



**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**  
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Business Development and Support Division  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

Wednesday, April 1, 2026  
10:03 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of  
**HB2474, HD1, SD1**  
**RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki 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 SD1**, 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 SD1 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 Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 10:03AM  
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

**RE: HB2474 HD1 SD1 Relating to International Relations**

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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 Senate Draft 1 (HB2474 HD1 SD1), which authorizes the State to enter into nonbinding international cooperative agreements with foreign national governments, foreign subnational jurisdictions, and regional intergovernmental partners, under certain conditions. Clarifies the scope and process for sister-state relationships.

HB2474 HD1 SD1 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 Senate Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-2474-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 5:25:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/1/2026 10:03:00 AM

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 Hawai'i 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. I also acknowledge that the previous committee made efforts to refine the framework, including clarifying definitions, specifying the roles of the Governor and Legislature, and making technical improvements. These changes represent a step in the right direction.

However, I must respectfully urge this committee to go further. The amended bill still lacks what is most essential: **clear, concrete guardrails to ensure that Hawai'i does not lend its symbolic recognition to entities credibly accused of genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity.**

**The Current Framework Remains Too Vague**

The amendments clarify process and definitions, but they do not establish any substantive criteria for evaluating prospective partners. The Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission is empowered to review proposals and develop recommendations, but the bill provides no guidance on what factors should disqualify a potential partner. It is a framework without principles.

This is not a theoretical concern. 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.

Hawai‘i currently maintains a sister-state relationship with Israel. In light of these credible and mounting allegations—including active proceedings before the world's highest courts for the crime of genocide—continuing business-as-usual engagement is not a neutral act. It is a statement. And the framework established by HB2474 does nothing to require that such statements be examined against our values.

### **Welcome Changes, But Not Enough**

The previous committee's amendments clarify process, and I commend that work. But process without principle is empty. The bill now tells us *how* we might enter into partnerships, but it does not tell us *with whom* we should—or should not—enter into them. That is a gap that leaves Hawai‘i vulnerable to inadvertently legitimizing the most serious violations of international law.

### **A Modest Proposal for Concrete Guardrails**

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 add clear, principled, and **concrete** guardrails—not vague aspirations, but specific criteria that the Commission must consider. Specifically, I urge you to amend the bill to:

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;
2. Prohibit the establishment of new agreements with entities against whom such credible allegations or proceedings exist, unless there are compelling humanitarian or peace-building justifications documented in writing and approved by concurrent resolution; and
3. Require the Commission to review existing agreements against these same criteria and report to the Legislature on whether continued engagement aligns with the values and moral standing of the State.

These are not radical proposals. They are modest, concrete, and rooted in Hawai‘i's proud history of standing for justice and human rights. They simply ensure that our international partnerships reflect our values—aloha ‘āina, mālama, and respect for the dignity of all people—and do not inadvertently lend legitimacy to actions that violate the most fundamental principles of human rights and international law.

HB2474 presents an opportunity to formalize and improve Hawai‘i's engagement with the world. The previous committee made welcome technical improvements. 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. Vague process alone will not protect us from that risk. We need concrete guardrails.

I thank the committee for its consideration of these comments and urge you to adopt the concrete criteria proposed above.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.