

Aloha Nui Loa,

It is with profound humility and deep commitment that I submit my intent to serve on the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) board, offering my insight, experience, and unwavering dedication to our Hawai'i's rich cultural fabric. As a practitioner, steward, and advocate of Hawaiian culture and values, I believe it is my kuleana to contribute toward shaping a sustainable, respectful, and meaningful future for Hawai'i—one that honors not only our vibrant past but also nurtures our iwi, our land, and our people today and for generations to come.

Honoring Our Roots: The Foundation of My Work and Values

My journey as a cultural practitioner has been rooted in a deep love and reverence for the traditions, language, and spiritual practices of Hawai'i. I have dedicated my life to perpetuating and protecting the Hawaiian way of life through my work as a Kumu Hula and leader of Hālau Ka Pā Hula O Hīnano. Since 2017, I have had the honor of guiding over 160 students each week, teaching them not only the dance of Hula but the very essence of our cultural identity—values of aloha, mālama, kuleana, and ha'aha'a.

To me, Hula is more than movement; it is an expression of our history, our stories, and our spirituality. It is a living tradition that connects us to our ancestors—our kupuna—whose wisdom and spirit continue to guide us. My halau is committed to upholding the highest standards of excellence while maintaining the integrity and authenticity of our Hawaiian practices. We recognize that Hula is a sacred gift, handed down through generations, and we serve as its custodians, ensuring it remains vibrant and true.

Within my halau, we embrace the notion that cultural practice is not a static act but a dynamic force that intertwines the past, present, and future. We teach our students to honor the land, our ancestors, and our community—living embodiments of the aloha spirit. We actively participate in community service, assist in cultural land stewardship, and offer blessings, protocols, and ceremonies at events that support and uplift our community.

Community Engagement: A Life of Service and Stewardship

My involvement within our community extends far beyond the walls of my halau. I see myself as a steward for our land, our resources, and our people—especially as native Hawaiians, the indigenous people of these islands. I have dedicated years to fostering conversations around mālama 'āina—caring for the land—and educating others about our sacred sites, water rights, forest conservation, and the importance of protecting wahi kupuna (ancestral sites).

I have been involved in various community initiatives, from leading cultural protocols at public festivals to collaborating with local organizations to promote mālama 'āina. As a public speaker and cultural facilitator, I regularly share insights at community gatherings, educational forums, and public events. These are our platforms to educate visitors and residents alike about the importance of Hawaiian values, our history, and our responsibilities as stewards of these lands.

I believe in advocacy that emphasizes the deep relationship our people have with 'āina and how respecting and understanding this connection is vital in fostering a sustainable future. Our land and natural resources are not commodities but sacred trusts entrusted to us by our ancestors. It is our kuleana to honor that trust, and I see my role as a voice for that sacred duty.

Navigating the Intersection of Culture and Tourism

As we look to the future of Hawai'i, I see the importance of recognizing that tourism—a vital economic engine—is not a separate entity from who we are. It is an extension of our story, our identity, and our community. When managed with aloha and respect, tourism can serve as a platform to showcase our culture authentically and serve as a bridge that connects the world to the true essence of Hawai'i.

However, it must be done thoughtfully. If we overlook the sacredness of our land, our stories, and our traditions in the name of economic growth, we risk losing the very heart of our islands. Yet, if we weave our heritage into the fabric of our tourism industry, we create a resilient foundation—one that sustains our people, honors our history, and educates visitors in the spirit of aloha.

This approach requires a commitment to authentic storytelling, cultural stewardship, and sustainable practices. It requires us, as native Hawaiians and custodians of this land, to lead by example—to share our stories in a way that is respectful, accurate, and empowering. It is also about cultivating partnerships rooted in mutual respect, where tourism becomes a platform for cultural exchange and mutual understanding rather than superficial commodification.

The Role of Culture in Shaping Our Future

Our ability to balance progress with preservation hinges on authentic leadership that values the voice of the native Hawaiian community. It is my belief that native Hawaiians—through our knowledge, traditions, and values—can provide the guidance necessary to create a balanced tourism strategy that benefits everyone.

By actively engaging our community in decision-making, fostering cultural education, and promoting mālama 'āina, we can help redirect the narrative of Hawai'i's tourism industry—a narrative that celebrates authenticity, sustainability, and integrity. I see this as an opportunity to elevate Hawaiian voices, honor our heritage, and steward our islands for those who come after us.

My Commitment

If given the privilege to serve on the Hawaii Tourism Authority board, I commit to bringing a voice rooted in 'ike, aloha, and kuleana. I will advocate for policies that respect and amplify Hawaiian cultural practices, prioritize mālama 'āina, and foster respectful engagement with

visitors. I will promote initiatives that educate and empower our community to lead sustainable tourism practices, and I will work tirelessly to ensure that the spirit of aloha remains at the core of our industry.

My life's work is dedicated to these principles, and I am ready to be a conduit—an advocate, a steward, and a cultural navigator—to help shape a future where Hawai'i's cultural heritage is not merely preserved but honored as the foundation upon which our thriving, respectful, and authentic tourism industry is built.

Closing

Mahalo nui loa for considering my application. It would be an honor to serve in this capacity and to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing story of Hawai'i—one written with aloha, respect, and a shared responsibility to mālama our beloved islands, our people, and our future.

Me ke aloha nui,
Troy Allen Hīnano Lazaro