



TESTIMONY OF  
**CAROLINE ANDERSON**  
Interim President & CEO  
Hawai'i Tourism Authority  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**  
Tuesday, March 31, 2026  
1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Room 229

In consideration of  
**GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 601**  
**CONFIRMATION OF TROY LAZARO**  
**ADVISORY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY**

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of Troy Lazaro's nomination to serve as a member of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board of Directors.

As a member of HTA's Advisory Board, Mr. Lazaro serves on the Branding Standing Committee, which provides strategic review, evaluation and recommendations on HTA's branding and marketing initiatives, programs and activities, with a particular focus on destination branding and meetings, conventions and incentive business; on the Film Tourism Standing Committee, which guides initiatives that promote Hawai'i through film and television and integrated marketing to drive economic development and foster a positive, authentic representation of the state; on the Ho'okahua Hawai'i Standing Committee, which provides strategic guidance on destination stewardship, Hawaiian culture, visitor experiences, workforce development, and implementation of HTA's Strategic Plan, Destination Management Action Plans and the state Tourism Functional Plan; and on the newly formed Governance Study Permitted Interaction Group, which reviews and makes recommendations to the Advisory Board on the Governance Study Final Recommendations.

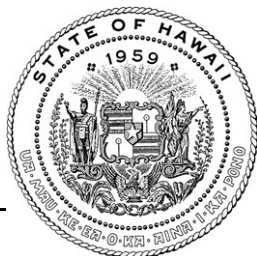
Mr. Lazaro's insight, experience, and unwavering dedication to Hawai'i's rich culture are so important for our board meeting discussions. As a practitioner, steward, and advocate of Hawaiian culture and values, Mr. Lazaro has made it his kuleana to help shape a sustainable, respectful, and meaningful future for Hawai'i. He has been instrumental in helping us see that we can not only honor Hawai'i's vibrant past, but also nurture our iwi, our land, and our people today and for generations to come.

As a kumu hula, Mr. Lazaro has dedicated his life to perpetuating and protecting the Hawaiian way of life, and we welcome his guidance and advice on our decisions for our Community Funding Programs, including our Signature Events Program, Community Enrichment program, Ho'okipa

Malihini Initiative, Kūkulu Ola Program and the Kahu 'Āina Program.

Mr. Lazaro brings cultural leadership and community stewardship grounded in Hawaiian values, with experience educating both residents and visitors through authentic cultural practice. We support Mr. Lazaro's nomination for the HTA Advisory Board of Directors.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support.



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

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

**DANE K. WICKER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804  
Web site: [dbedt.hawaii.gov](http://dbedt.hawaii.gov)

Telephone: (808) 586-2355  
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Testimony of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
Director  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**  
Tuesday, March 31, 2026  
1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Room 229

In consideration of  
**GM 601**  
**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Advisory Board of Directors  
of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, Gubernatorial Nominee,  
TROY LAZARO, for a term to expire 06-30-2029.**

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of Troy Lazaro's nomination to serve as a member of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board of Directors.

Mr. Lazaro's insight, experience and dedication to Hawaiian culture bring an important perspective to the Advisory Board. As a practitioner, steward and advocate of Hawaiian cultural values, he helps inform discussion about how tourism can honor Hawai'i's heritage while supporting communities and place-based stewardship.

As a kumu hula, Mr. Lazaro has dedicated his life to perpetuating and protecting the Hawaiian way of life. His guidance has been especially relevant to HTA's community-based programs and efforts to strengthen cultural integrity across its work.

As a member of HTA's Advisory Board, Mr. Lazaro participates in several key committees. He serves on the Branding Standing Committee, which conducts strategic reviews and evaluations of HTA's branding and marketing initiatives, with a focus on destination branding and the meetings, conventions, and incentive sectors. He is also part of the Film Tourism Standing Committee, which promotes Hawai'i through film and television and implements integrated marketing strategies to drive economic development while ensuring a positive and authentic representation of the state.

Additionally, Mr. Lazaro is involved in the Ho'okahua Hawai'i Standing Committee, offering strategic guidance on destination stewardship, Hawaiian culture, visitor experiences, workforce development, and the execution of HTA's Strategic Plan, Destination Management Action Plans, and the state's Tourism Functional Plan. Lastly, he is a member of the newly formed Governance Study Permitted Interaction Group, which reviews and provides recommendations to the Advisory Board regarding the Governance Study's final recommendations. Mr. Lazaro's cultural leadership and community stewardship, grounded in Hawaiian values, make him a strong contributor to the Advisory Board.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Mr. Lazaro.

# MAYOR DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI

COUNTY OF KAUA'I



Testimony of  
**Derek S.K. Kawakami**  
Mayor, County of Kaua'i



Before the  
**Committee on Economic Development and Tourism**  
March 31, 2026 at 1:00 PM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
**GM 601 Troy Lazaro**  
**Gubernatorial Nominee for the Advisory Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority**

Honorable Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

I write in strong support of Troy Allen Hānano Lazaro for confirmation to the Advisory Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. Troy brings to this role a rare and essential combination of deep cultural grounding, authentic Hawaiian values, and a clear vision for what pono tourism can and must look like for our islands.

As a Kumu Hula and the founder and leader of Hālau Kā Pā Hula O Hīnano, Troy has dedicated his life to the perpetuation and protection of Hawaiian culture. Since 2017, he has guided his students each week, not only in the art of hula, but in the foundational values of aloha, mālama, kuleana, and ha'aha'a. This is not the work of someone who speaks about Hawaiian culture from a distance but rather the work of a practitioner who lives these values daily and transmits them with care and integrity to the next generation.

What distinguishes Troy as a candidate for the HTA board is not only his cultural expertise, but his capacity to think critically and communicate clearly at the intersection of culture, community, and industry. He understands that tourism is not separate from who we are as a people, but as an extension of our story. He approaches this understanding with discernment, knowing that economic development and cultural integrity need not be in conflict when leadership is guided by pono principles.

Mr. Lazaro is known in our community as someone who does his research. He does not speak in generalities. He engages thoughtfully with the complexities of land stewardship, water rights, the protection of wahi kūpuna, and the careful balance between welcoming visitors and preserving what is sacred. His advocacy is grounded in knowledge and informed by both traditional wisdom and a genuine understanding of the contemporary challenges our islands face.

Troy can articulate the Native Hawaiian perspective with clarity, conviction, and respect. He can ensure that the voices of our community are not only present in the room but meaningfully heard. He is neither combative nor complacent; he is steady, grounded, and purposeful.

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority requires board members who can hold the tension between economic necessity and cultural responsibility, and who can advocate for authentic storytelling, sustainable

practices, and the true spirit of aloha without losing sight of the practical realities of our tourism-dependent economy. Troy Lazaro is precisely that kind of leader. He understands what is pono, and he has the courage and the humility to pursue it.

I respectfully urge you to **Advise and Consent** to Troy Lazaro's nomination and forward to the full Senate for their consideration.



**KAUAI**  
VISITORS BUREAU™

March 28, 2026

Honorable Lynn DeCoite  
Chair, Committee on Economic  
Development and Tourism  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Troy Hinano Lazaro / Support for HTA Advisory Board Position

Aloha Chair DeCoite and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism:

I'd like to offer this letter of support for Kumu Troy Hinano Lazaro's nomination for a seat on the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board.

I've known Troy Lazaro for 15 years through his work in tourism and his cultural work on Kaua'i and in Japan. Troy worked in a Po'ipū resort for many years and shared his cultural knowledge with his guests, a highlight of their Kaua'i trip. I was honored to travel with Troy while we worked to promote Kaua'i to the Japanese market. Also known for producing beautiful performances of mele and hula in the Hawaiian Islands and Japan.

I have seen Troy Lazaro grow into an amazing leader for Hawaiian Culture and was so proud to see his nomination to the HTA Advisory Board. I believe having the mana'o of Kumu Troy Hinano Lazaro on the HTA Board will benefit their work, as well as keep us all aware of how important culture is to the Hawaiian islands.

Mahalo nui loa in advance for your time and consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

With Aloha,

Susan A. Kanoho  
Managing Director/Island Chapters  
Executive Director  
Kaua'i Visitors Bureau

**GM-601**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 8:35:08 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/31/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Audrey Franco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair DeCoite and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism,

My name is Audrey Franco and I am a citizen of Kekaha, Kauai. I also work as an educator in Waimea Kauai. I have known Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro since youth (over 30 years) and I was a teacher at the high school when he attended Waimea High School. I have personally witnessed him take on the role of hula dancer and now a kumu who promotes the Hawaiian culture with the utmost respect. As his halau continues to grow, I look forward to what Kumu Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro will do with his expansive knowledge and willingness to learn about the history of his aina. I am excited to see him pass on this knowledge for generations to come. I would like to offer this letter of support for Kumu Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro's nomination for a seat on the Hawaii Tourism Authority Advisory Board.

Aloha,

Audrey Franco

**GM-601**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 9:32:37 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/31/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvonne Hosaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 30, 2026

Honorable Lynn DeCoite  
Chair, Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro/Support for HTA Advisory Board Position

Aloha Chair DeCoite and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism.

My name is Yvonne Hosaka, and I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support of Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro's nomination for a seat on the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board.**

I support this nomination because the individual being considered embodies the very qualities that are essential for public service in Hawai‘i—**deep cultural knowledge, integrity, and a demonstrated commitment to the people and traditions of our islands.**

The nominee has served as a Kumu Hula for over ten years, a role that carries not only artistic responsibility but also the kuleana of preserving, teaching, and upholding Native Hawaiian culture and values. This level of dedication reflects discipline, leadership, and a deep understanding of cultural protocol that cannot be overstated.

In addition, the nominee brings over a decade of experience in the tourism industry, providing a critical bridge between Hawai‘i’s cultural heritage and its global visitors. This dual experience is especially valuable, as it reflects an ability to both **protect cultural integrity and responsibly share it in ways that educate and inspire others.**

Beyond professional qualifications, the nominee is widely recognized as a **pillar** in cultural practices not only on the island of Kaua‘i, but throughout the State of Hawai‘i. His work demonstrates a consistent commitment to preserving ‘ike kūpuna (ancestral knowledge) and ensuring that cultural traditions are practiced with authenticity and respect.

Equally important, the nominee **embodies the spirit of aloha**—through humility, respect, and a genuine dedication to community. These are not abstract qualities, but ones that directly influence how decisions are made, how people are treated, and how trust is built in public roles.

Appointments such as this require more than technical qualifications; they require individuals who understand Hawai‘i at its core—its people, its history, and its values. This nominee brings all of those elements together in a way that will strengthen the integrity and effectiveness of the position they are being considered for.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support Kumu Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro's nomination for a seat on the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board.

Mahalo for this opportunity.

Yvonne Hosaka

March 30, 2026

Honorable Lynn DeCoite  
Chair, Committee on Economic Development and Tourism Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro / Support for HTA Advisory Board  
Position

Aloha Chair DeCoite and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism: It is my honor to offer this letter of strong support for Kumu Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro's nomination for a seat on the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board.

I have had the privilege of knowing Troy since his high school years, where he stood out as a natural leader in the Hawaiian Club. Even then, he demonstrated a deep commitment to 'ike Hawai'i, cultural practice, and service to his peers. In addition to his leadership, Troy was also a talented athlete, balancing discipline and teamwork with humility and drive.

As a young adult, I watched Troy continue to grow both professionally and culturally. He worked in the hotel industry, gaining valuable firsthand experience in Hawai'i's visitor sector. At the same time, he pursued his passions by becoming a Zumba instructor, teaching hula, and sharing his gifts with the community. One of the most meaningful moments of his journey was traveling to Japan to perform on behalf of his ailing Kumu Hula—a reflection of his loyalty, kuleana, and deep respect for his lineage and teachers.

Nearly ten years ago, Troy took the significant step of founding his own hālau hula. Since then, he has successfully built and sustained a program that not only teaches hula, but also instills cultural values, discipline, and pride in the next generation. His ability to lead, organize, and inspire is evident in the continued growth and strength of his hālau.

Troy is exceptionally talented, intelligent, organized, and creative. More importantly, he is grounded in 'ike Hawai'i and carries himself with integrity and purpose. He understands both the opportunities and challenges within Hawai'i's tourism industry and brings a valuable perspective that bridges culture, community, and visitor engagement.

Troy is part of a loving and supportive `ohana on Kaua`i. His makua Antone and Hilda Lazaro, along with his older brothers Tony and Stan and several of his close first cousins are always by his side in all of his endeavors.

I am confident that Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro would be an outstanding addition to the HTA Advisory Board. His leadership, cultural knowledge, and commitment to Hawai'i's future make him highly qualified to help guide thoughtful, respectful, and sustainable tourism for our islands.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any additional information at (808) 651-1846 or makaiwa93@yahoo.com

With respect and aloha,

`Iwalani Ka`auwai-Herrod

Retired State of Hawaii Child Welfare Services Administrator (Kaua`i)

Po`o for Na Hui o Kamakaokalani, Halau Hula on Kaua`i (1992-present)

Vice-President for Malie Foundation, Kaua`i Non-profit for Hawaiian Cultural events (2023-present)

**GM-601**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 3:02:20 PM

Testimony for EDT on 3/31/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ruthie Omoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair DeCoite and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism: I'd like to offer this letter of support for Kumu Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro's nomination for a seat on the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board.

I've known Troy Lazaro for over 15 years through his work in tourism and as a Kumu Hula.

Kumu Troy is "committed to preserving significance of hula, protecting our land, raising awareness about climate change and ensuring our voice remains strong within this space." Kumu Troy embodies the qualities as our ideal role model and integrates his cultural expertise into his role as our Ambassador of Aloha for our kamaaina, visitors and keiki. It would benefit our State to have Troy Lazaro serve on the HTA Board.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ruthie Omoto

Kamaaina & Miss Kaua'i 1985

Supportive Testimony for Kumu Troy Allen Lazaro's Confirmation to the HTA Advisory Board

March 30, 2026

Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Honorable Chair DeCoite and Members of the Economic Development and Tourism Committee,

I am writing to endorse the appointment of Kumu Troy Allen Lazaro to the Advisory Board of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. I have known Kumu Troy for over 15 years. His extensive knowledge of Hawaiian cultural practices will contribute significantly to ensuring that traditional customs are appropriately incorporated into tourism initiatives throughout Hawai'i.

During his tenure at Marriott's Waiohai Beach Club Resort, I had the opportunity to work with Kumu Troy. He was truly an Ambassador of Aloha and received many accolades during his long tenure with the resort. Of particular note was his leadership in restoring the beachfront heiau and integrating Hawaiian protocols into various resort events, thereby advancing cultural awareness among staff, guests, and local residents.

Kumu Troy demonstrates a strong dedication to the principles of integrity, respect, responsibility, and unity. His involvement with the Advisory Board would support the advancement of Hawai'i's cultural and community goals. Thank you for your kind consideration of my recommendation.

Sincerely,

*S. Lani Aranio*

S. Lani Aranio, SPHR, SHRM-SCP  
Marriott Vacations Worldwide Corporation  
VP Human Resources, Hawaii Region and AAH



**GM-601**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 8:02:21 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/31/2026 1:00:00 PM



<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Raysha Mamala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senator DeCoite & Committee,

I am writing to express my unequivocal support for the appointment of Troy Lazaro to the Advisory Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. Having served on the HTA Board for approximately five months, Mr. Lazaro has already demonstrated his profound dedication to the preservation and promotion of Hawaiian culture and values, qualities that are crucial for the continued success of our tourism industry.

With over 15 years of experience in the visitor industry, Mr. Lazaro has consistently integrated his cultural expertise into his role, embodying the spirit of aloha as an ambassador for our islands. His commitment to cultural integrity is unparalleled, and his experience as a kumu hula uniquely positions him to advocate for the vital significance of Hula and its role in our cultural heritage.

Moreover, Mr. Lazaro is a staunch protector of our land, demonstrating an acute awareness of pressing issues such as climate change and its impact on our environment. He has worked diligently to raise awareness and drive conversations around these critical topics, ensuring that native voices are not only heard but amplified within the tourism sector.

Troy Lazaro's contributions to the HTA will undoubtedly make a meaningful impact in fostering a tourism industry that is not only economically viable but also culturally responsible and environmentally sustainable. His vision for a tourism framework that honors our heritage while embracing modern challenges is essential for the future of Hawai'i.

I kindly urge you to consider Mr. Lazaro's nomination favorably, as his leadership and expertise will be invaluable to the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and the communities it serves.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

Raysha Mamala

March 30, 2026

**LATE**

RE: Testimony for Senate Confirmation for HTA Advisory Board of Directors

**Letter of support for Troy Hinano Lazaro**

*Aloha from Kauai!*

I'm writing in support of Mr. Troy Hinano Lazaro to be on the Advisory Board of Directors for Hawaii Tourism Authority.

My name is Art Umezu. I've worked for County of Kauai for 40 years and served under 5 Kauai mayors since 1985 as mayor's executive assistant; film commissioner; culture and sports tourism specialist in Office of Economic Development. Currently, I have an independent contract under Mayor Derek Kawakami's administration to work as Japan liaison to oversee Kauai's 5 sister cities in Japan.

I've known Mr. Lazaro since 1995 since he was a budding singer (winner of Hawaii Stars competition) and hula practitioner. For 20 years, I've had the honor and pleasure to travel with Mr. Lazaro on many official cultural exchange programs to Japan as kumu hula and Hawaiian cultural specialist. Although he doesn't speak the language, he has a large following in Japan because of his dedication to hula; mele and Hawaiian culture. Most importantly, he understands and follows their protocol which is of utmost importance when working in Japan. He is an intelligent; mindful and compassionate, multi-talented person who I think best represents Kauai and Hawaii to the world.

Wherever he travels to, Mr. Lazaro always shares his humble upbringing and promotes Kauai's special beauty through hula and mele. As an event producer and music promoter, I've worked with many Kauai dancers and musicians. Mr. Lazaro is always on top of my list.

I humbly ask for your support of Mr. Troy Hinano Lazaro to be the Hawaiian Cultural Advisory Board for Hawaii Tourism Authority.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

*Art Umezu*

Art Umezu

PO Box 3763 Lihue, HI. 96766 Cell: 808-652-3963

**GM-601**

Submitted on: 3/31/2026 9:06:56 AM

Testimony for EDT on 3/31/2026 1:00:00 PM



<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Steven Franco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 30, 2026

Honorable Lynn DeCoite

Chair, Committee on Economic Development and Tourism Hawai'i State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro / Support for HTA Advisory Board

Position

Aloha Chair DeCoite and Members of the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism: I'd like to offer this letter of support for Kumu Troy Allen Hinano Lazaro's nomination for a seat on the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) Advisory Board.

I've known Troy Lazaro for over 25 years and have watched him grow in the tourism industry and as a Kumu Hula. He continues to put Kauai first in everything he does and has been a huge part of our ohana. I know that he will continue to do good work if given the opportunity. I strongly recommend him for this position and hope the committee does the right thing by approving his nomination.

Mahalo,

Steve Franco