



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

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Statement of
DENNIS T. LING
Administrator

Business Development and Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Monday, March 2, 2026
2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
HB1863, HD1
RELATING TO AN HONORARY AMBASSADOR TO CANADA

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports the intent of **HB1863 HD1** to establish an **Honorary Ambassador to Canada** for the State of Hawai'i.

While national-level tensions have complicated U.S.–Canada relations, Hawai'i has always maintained its own distinct cultural identity and global relationships. This role allows us to preserve and strengthen those connections in a way that is fully consistent with state authority and respectful of federal boundaries.

Canada is one of Hawai'i's most important partners. It is a top visitor market, a key source of investment, and a collaborator in areas like renewable energy, ocean science, and Indigenous cultural exchange. An Honorary Ambassador would provide a stable point of contact for Canadian businesses, universities, and communities who value Hawai'i's unique voice—especially during periods of federal uncertainty.

The Ambassador would focus on three core areas: **business and trade**, to expand opportunities for local companies; **support on-going tourism efforts**, to attract a reliable and respectful visitor market; and **cultural and educational exchange**, to deepen ties between Native Hawaiian and First Nations communities, attract students from Canada to study in Hawaii, and vice-versa.

This is a low-cost, high-impact way for Hawai'i to maintain goodwill, economic stability, and cultural partnership with one of our closest international neighbors.

To operate such an honorary program but with programmatic activities and deliverables, DBEDT requires an annual appropriation of \$72,500, which would include:

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| 1. Honorary representative remuneration | \$20,000 |
| 2. Travel expenses | \$20,000 |
| 3. Programmatic expenses | \$25,000 |
| 4. Budget & Finance restrictions | \$7,500 |

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.