

# SR35

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  
**S.C.R 74/S.R. 35**  
**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, March 23, 2015  
2:50 p.m.  
Conference Room 225

The Hawaii Tourism Authority supports S.C.R. 74 and S.R. 35, 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.

Aware of the federal initiatives under the Travel Promotion Act to expand visa and travel opportunities for international visitors, HTA 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 visa laws.

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 has to 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 law has to be amended 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.

S.C.R. 74/S.R. 35 should be amended to request an amendment to the visa laws to describe personnel with the language skills required for working with international visitors as qualifying to be a “specialty occupation.”

For these reasons, we support S.C.R. 74/S.R. 35, and urge their adoption.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer these comments.

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**Date:** Wednesday, March 18, 2015 7:07:41 PM

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**SR35**

Submitted on: 3/18/2015

Testimony for TSI on Mar 23, 2015 14:50PM in Conference Room 225

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
James Gauer	Individual	Support	No

Comments: A reasonable resolution for the state to refocus its tourism market with China as its target.

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