

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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NADINE Y. ANDO
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DEAN I HAZAMA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the
House Committee on Tourism
Tuesday, February 3, 2026
8:30 a.m.
Via Videoconference

On the following measure:
H.B. 1944, RELATING TO TOURISM

Chair Tam and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ty Nohara, and I am the Commissioner of Securities and head of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Business Registration Division (BREG). The Department offers comments on this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to establish and designate the Corporation for the Stewardship of Hawaii Tourism as the official destination stewardship organization for the State.¹ Thus, this bill will add a new chapter that, among other things, directs an incorporator to organize the Corporation for the Stewardship of Hawaii Tourism as a nonprofit corporation, and to file a "certificate of incorporation" of the new entity with the Department.

Section § 414D-31 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) provides that "[o]ne or more individuals may act as the incorporator or incorporators of a corporation by

¹ Under this bill, the Hawaii Tourism Authority will be repealed, and its delegated functions will be transferred to the Corporation for the Stewardship of Hawaii Tourism.

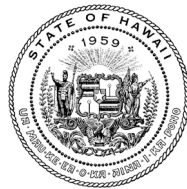
delivering articles of incorporation to the department director for filing.” (Emphasis added.) Additionally, pursuant to HRS § 414D-3(a), “[a] corporation’s existence begins when the articles of incorporation are filed with the department director.” (Emphasis added.)

Consistent with HRS chapter 414D and the foregoing statutory provisions, the Department respectfully requests that this bill be amended to replace all references to “certificate of incorporation” with “articles of incorporation.”

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

JOSH GREEN M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION

Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau
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GARY S. SUGANUMA
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. No. 1944, Relating to Tourism.

BEFORE THE:

House Committee on Tourism

DATE: Tuesday, February 3, 2026

TIME: 8:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 423

Chair Tam, Vice-Chair Templo, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding H.B. 1944 for your consideration.

H.B. 1944 establishes the "corporation for the stewardship of Hawaii tourism" ("corporation") to replace the Hawai'i tourism authority, shifting the focus from marketing to destination stewardship. The corporation would be organized as a nonprofit under Hawai'i law rather than a state agency attached to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, and the bill provides a tax exemption for all revenues and receipts derived by the corporation from any project or project agreement, or other agreement pertaining thereto.

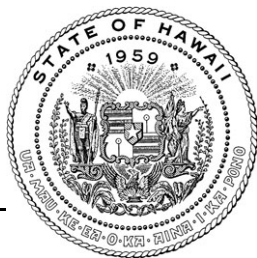
To facilitate these changes, Section 6 of the bill amends the exemption under section 237-24.75, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), by removing from the amounts received by the operator of the Hawai'i convention center for reimbursement of costs or advances, "those made pursuant to a contract with the Hawaii tourism authority under section 201B-7."

Section 7 of the bill amends section 237D-6.5, HRS, by removing the \$11,000,000 allocation to the convention center enterprise special fund established under section 201B-8.

The bill takes effect on approval.

DOTAX recommends that Section 7 take effect on July 1, 2026, to allow sufficient time to accommodate the fund allocation change.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKAI

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

Tuesday, February 3, 2026
8:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

In consideration of
HB 1944
RELATING TO TOURISM.

Chair Tam, Vice Chair Templo, and members of the Committee:

I respectfully oppose House Bill 1944, which seeks to establish and designate the Corporation for the Stewardship of Hawai'i Tourism, a nonprofit organization, as the official destination stewardship organization for the State and repeal the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA).

The passing of SB1571 during the 2025 Hawai'i Legislative Session designated the Hawai'i Tourism Authority Board of Directors as an advisory board, requires a member of the Board to represent a tourism-impacted entity, requires the Authority's President and Chief Executive Officer to report to the Governor, and exempted all positions within the Authority from the State's Civil Service Law to provide greater flexibility to recruit skilled professionals to carry out its mission.

These amendments, among others, are an effort to improve, strengthen and rebuild public trust in the Authority by ensuring leadership accountability and proper oversight.

Since SB1571 was signed into law by Governor Green as Act 132, the advisory board has convened full advisory board meetings; established committees – Administrative, Branding, and Ho'okahua Hawai'i (which provides strategic guidance on destination stewardship, the perpetuation of Hawaiian culture, the development and enhancement of visitor experiences, workforce development, and planning) – as well as new

committees for Sports Tourism and Film Tourism; and created Permitted Interaction Groups for HTA's CEO search and strategic plan.

In addition, the following FY 2026 priorities were identified by the HTA:

- Strengthen and diversify tourism's overall contribution to Hawai'i's economy through coordinated, market-appropriate branding and marketing activities with HTA's global marketing team, including increasing demand for sustainable, regenerative and experiential travel.
- Advance destination stewardship for Hawai'i, including growing HTA's sports portfolio to increase exposure of the Hawaiian Islands and support Hawai'i's communities and youth through professional sporting events, building the capacity of small businesses and community organizations, and developing a destination management app to manage tourism impacts.
- Improve interagency, visitor industry and community coordination and collaboration in destination management, workforce development, creative industries, DBEDT's Hawai'i Made program and agritourism.
- Perform essential repairs to the rooftop terrace deck of the Hawai'i Convention Center and reach specified milestones to ensure the completion of these repairs in 2027.

Since Act 132, HTA has implemented governance reforms and launched strategic initiatives to strengthen destination stewardship and cultural perpetuation.

The Governor and the Legislature have provided the framework for the HTA to carry out its mission to strategically manage Hawai'i tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, community desires and visitor industry needs. Repealing HTA now would create instability, delay critical projects and programs, and undermine collaborative efforts already underway.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose HB1944 and allow the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and its advisory board to fulfill its mandate. Dismantling a system that was just reformed to restore accountability and trust risks undoing progress before its impact can be considered.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



TESTIMONY OF
CAROLINE ANDERSON
Interim President & CEO
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM
Tuesday, February 3, 2026
8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 423
In consideration of
HB 1944
RELATING TO TOURISM

Aloha Chair Tam, Vice Chair Templo, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) respectfully opposes HB 1944, which would create and designate the Corporation for the Stewardship of Hawaii Tourism (a nonprofit organization) as the State's official destination stewardship organization and establish a structured transition of delegated functions from the HTA to the corporation. After the functions are transferred, the bill repeals the HTA statute (Chapter 201B).

While we agree with the Legislature's intent to advance destination stewardship and regenerative tourism, we have significant concerns regarding the proposed governance model:

1. **Accountability and Transparency Weakened.** Public oversight and accountability would be reduced in a nonprofit than in a state government agency which is subject to the Sunshine Laws and procurement rules. HTA's responsibilities include functions that can only be administered by a state agency, including procurement, contract administration, distribution of state funds, and program evaluation.
2. **Government and Stakeholder Coordination Challenges.** As a government entity, HTA serves as a catalyst, facilitating coordination and collaboration with other state and county agencies to address destination management and tourism product development.
3. **Loss of emergency authority and stable funding mechanism.** Chapter 201B includes a defined tourism emergency framework and a tourism emergency special fund to support emergency response measures when tourism experiences major disruptions. HTA currently has the ability to respond quickly to crises affecting visitor travel, public confidence, and community impacts. Should this bill pass, explicitly confirm how emergency authority, emergency funding mechanisms, and rapid-response roles continue under the new structure.

4. Transition and Market Risks. HB 1944 outlines a three-month transition period, during which HTA must continue its brand marketing and destination management efforts. This could lead to potential legal and financial complications associated with the transfer of contracts and obligations. Disruptions during this transition may negatively affect the state's existing programs and contractors, potentially resulting in unforeseen setbacks.

We defer to the Office of the Attorney General for guidance on the legality of HTA organizing a nonprofit corporation designated as the corporation for the stewardship of Hawai'i tourism.

We urge the Committee to hold HB1944, and instead strengthen HTA's mandate, by providing HTA with the tools and resources necessary for flexibility in brand marketing, destination stewardship, and oversight of the Hawai'i Convention Center within its existing framework.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our concerns and opposition on HB 1944.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

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EMAIL: oiip@hawaii.gov

To: House Committee on Tourism

From: Carlotta Amerino, Director

Date: February 3, 2026, 8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 1944
Relating to Tourism

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would repeal the Hawaii Tourism Authority and replace it with a corporation for the stewardship of Hawaii tourism. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) takes no position on the substance of this bill, but offers comments on provisions implicating part I of chapter 92, HRS, the Sunshine Law, and chapter 92F, HRS, the Uniform Information Practices Act (UIPA).

First, OIP notes that while the proposed new nonprofit stewardship corporation has language stating that it is not an agency or a public corporation, the Destination Stewardship Council also created in proposed section __-2 appears to meet the definition of a board subject to the Sunshine Law. Proposed subsection __-6(a), HRS, would give the Council an exception to the Sunshine Law's open meetings requirement to receive specified information, and subsection __-6(b) would allow it to go into executive session as authorized by the Sunshine Law. The open meeting exception appears to be based on the language of section 201B-4, HRS, which currently applies to the Hawaii Tourism Authority, but has been changed to split the language into two separate subsections. Because the language has been

split up, the provision in this bill does not make clear whether the Council is intended to go into executive session, following the procedure the Sunshine Law sets out for doing so, to use the open meeting exception in subsection __-6(a), or whether the Council is intended to be exempt from the Sunshine Law's open meeting requirement altogether for that exception. Subsection __-6(c) is also confusing. It states that the Council is subject to sections 92-4 and 92-5, HRS, "to enable the [Council] to respect the proprietary requirements of enterprises. . ." However, as a board subject to the Sunshine Law the Council would of course be subject to the Sunshine Law provisions in sections 92-4 and 92-5, HRS, so it is unclear why this language is necessary in the bill.

To clarify that the open meeting exception is a special executive session purpose, and that the Council can also go into executive session under the other purposes authorized in the Sunshine Law, **OIP recommends that this Committee amend proposed section __-6, HRS, on pages 17-18, to read as follows:**

(a) The council may go into an executive session that is closed to the public as provided in section 92-4 for any of the purposes listed in section 92-5, and also for the purpose of receiving:

(1) Information that is proprietary to a particular enterprise or the disclosure of which might be harmful to the business interests of the enterprise; or

(2) Information that is necessary to protect Hawaii's competitive advantage as a visitor destination; provided that information relating to marketing plans and strategies may be

disclosed after the execution of the marketing plans and strategies.

Finally, OIP notes that the way the corporation created by this bill is set up has implications for the Uniform Information Practices Act (UIPA), chapter 92F, HRS. The corporation is not an agency or a government corporation, but it will be led by a government Council subject to the Sunshine Law and will not be subject to taxation, presumably because it will perform what appears to be a government function. It will also work with county Island Destination Stewardship Councils on county-level plans. The Council would be an agency subject to the UIPA, as would the Island Destination Stewardship Councils, but the corporation apparently would not be. This creates considerable potential for confusion and frustration when members of the public seek records relating to the work done by the statewide and county level councils in conjunction with the corporation. Such requests will need to be made to the councils, not the corporation, and each request will raise the question of whether the records are maintained (directly or administratively) by the council it is addressed to, maintained by a different council, or maintained only by the corporation and thus not subject to the UIPA. OIP respectfully recommends this Committee consider the UIPA implications in deciding whether to move forward with this proposed new format for the State's tourism stewardship.

Thank you for considering OIP's testimony.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:40:58 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Cabjuan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose this bill. Open door for fraud. Please do not pass this bill.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:23:21 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michdelle Melendez	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

I'm a Hawai'i resident submitting testimony in opposition to HB1944.

Replacing the Hawai'i Tourism Authority with a **Governor-appointed private nonprofit removes critical public oversight** from one of the most powerful forces shaping our islands. Tourism affects housing, infrastructure, water, culture, and daily life for locals, yet this bill would shift decision-making into a structure with **less transparency, fewer public records, and reduced legislative accountability**.

Even if well-intended, this bill concentrates authority in the executive branch and sets a troubling precedent: **public policy funded by public dollars, managed by a private entity, with limited public recourse**. Locals already feel excluded from decisions that impact our cost of living and community well-being—this bill moves us further in that direction.

Tourism reform should mean **more accountability and community voice, not less**. I respectfully urge you to oppose HB1944.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:38:12 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cat Orlans	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: H.B. 1944 – RELATING TO TOURISM HEARING DATE: 2/2/26

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Cat Orlans, and I am a resident of Honolulu, O'ahu. I am testifying today as an individual citizen and a parent to a child with disabilities. While I work within the tourism industry, the views expressed in this testimony are my own and do not represent those of my employer.

I am testifying in **Support of H.B. 1944 with Comments**. I want to see a tourism strategy that moves beyond short-term in-fighting and provides long-term stability for the Hawaii my child will inherit. As a resident with a professional background in this field, I appreciate the intent of this bill, but I urge you to rely on the resident expertise captured in the "[Governance Study for the Hawai'i Tourism Authority](#)" study to refine three critical areas:

1. Establishing Fiscal Predictability (Section -5)

The "Governance" study findings emphasize that "uncertain funding" prevents the state from managing the long-term stewardship projects our communities need.

- **Resident Perspective:** Just as families with children with disabilities must plan and budget years in advance, our tourism stewardship organization must do the same. Relying on annual legislative appropriations makes destination stewardship subject to the volatility of political cycles.
- **Requested Refinement:** I urge the Committee to adopt the study's recommendation for a **dedicated, multi-year funding floor** (such as a fixed TAT percentage). This provides the "financial predictability" necessary for the brand stability and community trust our industry relies on. This also ensures we remain competitive in a global industry.

2. Enabling Operational Agility (Section -3(f))

The study found that the rigid state procurement code (Chapter 103D) is a significant barrier to fixing problems in real-time.

- **Resident Perspective:** When a public asset—like an accessible trail or a cultural site—is damaged or overcrowded, the solution should not be delayed by months and sometimes years of state paperwork. We need an organization that can respond to "hotspots" with the speed of the private sector.
- **Requested Refinement:** Please consider exempting the nonprofit corporation from Chapter 103D, provided it adopts its own **stringent, transparent, and agile procurement policies** that mirror the study's call for efficiency.

3. Ensuring Community-Led Transition (Section -4)

- **Resident Perspective:** To move past the "in-fighting" of the past, the transition to this new model must be guided by a diverse set of voices from the start.
- **Requested Refinement:** I suggest that the **Hawaii Destination Stewardship Council**—which includes resident and cultural expertise—be given a "concurrence" role in the transition agreement. This ensures that the expertise of the people living in these communities guides the new organization's first steps.

H.B. 1944 is the right vehicle for reform, but it needs the "engine" of funding stability and the "wheels" of administrative agility. By adopting these refinements, you are choosing a strategy that values the expertise of residents and ensures a sustainable future for all our children.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:38:52 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

While I am in support of the nonprofit entity to be the official destination stewardship organization for the State, I think what is missing in this bill that needs to be incorporated is the connection between stewardship and Hawaiian culture.

For more than a thousand years Native Hawaiians stewarded this land and kept in pristine beauty with an abundance of resources. The practices and traditions of the indigenous people of this land allowed and ensured that the people lived in balance with their environment, growing more and making abundant everything from fresh water to food, to clean streams and oceans.

In Hawaii, there should be no discussion of stewardship without a Hawaiian cultural connection/lens. In the bill, the members are appointed by the governor, but it should be required that all appointed members have a degree in Hawaiian studies or Hawaiian language, or have years of experience working with nonprofits with cultural foundations. There can not be a stewardship department or program that is void of Hawaiian culture. This requirement should be added into the bill.

The same should be applied for the state council that includes ex officio members to represent state government agencies. These departments should designate someone within their agencies that have Hawaiian cultural experience or expertise to be a part of this stewardship corporation.

Similarly, the bill indicates that the CEO and president will hire and direct the staff of the corporation, the heads of the departments or divisions within the corporation should have expertise and/or experience in Native Hawaiian culture.

Mahalo for your consideration,
Keoni Shizuma

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 2:46:32 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fran Copp	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Opposing this because it continues the pattern of shifting public power away from the people and into centralized unelected ted executive control, which changes the structure of government and is not how this country is meant to run!

With so many locals depending on tourism it MUST remain under transparent, accountable public governance.

Emergency orders pose a threat to the sovereignty of each individual citizen. The Governors and elected officials are meant to represent and not control its citizenry.

As citizens we need to see what you are doing and you need to be heard from your constituents in a timely transparent way.

mahalo for your service.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:15:13 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy A. Hayashi	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

No one man should override the Constitution, which is why we have 3 branches of gov't. In like manner, no one drug/vaccine is a one size fits all. Someone will die or have a catastrophic reaction to any drug, as we are all different. We must retain choice as free citizens. This gov't is unique worldwide, as it is one of and by the citizens. That has dwindled in past decades by corrupt and selfish intruders into our system. I stand to keep freedom. As a home owner and medical professional, I whole heartedly oppose HB1944.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:25:04 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Honma	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose hb1944

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:50:35 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendra Miranda	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is stealing the people's freedom and power and putting it into executive hands. We are a democracy and should remain as such.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:15:40 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Pusateri	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill continues the pattern of shifting public power away from the people and into centralized executive control, that is not democracy

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:03:29 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chris Porter	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Every single one in my family and circle of friends Opposes HB1944, it completely violates public trust, our Tourism industry needs maximum transparency. Just the proposition of HB1944 seems like it would move our state more toward a complete dictatorship, which by the way there's A Lot of things you've already done pushing us in that direction. It's gonna be really nice when we Vote on Paper again, most of you will be unemployed. God bless you all.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:04:14 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cecelia Ashton	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I say NO to replacing the HTA with a Governor appointed private Non-profit.

Cece Ashton

Waikoloa, Hi. 96738

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:29:55 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amara Karuna	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With so many locals depending on tourism it MUST remain under transparent, accountable public governance.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:55:42 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wendy Peters	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Oppose HB1944 – Protect Transparency and Public Oversight

Aloha Chair and Members,

I am writing in strong opposition to HB1944. Replacing the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority with a Governor-appointed private nonprofit would significantly weaken transparency, accountability, and public oversight in one of the state’s most consequential sectors.

This bill continues a troubling pattern of shifting public power away from the people and concentrating it within the executive branch. Centralizing control in a private entity—one not subject to the same open-meeting laws, public records requirements, or community accountability—fundamentally alters the balance of government. That is not how our system is meant to function, and it undermines the democratic safeguards that protect the public interest. Tourism policy affects every resident, every community, and every natural resource in Hawai‘i. Decisions of this magnitude must remain in the hands of a transparent, publicly accountable body—not a private organization appointed by a single office.

I urge you to reject HB1944 and preserve the principles of open government, shared power, and public trust.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:03:18 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Magoon Ohana	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

OPPOSE!

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:16:25 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Kekina	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Make the choice ourselves to vaccinate or not too!Aloha

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:33:40 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlene Lum	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill. Hawaii Visitor's industry is very important to all of us. It needs to be transparent and not appointed. The people need to be informed and involved in this process.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:01:38 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Makaawaawa	Nation of Hawai'i	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

****Providing Comments On****

As an organization dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and advancement of Native Hawaiian rights, culture, and self-determination, the Nation of Hawai'i recognizes the significance of HB1944, which proposes to establish a new nonprofit Corporation for the Stewardship of Hawaii Tourism and repeal the Hawaii Tourism Authority. This bill is of particular importance to our community, as tourism governance directly affects Native Hawaiian land use, cultural sites, and the ability to ensure that tourism aligns with the values and priorities of Hawai'i's Indigenous people.

We acknowledge the intent to shift toward a stewardship model for tourism, which aligns in principle with regenerative tourism practices and greater community involvement. However, the creation of a new nonprofit entity as the official destination stewardship organization raises questions about representation, accountability, and the degree to which Native Hawaiian voices will be integrated into decision-making. Historically, tourism management has not always adequately protected cultural sites, burial grounds, or supported the economic and social rights of Native Hawaiians. The transition away from the Hawaii Tourism Authority must address these longstanding concerns.

It is also essential that any new governance structure for tourism in Hawai'i recognizes the unique status of Native Hawaiians as the Indigenous people of these islands, and upholds their rights to self-determination, communal land tenure, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources. The bill's approach should ensure that Native Hawaiian organizations, cultural practitioners, and communities are not only consulted but are active partners in shaping tourism policy, particularly regarding land use, conservation districts, and the protection of sacred and historical sites.

We respectfully recommend that the bill include explicit provisions for Native Hawaiian representation within the new corporation's governance, as well as mechanisms for meaningful consultation and consent on matters affecting Hawaiian lands, waters, and cultural heritage. Clear safeguards and accountability measures are needed to ensure that the stewardship model truly advances regenerative tourism, protects Native Hawaiian rights, and supports the broader goal of Hawaiian reconciliation. We urge careful consideration of these issues as the bill moves forward.

Aloha,

Brandon Maka'awa'awa

Vice President, Nation of Hawai'i

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:04:55 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Fisher	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I do not support HB1944. By replacing the Hawai'i Tourism Authority with a Governor appointed non-profit, you are reducing transparency and public oversight. This is a continued pattern of shifting public power away from "the people" and into centralized executive control. It changes the structure of government and it's not how this country was meant to be run.

Mahalo,

Shannon Fisher

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 9:30:34 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rita Wong	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With so many locals depending on tourism Hawaii Tourism MUST remain under transparent, accountable public governance not Governor appointed private nonprofit, reducing transparency & public oversight.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 1:33:08 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MARILIA DE ANDRADE	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With so many locals depending on tourism it MUST remain under transparent, accountable public governance.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 1:37:05 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paula Hurley	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. To my understanding HB1944 would replace the Hawai'i Tourism Authority with a Governor-appointed private nonprofit. This will reduce transparency and public oversight and I oppose it. By shifting public power away from the people and into centralized executive control, the structure of government is changed and that is not democratic. We need transparency. Hawai'i depends on tourism and it MUST remain under transparent, accountable public governance. Mahalo

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:08:59 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Abellanida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill. It will remove transparency and oversight. I urge you to kill this bill.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 6:40:10 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vernelle Oku	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I oppose this bill to create another organization under the governor. Our governor already appoints the attorney general, the ethics commission, the LGBTQ commission, the head of the Department of Education, along with thousands of other positions including the judges and has been creating Emergency Executive Orders giving the Governor almost unchecked power over the people of Hawaii who are suffering with the same problems of cost of living, crime, homelessness. Under this law, Tourism will become another lawn in the Governor's already too powerful empire.

thank you for considering my comments.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:20:08 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tam and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully oppose HB1944.

HB1944 repeals the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority and designates a new nonprofit corporation as the State’s official destination stewardship organization. This structural change lacks sufficient statutory guardrails, transparency requirements, and accountability standards for an entity that would assume statewide authority over tourism policy and stewardship.

The bill does not clearly define enforceable performance metrics, legislative oversight mechanisms, or guarantees that resident needs, infrastructure capacity, and environmental limits will drive decision-making. Replacing a public authority with a nonprofit entity without clear accountability risks weakening public oversight and reducing community input in tourism governance.

Meaningful tourism reform must be transparent, resident-first, and accountable to the public and Legislature. HB1944, as written, does not meet that standard.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to oppose HB1944.

Mahalo,

Teri Kia Savaiinaea

Wai‘anae, Hawai‘i

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:24:34 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Donna Thompson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We need transparency and accountability, not decision making going to governor appointed private NGO's. Tourism significantly affects the infrastructure of Hawaii. Private corporations are not subject to the same oversight as governmental bodies and this bill should not move forward. Furthermore, the legislative branch really needs to rein in the governor that is suspending laws left and right using emergency proclamations to carry out an agenda. What happened to checks and balances of the original constitution?

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:51:15 AM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melodie Reyes	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please oppose HB1944 because it reduces transparency and public oversight which is not Pono.

HB-1944

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:41:39 PM

Testimony for TOU on 2/3/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill.