



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

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

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT DIVISION**

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

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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ADMINISTRATOR

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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**

Wednesday, March 4, 2026  
10:00 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of  
**HB1943, HD1**  
**RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Business Development and Support Division (BDSD) of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) offers the following comments on HB1943, HD1, which seeks to:

1. expand the purposes of out-of-state offices to collaborate with tourism agencies and stakeholders;
2. establish a Hawai'i Trade and Promotion Office in Seoul, Republic of Korea; and
3. appropriate funds for the promotion of "Made in Hawai'i" products for export.

Collaboration with tourism agencies and stakeholders is already occurring within DBEDT's China and Taipei offices, where HTA and DBEDT share the same executive director to coordinate synergistic initiatives. This model has proven effective and serves as a template for future out-of-state offices.

Regarding the establishment of an office in Seoul, the Republic of Korea is one of Hawai'i's most significant international partners. Korean consumers, investors, and visitors have long demonstrated strong affinity for Hawai'i's culture, products, and

values. Korea remains a leading source of international visitors, a growing source of foreign direct investment, and a high-value export market for specialty foods, coffee, macadamia products, apparel, wellness goods, and creative industry products.

A dedicated Seoul office would greatly enhance Hawai'i's ability to promote "Hawai'i Made" products, assist small and medium-sized businesses entering Asian markets, and deepen long-standing cultural and economic ties. Korea's advanced retail infrastructure and logistics networks make it one of the most strategic locations for establishing a permanent presence. The office would serve as a hub for export promotion and market entry support, retail and distribution partnerships, trade missions and buyer delegations, Hawai'i branding and marketing campaigns, and cultural and educational exchanges that reinforce Hawai'i's global identity.

To operate a fully functional Seoul office, DBEDT would require an annual appropriation of \$233,500, including:

- Executive Director (full-time) – \$90,000
- Administrative Assistant (full-time) – \$30,000
- Rent – \$30,000
- Furniture & equipment – \$10,000
- Program & deliverables – \$50,000
- Budget & finance restrictions – \$23,500

With respect to appropriating funds for DBEDT to market "Made in Hawai'i" products through its Beijing, Taipei, and Philippines offices, this support aligns with DBEDT's mission to diversify Hawai'i's economy, expand global markets, and strengthen international partnerships. It also advances the Legislature's long-standing goal of reducing Hawai'i's overreliance on tourism by growing export-driven industries. Previously, federal SBA funding of approximately \$150,000 annually supported these initiatives; with those funds no longer available, state appropriations are necessary to maintain this work.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



**ALA MOANA – KAKA‘AKO NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD NO. 11**

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION • 925 DILLINGHAM BOULEVARD SUITE 160 • HONOLULU, HAWAII, 96817  
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Tuesday, March 3, 2026

**TO: House Finance Committee (FIN)**

Hearing: Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

**FROM: The Ala Moana-Kaka‘ako Neighborhood Board No. 11**

**RE: Testimony IN SUPPORT of HB1943 HD1, RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee -

The Ala Moana-Kaka‘ako Neighborhood Board **strongly supports HB1943.**

Establishing a new out-of-state office in Seoul and expanding the existing offices in Beijing and Taipei is a practical step to strengthen Hawai‘i’s economic development efforts.

Hawai‘i’s economy depends heavily on tourism, and we should use that strength to support other sectors of our economy. Expanding Hawai‘i’s presence in our key international markets can help promote local products, support existing exports, and create new opportunities for Hawai‘i businesses.

Economic diversification has long been a goal for our state, but progress has often been difficult. HB1943 is a modest but meaningful step towards a more diversified economy by using our existing strength in tourism.

Mahalo for your consideration of this testimony.

Dale VanderBrink

2nd Vice Chair, Ala Moana-Kaka‘ako Neighborhood Board No.11

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 10:00AM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB1943 HD1 Relating to Economic Development**

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 1943 House Draft 1 (HB1943 HD1), expands the purposes of the establishment and operation of out-of-state offices to include collaboration with tourism agencies and stakeholders to execute tourism strategies. Requires, and appropriates funds for, the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish an out-of-state office in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Appropriates funds for the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism's Beijing, Philippines, and Taipei offices to promote "Made in Hawai'i" branded products and increase the export of Hawai'i products.

HB1943 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Travel & Tourism. By establishing new offices in Seoul, Beijing, and Taipei, this bill advances global marketing efforts for "Made in Hawaii" products and boosts visitor attraction in growing markets, which complements the Blueprint's goal of expanding regional tourism strategies to accelerate tourism-driven economic growth. Such advocacy for our Made in Hawaii brands further stimulates our local economies and small businesses, bringing international money and investment incentive into the state.

In the first 11 months of 2025, approximately 147,070 visitors from South Korea traveled to Hawaii and spent \$382.9 million, a 7.1% increase in arrivals and a 4.7% increase in spending from 2024. In 2024, Hawaii welcomed 51,579 visitors from China, a 51.9% increase from 2023. These markets represent serious growth opportunities for tourism in Hawaii and pose themselves as strong places to fund and deploy the physical presence of DBEDT. This bill will boost trade and stimulate regional tourism in a way that can reinvigorate the tourism economy.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1943 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030

Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.



March 4, 2026

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair; Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair; and Committee Members  
Public Hearing, March 4, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – Conference Room 308, State Capitol

**Testimony of William F. Anonsen,**  
**Managing Partner/Principal of The Maritime Group**  
**In Support of H.B. 1943 HD1, Relating to the Establishment of Out-of-State Offices in Asia**

My name is William F. Anonsen, the Managing Partner of The Maritime Group, a council member of the Hawai'i Pacific Export Council (HPEC), and a member of the Consular Corps of Hawai'i, and I respectfully support H.B. 1943, HD 1. This measure strengthens Hawai'i's international economic development strategy by refining the purposes of DBEDT's out-of-state offices to include collaboration with tourism agencies and stakeholders to execute tourism strategies, while expanding our presence in key Asia-Pacific markets.

Establishing a Hawai'i Trade and Promotion Office in Seoul is a prudent investment in one of our most important visitor and export markets. A dedicated presence will help promote "Made in Hawai'i" products, support local businesses entering Asian markets, and strengthen long-standing economic and cultural ties. Continued support for the Beijing, Philippines, and Taipei offices further enhances export opportunities for Hawai'i manufacturers, agricultural producers, and small businesses. For an island economy with a limited local market, expanding global access is essential to diversification and long-term resilience.

In a competitive global environment, maintaining a strategic presence in key Asia-Pacific markets is critical to sustaining Hawai'i's economic growth. This bill recognizes that international engagement, export expansion, and tourism coordination are interconnected components of a diversified and resilient economy. This measure promotes export growth, coordinated tourism strategy, foreign investment, and economic diversification in a measured and responsible manner.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to support H.B. 1943, HD 1, and move the measure forward. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

*William F. Anonsen*

William F. Anonsen  
Managing Partner/Principal  
THE MARITIME GROUP



TESTIMONY OF DAVE ERDMAN  
INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO  
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII

March 4, 2026

**IN SUPPORT OF HB 1943 HD1 – RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance:

My name is Dave Erdman, and I am the Interim President and CEO of Retail Merchants of Hawai'i (RMH), a statewide nonprofit trade association representing retailers, product manufacturers, shopping centers, and allied businesses across the islands.

**Retail Merchants of Hawai'i supports HB 1943 HD1, as amended.**

This measure strengthens Hawai'i's international economic development platform by supporting the establishment of an out-of-state office in Seoul, Republic of Korea, and by providing funding for the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism's offices in Beijing, Taipei, and the Philippines to promote "Made in Hawai'i" branded products and increase exports.

For Hawai'i retailers and local manufacturers, export growth is not optional—it is a strategic necessity. Our local consumer base is limited, and many of our members operate in a high-cost environment with thin margins. Expanding access to Asia-Pacific markets creates opportunities for scale, revenue diversification, and long-term business resilience.

RMH appreciates the Committee amendments that narrow the new initiatives to collaboration with tourism agencies and stakeholders to execute tourism strategies. Tourism and product demand are closely linked. Visitors who experience Hawai'i-made products while traveling here often become repeat purchasers in their home markets. Coordinated tourism and trade promotion can extend the economic impact of each visitor well beyond their stay.

The inclusion of the Philippines as an additional market for promoting Hawai'i products further broadens Hawai'i's regional engagement and supports diversification across multiple growth markets.

As the Committee evaluates the proposed appropriations, we encourage a focus on measurable outcomes and accountability, including increased export volume, new distributor relationships, small business participation, and alignment between tourism branding and product marketing.

Retail Merchants of Hawai'i respectfully supports HB 1943 HD1 and appreciates the Committee's consideration of investments that position Hawai'i businesses for growth in international markets.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Erdman  
Interim President and CEO  
Retail Merchants of Hawai'i

**HB-1943-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 7:20:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT!!!

Mahalo!

**HB-1943-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 8:47:16 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/4/2026 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Seuta'atia Cochran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Hawaii House Committee on Finance,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui loa,

Seuta'atia Cochran

Ewa Beach, 'Iolani Schools