



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

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

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT DIVISION

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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
HB2474, HD1
RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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) strongly supports **HB2474 HD1**, which seeks to broaden Hawai'i's authority to enter nonbinding international cooperative agreements. This measure goes beyond traditional sister-state partnerships by enabling collaboration with national governments, ministries, and regional organizations throughout the Asia-Pacific.

In today's interconnected world, challenges such as agriculture and food security, biosecurity, climate resilience, indigenous knowledge preservation, education, renewable energy, and economic development cannot be addressed in isolation. They demand coordinated action across borders and sectors. HB2474 HD1 provides Hawai'i with the flexibility to engage quickly and strategically with international partners while maintaining constitutional safeguards. These agreements are nonbinding, create no

enforceable obligations, and do not constitute treaties, ensuring compliance with federal and state law.

By adopting this measure, Hawai'i will strengthen global partnerships, accelerate innovation, and position itself as a leader in sustainability, cultural exchange, and economic resilience. Expanding our ability to collaborate internationally will help attract investment, share best practices, and amplify Hawai'i's voice on issues that matter most to our communities and future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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

**Monday, March 2, 2026, at 2:00PM
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

RE: HB2474 HD1 Relating to International Relations

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 2474 House Draft 1 (HB2474 HD1), which appropriates funds to the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation to assist small businesses, including those related to the tourism sector, with technology enablement.

HB2474 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This strengthens Hawaii's economic competitiveness by deepening international collaboration that can attract foreign investment, promote export opportunities for local products and services, and enhance global market access for Hawaii businesses of all sizes. This legislation supports workforce development and innovation by facilitating partnerships with global research institutions, technology hubs, and institutional purchasers that can help improve and monetize Hawaii's priority industries, such as technology, clean energy, agriculture, and tourism.

By expanding Hawaii's international collaboration, the state creates more opportunity to exchange in partnership and knowledge sharing around community and economic innovation. Formal channels of international cooperation facilitate shared learning, technical exchange, and potential access to foreign expertise that can strengthen local entrepreneurship and systems improvement. By increasing Hawaii's exposure, Hawaii benefits from the international thought leadership that can support the state in tackling its most pressing challenges: economic diversification, workforce development, technology adoption, manufacturing, and more.

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.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 2474 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2474-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 12:58:30 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am submitting comments on HB2474, which authorizes the Governor and Legislature to enter into nonbinding international cooperative agreements with foreign national governments, foreign subnational jurisdictions, and regional intergovernmental partners, and authorizes the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission to review proposals for such partnerships.

I appreciate the bill's intent to facilitate international cooperation and cultural exchange. However, I urge this committee to consider a critical gap in the proposed framework: **the absence of clear limits when prospective partner entities are credibly accused of war crimes, genocide, or other grave violations of international law.**

The Need for Ethical Guardrails

Hawai‘i has a proud history of standing for justice and human rights. Our values as a community—aloha ‘āina, mālama, and respect for the dignity of all people—should guide not only our local policies but also our international engagements. A nonbinding agreement with a foreign government is, at its core, a statement of symbolic recognition and association. It signals that Hawai‘i considers that entity a legitimate partner worthy of engagement. We must ask ourselves: what message does it send when we extend such recognition to governments credibly accused of the most serious international crimes?

This is not a hypothetical concern. In recent years, we have witnessed ongoing military campaigns that have drawn condemnation from international human rights organizations, United Nations experts, and international judicial bodies. The International Court of Justice is currently seized of a case brought by South Africa against Israel, alleging violations of the Genocide Convention in Gaza . Multiple countries have intervened in those proceedings, reflecting the grave concern of the international community. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israeli leaders over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Just this past weekend, an elementary school in Minab, Iran—the Shajarah Tayyebah school—was struck in an attack that killed dozens of children, most of them girls. Verified video footage shows the aftermath, with rescuers digging through rubble and piles of bloodied backpacks.

Reports indicate more than 100 students were killed. This attack has been condemned as yet another potential war crime.

The Current Agreement with Israel

Hawai‘i currently maintains a sister-state relationship with Israel. In light of the credible and mounting evidence of grave violations of international law—including genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes—this committee must ask whether such a partnership aligns with the values and moral standing of our state. Continuing business-as-usual engagement with a government facing active proceedings before the world's highest courts for the crime of genocide is not a neutral act. It is a statement.

A Modest Proposal

I am not asking this committee to oppose HB2474. The bill has merit in its facilitation of cultural and economic exchange. But I do ask that you consider adding clear, principled guardrails. Specifically, I urge you to consider an amendment that would:

1. Require the Hawai‘i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission to consider, as part of its review process, whether a prospective partner entity is the subject of credible allegations or pending proceedings before the International Court of Justice or International Criminal Court regarding genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity; and
2. Discourage or prohibit the establishment of new agreements, and encourage review of existing agreements, with entities against whom such credible allegations exist, unless there are compelling humanitarian or peace-building justifications for continued engagement.

This is not about isolating any one nation. It is about ensuring that Hawai‘i's international partnerships reflect our values and do not inadvertently lend legitimacy to actions that violate the most fundamental principles of human rights and international law.

Conclusion

HB2474 presents an opportunity to formalize and improve Hawai‘i's engagement with the world. But with that opportunity comes responsibility. We must ensure that in reaching out to foreign partners, we do not embrace those who are credibly accused of the gravest crimes known to international law. Our keiki, our kūpuna, and our community deserve nothing less than a foreign policy rooted in aloha and justice.

I thank the committee for its consideration of these comments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2474-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2026 6:21:43 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/2/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Jen Lum, ‘Ewa Beach

