



**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

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

Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
9:30 am
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

In consideration of
HB1904
RELATING TO SPACE OPERATIONS

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee,

The Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT) supports HB1904, which establishes a comprehensive state framework for orbital sustainability, orbital debris mitigation, and space traffic management/space situational awareness (SSA) under DBEDT.

HB1904 is timely and strategically important. It positions Hawai'i to lead in a high-value, globally relevant niche—space domain awareness and orbital stewardship—while also strengthening our state's aerospace diversification, workforce pipelines, and public-private partnerships.

1) Why HB1904 Matters: Hawai'i's Strategic Niche

HB1904 recognizes an important reality: Hawai'i does not need to compete directly as a launch site to capture meaningful economic and security value from the space economy. Instead, Hawai'i can differentiate as a trusted center for:

- Orbital sustainability and debris mitigation
- Space situational awareness and collision warning
- Governance, standards, and coordination
- Education, workforce training, and applied R&D

This is a defensible and durable niche. Orbital congestion and debris hazards are long-term issues affecting civil, commercial, and national security space operations. A state-level capability—properly coordinated with federal agencies and partners—can elevate

Hawai'i's role as a responsible steward and innovation hub for safety and sustainability in the space domain.

2) Governance in DBEDT: Leveraging Maui's Space Infrastructure and Existing Space Assets

HB1904's decision to place leadership within DBEDT is a significant strength, particularly given Hawai'i's existing—and often underutilized—space infrastructure, much of which is concentrated on Maui.

Maui is already home to nationally significant space and sensing assets, including:

- U.S. Space Force and Department of Defense space domain awareness infrastructure,
- A growing cluster of space-based companies and research activities, and
- Emerging applied research and prototyping capabilities such as the Space Domain Awareness (SDA) TAP Lab, which focuses on advanced manufacturing, rapid prototyping, and operational support relevant to space and defense missions.

By establishing the Hawai'i Orbital Sustainability and Space Traffic Board within DBEDT, HB1904 creates a formal mechanism to coordinate, align, and amplify these existing assets under a clear statutory framework.

Specifically, this structure enables Hawai'i to:

- Integrate Maui's space sensing and Space Force infrastructure into a broader state-level orbital sustainability and space traffic management strategy, enhancing relevance to national and allied missions;
- Strengthen public-private collaboration between Space Force stakeholders, UH researchers, the SDA TAP Lab, and commercial aerospace companies;
- Support dual-use innovation, where technologies developed for defense and SSA applications also benefit civil, commercial, and academic users;
- Anchor high-value jobs on Maui, including engineers, technicians, analysts, and advanced manufacturing roles, supporting economic diversification beyond tourism; and
- Create continuity and credibility for long-term investment by signaling that Hawai'i is committed to responsible space operations, not ad-hoc or fragmented efforts.

Importantly, DBEDT is uniquely positioned to serve as the connecting tissue between Maui's operational space infrastructure, statewide workforce and education programs, and private-sector commercialization pathways. This ensures that investments in space domain awareness and orbital sustainability translate into local economic impact, workforce development, and durable institutional capacity—rather than remaining siloed or externally driven.

In this way, HB1904 does not create space capability from scratch; it builds on what Hawai'i—and Maui in particular—already does well, while providing the governance and coordination needed to scale those strengths responsibly.

3) Registration & Compliance Standards: Enabling Safe Growth (Not Restricting It)

HB1904's registration and compliance provisions—focused on operators whose activities affect state airspace—can be a pro-growth mechanism if implemented thoughtfully. Clear standards and predictable processes:

- Reduce uncertainty for investors and operators
- Improve safety and coordination
- Establish Hawai'i as a “high-trust” operating environment
- Encourage companies to base operations, testing, training, and R&D here

The goal should be a modern, efficient, and transparent registration pathway that aligns with federal authorities while ensuring Hawai'i can coordinate operations responsibly.

4) Direct Benefits for Horizontal Launch Companies (Including Fenix Space)

HB1904 can materially help horizontal launch companies—such as Fenix Space and other air-launched or runway-based systems—because these models intersect both aviation and space operations and require robust coordination around:

- Airspace deconfliction
- Trajectory safety and operational planning
- Data-sharing for situational awareness
- Launch and reentry risk management

A state-enabled SSA and space traffic management capability—paired with clear coordination processes—supports horizontal launch by reducing operational friction and strengthening safety cases. It also helps Hawai'i become a preferred location for:

- Flight testing and operational exercises
- Training, mission planning, and simulation
- Sensors, tracking, and data fusion activities
- Supply-chain and subsystem development

Even without being “the launch site,” Hawai'i can become a strategic node in the value chain for horizontal launch operations and related aerospace activities.

5) Strong Alignment with Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) and Stratospheric Platforms

HB1904's coordination and tracking orientation can also accelerate growth in adjacent aerospace sectors—especially advanced air mobility (AAM/eVTOL) and stratospheric

platform operations—both of which share needs around safe integration in complex airspace and often involve high-altitude flight profiles and mission planning.

Advanced Air Mobility (AAM/eVTOL)

AAM ecosystems depend on clear coordination mechanisms, community confidence, workforce readiness, and safety frameworks. HB1904 supports this indirectly by building state capability in real-time tracking, airspace coordination, and safety monitoring, creating funding pathways for STEM and workforce training, and encouraging public-private partnerships that can include dual-use technologies (sensing, autonomy, command and control).

Stratospheric Platforms (HAPS, balloons, pseudo-satellites)

Stratospheric systems operate in a domain where monitoring, coordination, and long-duration operations are critical. HB1904's emphasis on tracking, situational awareness, and warning functions supports risk reduction for long-duration missions, better coordination among airspace stakeholders, and opportunities for Hawai'i-based R&D, payload integration, environmental monitoring, and communications testbeds.

6) Grants & Workforce: The “Multiplier” Effect

The bill's grant authority for orbital debris mitigation, SSA systems and operations, STEM education and workforce training, and public-private partnerships is essential for building a pipeline from classroom to career, and from research to commercialization. Hawai'i can leverage these grants to:

- Expand UH and partner research capacity
- Support internships/apprenticeships aligned with DLIR priorities
- Grow technician and operator pipelines for aerospace operations
- Attract and retain local talent in high-wage technical fields

This is how HB1904 becomes more than a policy statement—it becomes an engine for workforce and economic development.

7) Implementation Recommendations (Constructive)

To maximize impact, I respectfully recommend that implementation:

1. Align with federal frameworks and avoid duplicative processes while preserving Hawai'i's coordination role.
2. Emphasize streamlined registration with clear timelines and predictable requirements.
3. Prioritize grants that build dual-use capabilities (e.g., sensing, tracking, data fusion, autonomy, safety analytics) that benefit space, aviation, AAM, and high-altitude platforms.
4. Establish measurable outcomes: workforce placements, partner projects, SBIR/STTR wins, research outputs, and operational readiness milestones.

5. Ensure private-sector participation is meaningful—particularly from horizontal launch, AAM, and stratospheric operators—to keep the program grounded in operational reality.

Conclusion

HB1904 is a forward-looking measure that positions Hawai'i as a leader in orbital sustainability, debris mitigation, and space domain awareness, while also strengthening the broader aerospace ecosystem—supporting companies like Fenix Space and other horizontal launch innovators, enabling the growth of advanced air mobility, and expanding opportunities for stratospheric platform operations.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to PASS HB1904.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

HB-1904

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 11:05:40 PM

Testimony for ECD on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dana Keawe	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

OPPOSE HB1904

Dana Keawe

Moku o Keawe

HB-1904

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 7:28:02 PM

Testimony for ECD on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

This is an excellent proposal to meaningfully diversify the Hawaiian economy. Space is full of opportunity and Hawaii is perfectly positioned to take full advantage of. I **STRONGLY** urge this committee to **SUPPORT** this bill!

HB-1904

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 9:10:02 PM

Testimony for ECD on 2/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dalan Kam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee, my name is Dalan Kam and I am testifying in support of HB1904.

Diversification of our economy has been a prevailing issue in our state, and encouraging investment into the space industry. Hawaii has a unique advantage of being closer to the equator than all of the US's current space infrastructure. Allowing prospective but responsible and accountable investment into this industry will create well paying jobs in Hawaii that will be here to stay.

Mahalo for your time