



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Tuesday, April 1, 2025
Time 2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
SB1578, SD2
RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) supports the intent of **SB1578, SD2** in the following areas:

- Redesignate the Hawaii sister-state committee as the Hawaii sister-state and international commission;
- Provide an exemption from 42F for state funding for the East-West Center(EWC). The EWC is an invaluable education and research organization in Hawaii and the country established by the U.S. Congress in 1960 to strengthen relations and understanding among the peoples and nations of Asia, the Pacific, and the United States. Its programs significantly contribute to Hawaii's role and position in international affairs, and align with Hawaii's goals in economic development, international relations and education. In addition, this bill provides an appropriation to the EWC. Regular support from State resources would help ensure that the EWC continues its good work and presence in Hawaii;

- Allow the out-of-state offices to establish and operate facilities to generate revenue for the state, such as pop-up stores selling Hawaii-made products, and other revenue producing facilities;
- Provide an appropriation to the office of international affairs of \$180,000 each fiscal year of the biennium. This funding is necessary to carry out the functions of the office of international affairs to develop and maintain the State's international relationships, programs and partnership, and to update its strategy for the State's international engagement and analyze potential investment and revenue generation abroad.

We support the intent of this measure provided it does not replace or adversely affect the Administration's priorities indicated in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 1578_SD2 HD1
RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol

April 1, 2025

2:00 p.m.

Room 308

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB1578 SD2 HD1, which would redesignate the Hawai'i Sister State Committee as the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission and name OHA as a member of the Commission. OHA willingly accepts this kuleana which would expand upon OHA's ongoing international activities and enable further collaboration with the State of Hawai'i and international partners on projects that promote cross-cultural exchanges and advance solutions to common problems like climate change.

OHA is an active member of the Austronesian Forum and other trans-Pacific forums that allow for cultural exchange and problem solving with sister nations, particularly the nations of Oceania. For example, OHA signed the Tuurama Ariki Declaration in June 2024 to join with traditional leaders across the Pacific to establish the Osiana Traditional Leaders Forum to share knowledge and collaborate on issues that affect all peoples of the Pacific. OHA also regularly engages with leaders of foreign nations on repatriation efforts, and engages in cultural protocol with those leaders when reclaiming ancestral patrimony. OHA welcomes the opportunity to share its experiences with the State of Hawai'i and other sister states.

OHA also notes that throughout the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of Hawai'i was an active player on the world stage. Hawai'i's monarchs strengthened Hawaii's international relationships to promote economic growth and preservation of cultural identity and sovereignty at home, but also to engage in relationship building and cultural exchange abroad. In the interest of continuing the work of Hawaii's sovereign and modern state leadership, we support strengthening sister-state and international partnerships.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. We respectfully request the Committee **PASS SB1578 SD2 HD1**.

**Testimony of James K. Scott, EdD
Interim President, East-West Center**

House Committee on Finance
Monday, March 31, 2025

SB NO. 1578 SD2 HD1: RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance:

Mahalo for this opportunity for the East-West Center (EWC) to provide testimony in **strong support** of SB1578 SD2 HD1. The measure authorizes General Fund appropriations to the East-West Center to be exempt from the requirements of chapter 42F, Hawai'i Revised Statutes.

We would like to note that the Hawai'i State Legislature in Act 82, Session Laws of Hawai'i 1975, established the EWC as an educational nonprofit public corporation. The designation of the East-West Center as the Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange Between East and West, Inc., underscores the state's recognition of the Center's pivotal role in international and intercultural exchange. This acknowledges not only the Center's stature but also reaffirms Hawai'i's commitment to fostering regional understanding and cooperation.

Furthermore, authorizing General Fund appropriations exempt from the requirements of chapter 42F, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, provides the Center with the financial flexibility necessary to effectively plan and implement programs in support of the State of Hawai'i. This exemption acknowledges the unique nature of the Center's work and the importance of timely and efficient allocation of resources to support its mission locally, nationally, and internationally.

The EWC plays a vital role in strengthening Hawai'i's communities through its diverse programs. Each year, more than 10,000 local residents engage with the Center through seminars, public events, arts programs, and cultural initiatives. The Center also makes a significant economic impact, injecting over \$30 million directly into Hawai'i's economy and providing employment for more than 160 people. With an active network of over 2,400 Hawai'i-based alumni and nearly 2,000 participants coming to the state annually for short- and long-term programs, the East-West Center not only enriches Hawai'i's cultural landscape but also strengthens its global connections and economic vitality.

In conclusion, the East-West Center supports SB1578 SD2 HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important measure.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB1578 SD2 HD1, RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025**

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance:

The East-West Center Employees Association, AFSCME Local 928, AFL-CIO, represents approximately 120 administrative support, professional/administrative, and academic employees currently employed at the East-West Center. We are writing to express our **STRONG SUPPORT** for **SB1578 SD2 HD1, RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**.

Since its establishment in 1960, the East-West Center has been instrumental in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between the United States and the nations of Asia and the Pacific. For over six decades, the Center and our union members have significantly contributed to promoting international relations, education, and research, positioning Hawai'i as a unique bridge between East and West. The Center's programs have not only enhanced the State's cultural and diplomatic relations but have also provided substantial economic benefits. While federal and private support for the East-West Center has been invaluable, it has been subject to fluctuations. Regular and predictable state funding would ensure the continuity and expansion of the Center's vital programs and initiatives, aligning with the State's strategic goals in international relations, education, and economic development. We believe that exempting the Center from certain statutory requirements will provide the necessary support for it to continue its mission without compromising its autonomy. This support will enable the Center to uphold its high standards of excellence and continue fostering better relations and understanding between the United States and the Indo-Pacific region.

We urge the legislature to pass SB1578 SD2 HD1 to ensure the East-West Center can continue to thrive and contribute to the State of Hawaii's role in international affairs and Sister-State Partnerships. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important bill.

Respectfully submitted,


Bronson K. Silva

International Union Representative