

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



CHAD K. TANIGUCHI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
1002 NORTH SCHOOL STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 17907
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Statement of
Chad K. Taniguchi
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

March 2, 2009 1:30 P.M.
Room 308, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of
H.B. 1187, HD1
RELATING TO THE HOMELESS

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) supports the intent of H.B. 1187, which provides for a return-to-home program for persons stranded in this State.

While we acknowledge the good intent of this bill, we caution that it may have the unintended effect of increasing the number of homeless persons entering Hawaii, once it is known that a person who gets here on their own will be able to get transportation back home provided by the State. We are concerned that some may misuse this program to take a "free vacation" to Hawaii.

For that reason we recommend that the program be limited to families with minor children who are stranded. Families would be less likely than single individuals to decide to come to Hawaii temporarily, with the intent of getting a free trip back to their home.



VISITOR ALOHA SOCIETY OF HAWAII
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE, REGULAR SESSION OF 2009

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

Rep. Rida Cabanilla, Chair Rep. Pono Chong, Vice Chair

DATE: Monday, March 2, 2009

TIME: 1:30 p.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 308

State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

My name is Jessica Lani Rich and I am the President & Executive Director of the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii, also known as VASH for short. We are a non-profit agency dealing with visitors in emergency situations.

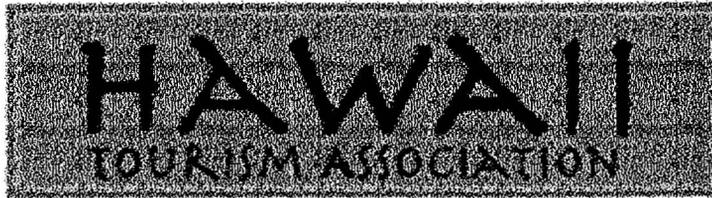
I am testifying relating to House Bill 1187 and I am in favor of this bill. The reason I support this bill is that our office provides assistance to hundreds of visitors in crisis every year. We deal with visitors who are victims of crimes, which include having their car broken into; to visitors who even die while they are on vacation for numerous reasons. Our office is contacted on a regular basis by people who started out as visitors but then became homeless. Many of these visitors have children and find themselves in homeless shelters.

The Visitor Aloha Society does not purchase airline tickets for visitors. Visitors must have a round-trip ticket to qualify for our services but most people don't know that so they call us for help. Our office has been asked for assistance from 18 year old young women who respond to jobs on the internet and when they get here the work was not what they expected. They come from families who cannot afford to send them back home so they become homeless. We fear that these young women could land up on the streets as prostitutes if they are not helped with airline tickets. Our office has also been asked to assist families, who come to Hawaii on vacation and don't buy a round trip ticket, if they are robbed, they also land up in a homeless shelter. Another common problem is visitors who go online for vacation rentals and will pay hundreds of dollars only to find out that they have no place to stay. These people also land up homeless.

A most recent case we assisted involved a 79 year old man who came here as a visitor with no round-trip ticket. If there were funds available, he could have been sent home to his family. If the state could help out many people who are in homeless shelters by buying them a ticket home, not only is it a humane thing to do but it is also very cost effective. We are in the front line helping visitors in crisis who said if they could only have a ticket home it would solve their problem of homelessness and isolation. Many have a better life waiting for them back home. I am in support of House Bill 1187 because it assists the homeless in reuniting with their family members. They would not have to suffer if they had plane tickets. On behalf of the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii, I thank you.

Submitted by Jessica Lani Rich, President & Executive Director, Visitor Aloha Society of HI

Waikiki Shopping Plaza • 2250 Kalakaua Avenue, Suite 403-3 • Honolulu, HI 96815
Phone: (808) 926-8274 • Fax: (808)926-0500 • Email: visitorexec@hawaii.rr.com



WWW.HAWAII TOURISM ASSOCIATION.COM

PHONE HAWAII, USA : +1-808-566-9900

GERMANY: (+49) 2102-1458477 UK:(+44) 20 3239 3300 AUSTRALIA (+61) 2-8005 1444

ALOHA@HAWAII TOURISM ASSOCIATION.COM

MEDIA UPDATE

.PDF with active links at <<http://belammc.com/hita/090303HITA.pdf>>

CONTACT: JUERGEN THOMAS STEINMETZ

Direct 808-536-1100

HAWAII TOURISM ASSOCIATION (HiTA) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED **Other Advances Made To Formalize & Promote New Professional Organization**

HONOLULU: March 03, 2009 – The recently-formed Hawaii'i Tourism Association (HiTA) is pleased to announce our first Executive Committee which will guide the association through startup and in determining its future direction and activities.

As its first order of business, the new Executive Committee voted to change its acronym from "HTA" to "HiTA." Hawaii's visitor industry marketing is managed via a government organization known as the *Hawai'i Tourism Authority* (HTA) See: <http://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/> Established in 1998, HTA's mission is "to strategically manage Hawaii'i tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with our economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, community desires and visitor industry needs."

The newly-formed *Hawai'i Tourism Association* (HiTA) mission statement reads:

"... to inform, educate, and update the global travel industry on current and emerging trends, economics, events, activities, services, businesses, and marketing that help shape the travelers' perception of the Hawaiian Islands. HiTA serves as a discussion forum for issues affecting consumers, and industry members, interested in visiting or doing business in Hawaii'i while also working with new markets and regions expressing interest in visiting, or working with, the Islands. By recognizing and promoting what *differentiates* this geographically-remote, island destination from other sand-sun-surf locations – the Hawaiian culture with its many expressions of Aloha -- we enhance our ability to bring to both the traveler, and the travel industry participant, those unique opportunities that will enrich their Hawaii'i experience."

Regarding the *Hawai'i Tourism Association* (HiTA) acronym change, founder, Jurgen Thomas Steinmetz said, "I never thought of the two entities in terms of their acronyms. I was simply looking for a name that met our

HAWAII TOURISM ASSOCIATION (HiTA)

Page 1 of 2

purpose. The *Hawaii Tourism Association* URL was available and I grabbed it. When I later realized both had the same acronym, which has apparently caused some confusion, we changed our acronym to "HiTA" and we trust this will help differentiate these two, distinct organizations with complementary agendas."

"We are off to a great start," Steinmetz said. "The response to our initial international survey garnered overwhelming response and served as an initiative to launch this association. We have received our first monetary contribution; HiTA's web portal is being constructed; we will have a presence at ITB in Berlin, Germany. ITB (International Tourism Exchange) is the world's largest travel trade show which we believe will give enhanced exposure to our destination. We have scheduled a presentation to German SKAL clubs. SKAL is a global association of travel industry CEO's and managers with chapters worldwide including Hawai'i. A phone conference with the trade in Singapore is expected to generate positive PR and open doors to new business opportunities. We recently conducted a telephone conference with 37 Hawai'i industry professionals participating, and our first phone 'educational seminar for travel industry professionals' on the East Coast had 50 callers -- the maximum possible per call. In terms of next steps, information recently assembled by the HiTA about Hawai'i is currently being circulated with the help of the U.S. Department of Commerce, which has access to 86 foreign embassies and local industry and media networks in those countries."

The new *Hawai'i Tourism Association* Executive Committee Members are:

Mr. Juergen Thomas Steinmetz, Publisher of Oahu-based *eTurboNews* which provides international travel industry news to 235,000 travel industry professionals in 226 countries and 17,000 journalists interested in travel news.

Mr. Frank Haas, Principal of *Marketing Management*, a consulting firm developing business, marketing, and operating plans for organizations primarily in the Hawai'i visitor industry. Mr. Haas is the Past VP of Marketing for the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and the Past National Chairman for the American Marketing Association.

Ms. Denise Moreland, President, *Hawaii's Cultural Connection*, is a cultural specialist whose purpose and passion is to preserve, promote, protect, and *share* Hawaii's indigenous cultural, and its essence of aloha, with all who visit Her shores.

Mr. Scott Foster, Principal, *Scott Foster & Associates* providing marketing communications, political strategy and public-opinion management consultation to musicians and artists, and progressive international organizations conducting business in Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Tourism Association welcomes your comments, communications, and inquiries and we look forward to, and welcome, the opportunity to meet or work with you in the near future. Mahalo A Nui Loa (Thank you very much)!

Opt to receive future information at: aloha@hawaiitourismassociation.com

Background on our organization (HiTA) and the issues at:

http://belammc.com/hita/HITA_Background_FINAL.htm

--###--

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair,
Representative Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

From: Community Alliance Partners
Hawai'i Island Continuum of Care to End Homelessness
(808) 933-6033 hawaiicap@gmail.com

FIN Public Hearing Date: Monday, March 2, 2009 (1:30 p.m.) CR 308

COMMENTS: HB 1187 RELATING TO HOMELESS, RETURN HOME

Dear Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Finance:

Community Alliance Partners (CAP), the Continuum of Care for the Island of Hawai'i, is a broad based consortium of social service providers and community members working together to address the issue of homelessness. These efforts are centered on collaboration to develop a spectrum of resources to assist those affected by homelessness in obtaining and maintaining sustainable housing and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

CAP would like to provide the following comments in reference to this proposed measure. This bill could be valuable to assist appropriate individuals. However, it should be given careful consideration before implementation.

It is critical that guidelines for selection of funding recipients should be clearly identified. The greatest benefit would be to utilize funding for individuals who have high services needs that could result in high costs for Hawaii and not for those who could manage here or return home on their own. People should only be returned to their home community when it can be verified that there is someone (family or service provider) who is willing and able to address their housing and service needs upon arrival.

Since a high percentage of project cost must be available to fund transportation cost to effectively impact the population in need, the funds for this program should be administered as efficiently and effectively as possible. It is recommended that this would be most effective through contracting funds to a non-profit homeless service agency.

Community Alliance Partners urges that when implemented, a proportionate share of this funding be designated for access by homeless individuals on Neighbor Islands, including the Big Island.

We support the current amendment to allow further consideration and dialogue to assess and develop the appropriate structure to facilitate the intended positive outcome for homeless individuals in need and the Hawaii community.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Testimony 1187

Netra Halperin

March 2, 2009

Finance committee

Good afternoon Chair Oshiro and members of the committee,

My name is Netra Halperin. I am a social worker and I support HB 1187.

The purpose of the return to home program is to assist homeless people from other states voluntarily return to home. This isn't meant to solve the entire homeless problem in the state of Hawaii, only the specific population that came to Hawaii with dreams of Hula girls serving Mai Thais on the beach and has then encountered the harsh reality of homelessness in Hawaii. It is meant for the out-of-state homeless that already have family, friends or other support services in the place where they are requesting transport to.

This program will work with homeless services, local airlines and charter companies to obtain tickets. It will get participants ready for travel and also follow up one month later. This will cost between \$400 and \$600 per person.

On the other hand it now costs the State of Hawaii between \$30,000 and \$35,000 per year, per homeless person in services, which include extensive hospital stays and medical care, shelter, food and social and other support services. This doesn't even include children incurring developmental delays with later costs.

This bill would save the state of Hawaii thousands of dollars and much un-necessary suffering.