SCR 121