

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND



Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

Rep. Adrian K. Tam, Chair

Rep. Shirley Ann Templo, Vice Chair

DATE: Tuesday, February 10th

TIME: 11:15 a.m.

STRONGLY Oppose HB1947

Aloha Chairs Hashem and Tam, Vice Chairs Morikawa and Templo, and committee members,

My name is Antoinette Davis, and it has been my honor to serve as Executive Director of the Activities and Attractions Association of Hawaii (A3H), a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) trade organization, since 1997. A3H STRONGLY Opposes the establishment of the Division of Destination Management within the Department of Land and Natural Resources as well as the repealing of the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

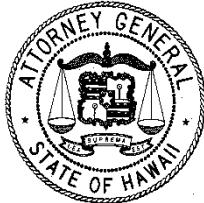
DLNR has no place, money or time to be managing DMAPs. As an active committee member of the Maui DMAPS and from years of experience of DLNR's dysfunction and lack of sound management, this is like oil and water – an odd suggestion.

Repealing HTA should not be considered either. Like it or hate, tourism is our main economic engine and as a state we must market Tourism. We need allocated dollars at previous levels without hurdles to climb and strings attached. Having DBEDT's oversite is prudent. There are other Bills that address HTA better: SB2907 and HB2447.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and the opportunity to testify.

Toni

Toni Marie Davis
Executive Director
Activities & Attractions Association of Hawaii, Inc.
Statewide 501 (c) (6) not-for-profit Trade Association
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**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
H.B. NO. 1947, RELATING TO TOURISM.**

**BEFORE THE:
HOUSE COMMITTEES ON TOURISM AND ON WATER & LAND**

DATE: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 **TIME:** 11:15 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 423

TESTIFER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
John E. Cole or Christopher J.I. Leong, Deputy Attorneys General

Chairs Tam and Hashem and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) opposes the new section 201-E (page 12, line 14, through page 13, line 4) and the amendments to section 28-8.3(a) and (c) (page 24, line 10, through page 27, line 21) in the bill and otherwise provides the following comments.

This bill repeals the Hawaii Tourism Authority, establishes the Office of Tourism within the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT), and establishes the Division of Destination Management within the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

The Department respectfully opposes section 201-E (page 12, line 14, through page 13, line 4) and the amendments to section 28-8.3(a) and (c) (page 24, line 10, through page 27, line 21), which would allow the Advisory Board on Tourism or the Office of Tourism to appoint or retain by contract attorneys independent of the Attorney General, and to fix their compensation. The Department requests that these provisions be removed from the bill.

The Attorney General serves as legal counsel to the State of Hawai'i, which statutory obligation includes providing legal services to state agencies. Because it is the largest legal entity of the State, with a number of diverse divisions, the Attorney General is best suited to provide legal advice to its state clients on a broad array of matters and therefore, as a general matter, state agencies should be advised by deputy attorneys general. By utilizing attorneys representing state agencies within the

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Department of the Attorney General, state agencies benefit from the wide range of experience and expertise in a cost-effective and conflict-free manner. Additionally, because state agencies are regulated by a variety of laws not applicable in private practice – including the Procurement Code, the Sunshine Law, and the Uniform Information Practices Act – the Attorney General's expertise representing state agencies in these areas would be difficult for private attorneys to duplicate, and certainly not without additional expense. Finally, because deputy attorneys general are separate and apart from the agencies they represent, they are insulated from political issues that may arise within an agency. This insulation permits the Department of the Attorney General to provide objective legal counsel. For these reasons, we respectfully request that section 201-E and the amendments to section 28-8.3 be deleted.

In all other respects, on page 9, line 2, of the bill, section 201-A defines the term "office" as "the office of tourism." However, in multiple places within part IV (Office of Tourism), the bill uses the word "division" when it appears the intent is to refer to the Office of Tourism. For consistency and clarity, "division" should be changed to "office" at the following locations:

- Page 12, line 3
- Page 13, lines 6, 19, and 20
- Page 14, lines 12, 16, and 18
- Page 16, line 19
- Page 17, lines 3, 4, 8, and 20
- Page 18, lines 4, 5, 7, 13, and 19
- Page 19, lines 2, 12, and 15
- Page 20, line 5
- Page 40, lines 13 and 15

Section 201-C(d), on page 11, lines 10-12, states: "seven members shall constitute a quorum, and a minimum of seven affirmative votes shall be necessary for all actions by the office." Typically, advisory boards do not make binding decisions. Unless the intent is to have the advisory board make all decisions for the Office of Tourism, the phrase "and a minimum of seven affirmative votes shall be necessary for all actions by the office" should be deleted.

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Section 201-D(b), on page 12, lines 1-2, states: "The staff of the office shall be exempt from chapter 76 . . ." Pursuant to section 76-16(b)(17)(A), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), exemptions from civil service created outside of section 76-16, HRS, generally do not remain in effect for longer than three years unless affirmatively extended by the Legislature. If the intent is to exempt those positions beyond three years, the bill should include an amendment to section 76-16(b) to expressly exempt the Office of Tourism position. This may be accomplished by amending section 76-16(b)(43), HRS, as follows: "[](43)[] All positions [filled by] in the [Hawaii tourism authority] office of tourism within the department of business, economic development, and tourism."

Section 201-D(a), on page 11, line 18, refers to a "state tourism liaison," provides that the position serves as the liaison to the Advisory Board on Tourism, and states that the liaison reports to the Governor. However, the bill does not otherwise clarify the role, duties, or employment status of this position, including whether it is intended to be part of the Office of Tourism's staff (and be included in section 201-D(b)) and whether it is intended to be exempt from civil service. For clarity, the Department recommends that the bill clearly specify the role and status of the position.

Section 8 of the bill amends section 201B-16 regarding annual reports (beginning on page 34, line 12). However, section 2 of the bill, on page 3, lines 8-9, repeals chapter 201B, HRS. If the intent is to impose annual reporting requirements on the new Office of Tourism, the reporting provision should instead be added as a new section within the new part added to chapter 201, in section 4 of the bill.

Section 9 of the bill amends section 237-24.75(2), HRS, by replacing "Hawaii tourism authority" with "office." For clarity, the full name, "office of tourism," should replace "Hawaii tourism authority."

The bill does not include provisions that are typical when transferring functions from one department or agency to another. These include the transfer of employees, continuity of rules and policies, the transfer of contracts, permits, and other documents, and the transfer of records and equipment. Appropriate transfer provisions pertaining to both DLNR, and the new Office of Tourism should be included in new sections of the bill. Templates for these provisions are provided in the Legislative Reference Bureau's

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Legislative Drafting Manual, Eleventh Edition, at pages 73-74. We have attached draft transfer provisions for both DLNR and the Office of Tourism to our testimony for your consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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For transfers to DLNR:

SECTION XX. All rights, powers, functions, and duties of the Hawaii tourism authority identified in part III of this Act are transferred to the department of land and natural resources.

All officers and employees whose functions are transferred by this Act shall be transferred with their functions and shall continue to perform their regular duties upon their transfer, subject to the state personnel laws and this Act.

No officer or employee of the State having tenure shall suffer any loss of salary, seniority, prior service credit, vacation, sick leave, or other employee benefit or privilege as a consequence of this Act, and such officer or employee may be transferred or appointed to a civil service position without the necessity of examination; provided that the officer or employee possesses the minimum qualifications for the position to which transferred or appointed; and provided that subsequent changes in status may be made pursuant to applicable civil service and compensation laws.

An officer or employee of the State who does not have tenure and who may be transferred or appointed to a civil service position as a consequence of this Act shall become a civil service employee without the loss of salary, seniority, prior service credit, vacation, sick leave, or other employee benefits or privileges and without the necessity of examination; provided that such officer or employee possesses the minimum qualifications for the position to which transferred or appointed.

If an office or position held by an officer or employee having tenure is abolished, the officer or employee shall not thereby be separated from public employment, but shall remain in the employment of the State with the same pay and classification and shall be transferred to some other office or position for which the officer or employee is eligible under the personnel laws of the State as determined by the head of the department or the governor.

SECTION XX. All rules, policies, procedures, guidelines, and other material adopted or developed by the Hawaii tourism authority to implement provisions of the Hawaii Revised Statutes that are reenacted or made applicable to the department of land and natural resources by part III of this Act shall remain in full force and effect until amended or repealed by the department of land and natural resources pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

In the interim, every reference to the Hawaii tourism authority in those rules, policies, procedures, guidelines, and

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other material is amended to refer to the department of land and natural resources, as appropriate.

SECTION XX. All deeds, leases, contracts, loans, agreements, permits, or other documents executed or entered into by or on behalf of the Hawaii tourism authority, pursuant to the provisions of the Hawaii Revised Statutes, that are reenacted or made applicable to the department of land and natural resources by part III of this Act shall remain in full force and effect. Upon the effective date of this Act, every reference to the Hawaii tourism authority or its president and chief executive officer therein shall be construed as a reference to the department of land and natural resources, or the chairperson of the board of land and natural resources, as appropriate.

Section XX. All appropriations, records, equipment, machines, files, supplies, contracts, books, papers, documents, maps, and other personal property heretofore made, used, acquired, or held by the Hawaii tourism authority relating to the functions transferred to the department of land and natural resources by part III of this Act shall be transferred with the functions to which they relate.

For transfers to the Office of Tourism:

SECTION XX. All rights, powers, functions, and duties of the Hawaii tourism authority as identified in part IV of this Act are transferred to office of tourism within the department of business, economic development, and tourism.

All officers and employees whose functions are transferred by this Act shall be transferred with their functions and shall continue to perform their regular duties upon their transfer, subject to the state personnel laws and this Act.

No officer or employee of the State having tenure shall suffer any loss of salary, seniority, prior service credit, vacation, sick leave, or other employee benefit or privilege as a consequence of this Act, and such officer or employee may be transferred or appointed to a civil service position without the necessity of examination; provided that the officer or employee possesses the minimum qualifications for the position to which transferred or appointed; and provided that subsequent changes in status may be made pursuant to applicable civil service and compensation laws.

An officer or employee of the State who does not have tenure and who may be transferred or appointed to a civil service position as a consequence of this Act shall become a

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civil service employee without the loss of salary, seniority, prior service credit, vacation, sick leave, or other employee benefits or privileges and without the necessity of examination; provided that such officer or employee possesses the minimum qualifications for the position to which transferred or appointed.

If an office or position held by an officer or employee having tenure is abolished, the officer or employee shall not thereby be separated from public employment, but shall remain in the employment of the State with the same pay and classification and shall be transferred to some other office or position for which the officer or employee is eligible under the personnel laws of the State as determined by the head of the department or the governor.

SECTION XX. All rules, policies, procedures, guidelines, and other material adopted or developed by the Hawaii tourism authority to implement provisions of the Hawaii Revised Statutes that are reenacted or made applicable to the office of tourism by part IV of this Act shall remain in full force and effect until amended or repealed by the office of tourism pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

In the interim, every reference to the Hawaii tourism authority in those rules, policies, procedures, guidelines, and other material is amended to refer to the office of tourism, as appropriate.

SECTION XX. All deeds, leases, contracts, loans, agreements, permits, or other documents executed or entered into by or on behalf of the Hawaii tourism authority, pursuant to the provisions of the Hawaii Revised Statutes, that are reenacted or made applicable to the office of tourism by part IV of this Act shall remain in full force and effect. Upon the effective date of this Act, every reference to the Hawaii tourism authority or its president and chief executive officer therein shall be construed as a reference to the office of tourism, or the director of business, economic development, and tourism, as appropriate.

Section XX. All appropriations, records, equipment, machines, files, supplies, contracts, books, papers, documents, maps, and other personal property heretofore made, used, acquired, or held by the Hawaii tourism authority relating to the functions transferred to the office of tourism by part IV of this Act shall be transferred with the functions to which they relate.

JOSH GREEN M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



GARY S. SUGANUMA
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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**TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
H.B. No. 1947, Relating to Tourism

BEFORE THE:
House Committees on Tourism, and Water & Land

DATE: Tuesday, February 10, 2026
TIME: 11:15 a.m.
LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 423

Chairs Tam and Hashem, Vice-Chairs Templo and Morikawa, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding H.B. 1947 for your consideration.

Part II, Section 2, of H.B. 1947 repeals in its entirety chapter 201B, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) thereby eliminating the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA).

Part III, Section 3, of the bill adds a new chapter to the HRS establishing within the Department of Land and Natural Resources a new "Division of Destination Management" ("Division"). The Division's primary focus is to meet destination management objectives by performing the action plan for each county.

Part IV, Section 4, of the bill adds new parts to chapter 201, HRS, establishing within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, the "Office of Tourism" to replace the HTA. The focus of the Office of Tourism is primarily on developing a strategic tourism management plan that advances tourism marketing, complies with destination management best practices, and promotes regenerative tourism.

New section 201-I, HRS, creates a new “Tourism Emergency Special Fund” (TESF) to be administered by the Division and which will be funded with deposits from the revenues generated under section 237D-6.5(b)(3), HRS.

New section 201-K, HRS, creates a new “Convention Center Enterprise Special Fund” (CCESF) which will be partially funded with a portion of the revenues generated from the Transient Accommodations Tax (TAT) as provided by section 237D-6.5(b)(2).

New section 201-L, HRS, provides that all revenues and receipts derived by the Office of Tourism from any project, project agreement, or other agreement “pertaining thereto” will be exempt from all Hawai’i taxes.

To facilitate these changes, Part V, Section 6 of H.B. 1947 amends section 36-27(a)(4), HRS (regarding exemptions from the requirement to transfer five per cent of special funds to the general fund to defray fund operation costs) to remove and replace the reference to the CCESF under 201B-8, HRS, to the newly created section 201-K, HRS (which establishes the new CCESF).

Part V, Section 9, of the bill amends the exemption under section 237-24.75, HRS, to remove and replace the reference to the HTA with the newly established “office” (Office of Tourism) and the reference of section 201B-7, HRS, to the newly created section 201-G (regarding tourism-related activities).

Part V, Section 10, of the bill amends section 237D-6.5(b)(2), HRS, (regarding the \$11,000,000 allocation to the CCESF) to remove and replace the reference to section 201B-8, HRS, with the newly created section 201-K, HRS (which establishes the new CCESF), and the reference under 237D-6.5(b)(3) (regarding the \$5,000,000 allocation to the TESF) from section 201B-10, HRS, to the newly created section 201-I, HRS (which establishes the new TESF).

The bill takes effect on January 1, 2027, provided that Part VI, sections 11 and 12 (regarding appropriations for staffing) are effective on July 1 of an unspecified year.

DOTAX recommends, for clarity, that the term “office” in Part V, Section 9, which amends section 237-24.75, HRS, be replaced with the term “Office of Tourism.”

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

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
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CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
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**Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson**

**Before the House Committees on
TOURISM
and
WATER & LAND**

**Tuesday, February 10, 2026
11:15 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1947
RELATING TO TOURISM**

House Bill 1947 proposes to repeal the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), establish the Office of Tourism within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), and establish the Division of Destination Management within the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department). **The Department has serious concerns with this measure and provides the following comments.**

This measure would repeal HTA and assign its destination management duties to the Department to be managed by a newly created division. While the Department has had some notable success in the realm of destination management - lauded examples include the Hā'ena State Park community management paradigm, and the Division of Forestry and Wildlife's Pololu Trailhead management program - the Department is not suited to expand efforts outside of its jurisdiction into county and private lands. The Department's staff is largely comprised of experts in natural sciences, natural resource management, and other closely related areas of expertise commonly associated with its mission to enhance, protect, and conserve Hawai'i's unique and limited natural, cultural, and historic resources.

Furthermore, as a practical matter, the Department has no space to accommodate a new division. Department staff are already fully occupying existing office space in the Kalanimoku Building. Additionally, some divisions are already required to seek external office and other

work spaces due to ongoing constraints. The Department is currently performing due diligence to support possible acquisition of the former Hawai'i Pacific University's Hawaii Loa campus to relocate and consolidate some divisions and departmental functions. All available space on that campus is already allocated to existing divisions.

The Department values HTA's leadership on the Island-specific Destination Management Action Plans (DMAPs) and has willingly participated in these collaborative efforts with State, County and private sector entities that approach destination management holistically. The Department support this continued approach. HTA has been at the forefront of managing Hawai'i's tourism industry, including destination management, for nearly thirty years. If the Legislature finds that HTA needs changes in culture, direction, and organizational structure, the Department respectfully suggests that the Legislature work with HTA to implement the necessary reforms.

The Department stands ready to provide its natural, cultural, and historic resource management expertise to support HTA in its destination management functions to the extent that doing so does not interfere with the Department's ability to carry out its resource management mission.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



TESTIMONY OF
CAROLINE ANDERSON
Interim President & CEO
Hawai'i Tourism Authority

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM
and the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAND AND WATER

February 10, 2026
11:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 423

In consideration of
HB 1947
RELATING TO TOURISM

Aloha Chairs Tam and Hashem, Vice Chairs Templo and Morikawa, and Members of the Committees:

:The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) respectfully opposes HB 1947, which repeals the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and establishes the Office of Tourism within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. This bill also establishes the Division of Destination Management within the Department of Land and Natural Resources, effective January 1, 2027.

Last year, the Legislature passed SB1571, which Gov. Josh Green signed into law as Act 132. The act transformed HTA's governance, which in turn strengthened transparency, streamlined accountability, and supported clearer decision-making at HTA, while still allowing a healthy diversity of perspectives. Considering the recent governance improvements and the resulting transformation at HTA, dissolving the HTA offers fewer advantages than the known drawbacks of the structure proposed in HB1947.

HB 1947 proposes dissolving the HTA and splitting its functions, undermining the holistic approach needed for effective destination management in Hawai'i. Momentum has been building since the 2021 Destination Management Action Plans (DMAPs), with community voices central to addressing tourism impacts through collaboration with counties and state agencies. According to DBEDT's 2025 Spring Resident Sentiment Survey, "More residents now acknowledge efforts to better manage tourism and balance tourism's benefits with everyday quality-of-life aspects. Further, perceptions of having a voice in tourism decisions have inched up but remain weak, signaling the need for stronger community engagement." Restarting this process under a fragmented structure will erode trust and delay solutions that residents and visitors expect.

Managing tourism requires consistency between what is promoted and what communities can support. Destination management achieves this through a holistic approach, which includes brand marketing, development of visitor experiences, tourism product development, hotspot management, visitor education and safety, and collaboration with our visitor industry and community. A cohesive strategy is vital for managing tourism impacts. HB1947 separates these functions, weakening the ability to manage tourism impacts effectively.

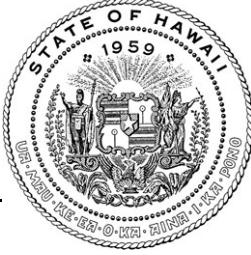
DLNR's mission is conservation and protection of natural, cultural, and historic resources, not economic development or visitor system coordination. Assigning it destination management responsibilities stretches beyond its core mandate. DLNR is not structured or resourced to lead economic development or coordinate visitor systems. For example, draft DMAPs for 2026 – 2030 will address issues like:

- sudden congestion at popular sites
- unplanned detours into neighborhoods
- trespassing driven by guidebook shortcuts and social media
- long lines at places with aging facilities
- fragmented messaging

These issues are best addressed through an integrated approach that includes visitor education messaging, coordination and cooperation among multiple agencies and the visitor industry, and collaboration with our tourism sector to improve processes. This comprehensive strategy goes beyond just resource protection, stewardship, or enforcement alone. Furthermore, HB1947 assigns the Office of Tourism to develop DMAPs while granting DLNR authority to execute them, creating ambiguity and weakening accountability.

HB1947 does not solve the problems identified by audits and governance studies — it creates new ones. It introduces ambiguity, fragments essential functions, and ignores evidence-based recommendations for integrated destination stewardship.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our comments in opposition to HB 1947.



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Tuesday, February 10, 2026
11:15 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

In consideration of
HB 1947
RELATING TO TOURISM.

Chairs Tam and Hashem, Vice Chairs Templo and Morikawa, and Members of the Committees:

I respectfully oppose House Bill 1947, which seeks to repeal the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), establish the Office of Tourism within the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) and establish the Division of Destination Management within the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

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.

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.

HB1947 notes that a change in culture, direction and organizational structure is needed to promote and protect tourism as a highly valuable asset for the State and its people, which Act 132 does by shifting governance roles, restructuring the board, and enhancing hiring flexibility, all aiming to restore confidence and operational effectiveness.

I respectfully request that the Committees allow the current progress to continue as a result of Act 132 and oppose HB1947. Repealing HTA now would create instability, delay critical projects and programs, and undermine collaborative efforts already underway.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NALANI BRUN, DIRECTOR



DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Testimony of Nalani Ka‘auwai Brun
Director, Office of Economic Development
County of Kaua‘i

Before the
House Committee on Tourism
House Committee on Water & Land

February 10, 2026, at 11:15 a.m.
Via Videoconference
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

In consideration of
House Bill 1947
Relating to Tourism

Honorable Chair Tam, Chair Hashem, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees:

I am writing to express my **opposition to House Bill 1947**, which proposes repealing the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (HTA) and redistributing its functions across the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) and the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

HTA was created because counties and communities across Hawai‘i had long been attempting—without success—to address visitor industry impacts through existing state agency structures operating in silos. Tourism-related challenges do not fall neatly within one department’s jurisdiction. They intersect with transportation, infrastructure, housing, water, land management, public safety, culture, and community well-being—touching nearly every state and county agency.

This is precisely why Hawai‘i needs **one entity whose primary responsibility is tourism coordination and destination management**.

Tourism problem-solving cannot be treated as an additional duty layered onto agencies whose missions are already broad and demanding. DBEDT is currently tasked with advancing economic diversification across many sectors, including agriculture, innovation, energy, workforce development, and emerging industries. That work is critical to Hawai‘i’s long-term economic resilience and already stretches the department’s capacity. Tourism should not be expected to sit solely within DBEDT when it requires dedicated, specialized, and cross-agency coordination.

Similarly, DLNR carries an immense and critically important responsibility to protect Hawai‘i’s natural and cultural resources. That work is complex, ongoing, and under-resourced. Adding destination management responsibilities to DLNR risks diluting both conservation outcomes and effective tourism management.

HTA was designed to serve as a **coordinator and convener**—bringing state agencies, counties, communities, and industry partners together to address tourism impacts in a comprehensive and aligned way. Weakening or dismantling HTA recreates the very fragmentation that led to its creation in the first place.

Communities and counties need **one clear organization to work with**—one place to bring concerns, coordinate responses, and ensure follow-through. At this time, that organization is HTA.

Like any organization navigating change, HTA needs time, stability, and clear authority to adjust and improve. Continual restructuring and erosion of its role only undermine progress. There is no need to keep making holes in the ship while expecting it to sail more effectively.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **oppose House Bill 1947**, strengthen the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, and allow it to fulfill its original purpose as Hawai‘i’s central coordinating entity for tourism management.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your thoughtful consideration.

HB-1947

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:16:27 AM
Testimony for TOU on 2/10/2026 11:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members,

I SUPPORT HB 1947 which repeals the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. Establishes the Office of Tourism within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. Establishes the Division of Destination Management within the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

We have to do something to drastically change the ways tourism is looked at in our islands. There's too much waste and misdirection in the current path. This being said, I believe that in order for the "Office of Tourism" to work as a positive path there have to be many changes and lots of accountability. Trust needs to be restored and that won't happen by putting "familiar" faces, the ones who circle within agencies and places. How will the State keep this office accountable and will the resources be provided? How much time will be devoted to including the people of this place, Kanaka Maoli in decision making? Will we move forward from the western approach to marketing of days gone by? There is a lot to consider with this creation of this office and I would suggest a consulting group be in place to advise as well.

Mahalo

Cheryl Burghardt

Nuuanu Oahu