



TESTIMONY OF
CAROLINE ANDERSON
Interim President & CEO
Hawaii Tourism Authority
before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM
Tuesday, March 25, 2025
1:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 229

In consideration of
SCR 61/ SR 46
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND
TOURISM TO SPONSOR A MICHELIN GUIDE FOR RESTAURANTS ACROSS THE STATE

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) offers comments on SCR 61/ SR 46, which requests the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to sponsor a Michelin Guide for restaurants across the state.

The Hawaiian Islands offer a rich and diverse culinary landscape that showcases a blend of cultures, highlighting locally-sourced ingredients and innovative dishes. Implementing a Michelin Guide would not only elevate our local restaurants but also attract food enthusiasts and enhance the visitor experience by directing them to the best dining options. Additionally, it will bolster the local economy by elevating our culinary excellence.

We conducted research to gather background information about the process and budget required to bring the Michelin Guide to restaurants in a U.S. state. The process of introducing the Michelin Guide and its inspectors typically involves multiple steps and requires collaboration between Michelin, local tourism boards, government agencies, and stakeholders in the hospitality industry.

Funding is necessary to introduce the Michelin Guide to Hawai'i. The cost for a U.S. state to bring Michelin inspectors varies significantly based on the agreement reached between Michelin

and the state or local tourism boards. While Michelin does not publicly disclose exact pricing, state tourism boards usually negotiate financial agreements with Michelin to have their region evaluated for inclusion in the Michelin Guide. Below are some recent examples of U.S. destinations that have brought the Michelin Guide to their states:

- **Texas:** In 2024, the cost to bring the Michelin Guide to Texas involved a combined investment of \$2.7 million over three years, covering the cities of Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio. This funding was shared equally between Travel Texas, the state's tourism board, and the visitor bureaus of the participating cities. The state tourism board put up half of the amount, with the remaining \$450,000 to be split five ways between the five major metros in the guide. Visit Dallas pledged approximately \$90,000 annually over the three-year period. (Source: WFAA (Working For All Alike) <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/michelin-guide-texas-restaurants-star-ratings-dallas-fort-worth/287-e08cb870-e147-418b-8062-ea2264b67160>)
- **Colorado:** In 2023, the Colorado Tourism office agreed to contribute \$100,000 a year for 3 years to Michelin. Although the total cost projected was closer to \$135,000 according to the Communications Manager for the agency. (Source: The Colorado Sun <https://coloradosun.com/2023/09/12/colorado-michelin-guide-stars-restaurants-2023/>)
- **Florida:** In 2022, Visit Florida and the local tourism boards in Miami, Tampa and Orlando agreed to pitch in and pay Michelin up to \$1.5 million for 3 years. (Source: Axios Miami https://www.axios.com/local/miami/2025/02/04/michelin-guide-lauderdale-palm-beach?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our comments.

SCR-61

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 5:42:37 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/25/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism,

I am testifying in opposition to this resolution.

Hawaii has quality culinary education programs and opportunities and have lots of homegrown culinary talent. Hawaii should not be using tax dollars to pay for someone to come to Hawaii and review our programs in order to get publicity and attract more talent. Hawaii already has the local culinary talent.

Hawaii also does not need to promote our culinary talent to attract more visitors, as those are not the visitors we are looking for. We are not looking for visitors who simply come to Hawaii to experience something and return to their home, that is the current extractive model and we need to shift supporting things that promote that form of tourism.

We need to move to a regenerative model of tourism by promoting activities like reforestation efforts, indigenous agriculture, and green-technology advancements, to attract tourist that contribute to our communities, our environment, and our economy in a non-extractive way. The local culinary talents can benefit from the increase in these tourists if the state promotes chefs within our state - to hotels, local media, local channels - instead of sponsoring international reviews and publicity.

Lets focus on shifting tourism and moving away from extractive process. Lets not sponsor someone in hopes that they promote and attract the current standard tourists. Lets promote regenerative tourism externally with those dollars instead.

Mahalo for your consideration,
Keoni Shizuma