

# HCR59

URGING THE HAWAII TOURISM  
AUTHORITY TO COORDINATE  
WITH THE HOSPITALITY  
INDUSTRY TO CREATE A MORE  
WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT  
FOR CHINESE VISITORS.



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**David Y. Ige**  
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Testimony of  
**Ronald Williams**  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Hawai'i Tourism Authority  
on  
**H.C.R 59, H.D.1**  
**Urging the Hawaii Tourism Authority to Coordinate with the  
Hospitality Industry to Create a More Welcoming  
Environment for Chinese Visitors**  
Senate Committee on Tourism and International Affairs  
Monday, April 20, 2015  
10:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 312

The Hawaii Tourism Authority supports H.C.R. 74, H.D.1, which urges the Hawaii Tourism Authority to coordinate with trade organizations and others in the hospitality industry to create a more welcoming environment for Chinese visitors, and requests the Hawaii congressional delegation to amend visa laws to include as a “specialty occupation” workers with a high degree of specialized knowledge of reading, writing, and speaking at an honorific level to international visitors.

HTA has been aware of the federal initiatives under the U.S. Travel Promotion Act to expand visa and travel opportunities for international visitors to the United States, and has endeavored to coordinate the efforts of the Hawaii travel industry to create a friendlier environment for Japanese, Korean, Chinese visitors, as well as emerging markets like Latin America.

These efforts, however, require more than hiring Chinese-speaking, Japanese-speaking, Korean-speaking, and other foreign-language speaking staff, or providing training in those cultures. An important component in facilitating the goal of increasing the number of international visitors, including Chinese visitors, is access to bilingual employees with the communications skills to read, write, and speak at an honorific level. The industry needs employees who are fluent in the languages of international visitors, who understand and respect the values and mores in their countries of origin. The facilitation of this goal will require amendment of certain federal visa laws and quotas.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa, which allows a U.S. company to employ a foreign individual for up to six years. It is designed to be used to employ staff in “specialty occupations,” which require a high degree of specialized knowledge. The law

should be amended to change the description of “specialty occupation” under the H-1B visa, to define the qualifications of an employee with the language skills required for working with international visitors. The amendment has to describe how a person qualifies as having the “high degree of specialized knowledge” to read, write, and speak at an honorific level to international visitors, with an understanding and respect required in their countries of origin.

For these reasons, we support H.C.R. 59, H.D.1, and urge its adoption.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer these comments.