



**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 WAYS AND MEANS

April 1, 2025
10:01 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of
HB437 HD1 SD1
RELATING TO OUT-OF-STATE OFFICES

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **supports the intent** of HB437 HD1 SD1 which establishes an out-of-state office in the Philippines.

There exists a long history of cultural and business ties between Hawaii and the Philippines. An office in the Philippines can strengthen, expand and promote these ties for economic development and cultural exchanges between the two jurisdictions.

An appropriation in the amount of \$200,000 in fiscal year 2025-26 is needed for salaries, operating expenses, programmatic expenses, and start-up costs including a study as to where best to locate the office. An appropriation in the amount of \$175,000 is needed for fiscal year 2026-2027 and thereafter on a recurring basis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



OAHU FILIPINO COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Honolulu, Hawaii

April 1, 2025

To: Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 **Time:** 10:01 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

From: Oahu Filipino Community Council

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB437 HD1 SD1 - Appropriates Funds to Establish an Out-of-State Office in the Philippines.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

The Oahu Filipino Community Council submits this testimony in strong support of **HB437 HD1 SD1**, which requires and appropriates funds for the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) to establish an out-of-state office in the Republic of the Philippines.

This measure represents a significant opportunity to strengthen Hawai'i's economic, cultural, and diplomatic ties with the Philippines, a key partner in trade, tourism, and cultural exchange. Establishing an out-of-state office in the Philippines will provide a dedicated platform for fostering collaboration, promoting Hawai'i's interests, and supporting the Filipino community both locally and abroad.

Supporting Arguments:

- **Enhancing Economic Opportunities:**
 - The Philippines is one of Hawai'i's largest sources of visitors and a growing trade partner. Establishing an office in the Philippines will facilitate business

development, attract investments, and promote Hawai‘i as a premier destination for tourism and commerce.

- **Strengthening Cultural Connections:**

- Hawai‘i is home to a vibrant Filipino community, which plays a vital role in the state’s cultural and economic fabric. This office will serve as a bridge to strengthen cultural ties and support initiatives that celebrate and preserve Filipino heritage in Hawai‘i.

- **Supporting Workforce Development:**

- The Filipino community contributes significantly to Hawai‘i’s workforce, particularly in industries such as healthcare, education, and hospitality. An out-of-state office will help address workforce needs by fostering partnerships and facilitating the recruitment of skilled professionals from the Philippines.

- **Promoting Diplomatic Relations:**

- Establishing an office in the Philippines underscores Hawai‘i’s commitment to fostering positive diplomatic relations and mutual understanding with the Philippines. This initiative aligns with Hawai‘i’s values of inclusivity and global collaboration.

- **Expanding DBEDT’s Reach:**

- By establishing a presence in the Philippines, DBEDT can more effectively promote Hawai‘i’s interests, identify opportunities for collaboration, and address challenges in real-time.

Conclusion:

The establishment of an out-of-state office in the Republic of the Philippines is a forward-thinking initiative that will benefit Hawai‘i’s economy, culture, and community. We strongly urge the Committee to pass **HB437 HD1 SD1** to support this important effort.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this measure.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melodie Aduja
Chair, Social Action Committee
Director, Oahu Filipino Community Council