



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI  
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

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

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

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Statement of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
**Director**  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism**

Thursday, February 5, 2026  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
**SB 2263**  
**RELATING TO BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and members of the Committee.

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports SB2263, which establishes a business competitiveness goal for the State to achieve a ranking of being in the top ten states in the United States for business climate by 2045, with ranking metrics, interim goals, establishes a working group and requires an annual report.

SB 2263 is a direct and necessary next step following the work of the Business Revitalization Task Force established pursuant to Act 142 (SB2974). That task force was charged with identifying methods to improve Hawai'i's overall economic competitiveness, business climate, and governmental efficiency, including mitigation of regulatory and tax burdens. The Task Force's findings made clear that Hawai'i's economic performance challenges are structural and require a sustained, measurable, and long-term policy framework, not one-time adjustments.

SB 2263 implements that recommendation. The measure establishes a formal, measurable statewide goal: improving Hawai'i's national business climate ranking into the top ten states by 2045, with clear interim benchmarks in 2030, 2035, and 2040. This transforms the Task Force's strategic direction into an operational accountability structure.

Importantly, SB 2263 does not focus on a single policy lever. Instead, it recognizes that economic competitiveness is multi-dimensional: spanning workforce, infrastructure, cost of doing business, regulatory efficiency, innovation, education alignment, access to capital, and quality of life. All of which are reflected in the national ranking metric outlined in the bill. These are the same cross-sector drivers identified by the Task Force as influencing Hawai'i's long-term economic vitality.

Hawai'i has already demonstrated the value of setting clear, measurable statewide mandates in other policy areas:

- Act 151 (Food Production) established a goal of doubling local food production, which has helped align agriculture, infrastructure, workforce, and market efforts under a shared target.
- Act 97 (Renewable Portfolio Standard) set long-term clean energy benchmarks that now guide investment, grid planning, and technology deployment.

SB 2263 applies that same proven policy model to economic competitiveness. Without measurable benchmarks, economic development efforts remain fragmented. This bill establishes a shared scorecard and requires annual reporting to the Legislature on progress and policy options, ensuring continuous course correction and legislative engagement.

By codifying an economic competitiveness goal:

- The State signals long-term policy stability to investors and employers.
- Agencies gain a unifying framework to align regulatory reform, infrastructure planning, workforce initiatives, and innovation policy.
- The Legislature receives structured, recurring analysis and legislative options rather than episodic proposals.

SB 2263 is not about chasing a ranking for its own sake. It is about using recognized benchmarks as a proxy for economic health, job opportunity, wage growth potential, business formation, and long-term affordability for residents.

For these reasons, DBEDT supports SB 2263 as the implementation vehicle for the Business Revitalization Task Force's findings and as a necessary step toward a more competitive, resilient, and opportunity-driven Hawai'i economy.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
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Statement of  
**JENNIFER CHUN**  
**Acting Administrator**  
Research and Economic Analysis Division  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism**

Thursday, February 5, 2026  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
**SB2263**  
**RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and members of the Committee.

The Research and Economic Analysis Division of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports SB2263, which establishes a goal for the State to achieve a ranking among the top 10 states in the nation for business competitiveness by 2045, a ranking metric and interim goals, and requires DBEDT to establish a working group to develop and recommend policies that improve Hawai'i's business competitiveness with an annual report.

Act 142 of Session Laws of Hawai'i 2024 (SB2974 CD1) established a Business Revitalization Task Force within DBEDT to identify methods to improve Hawai'i's general economic competitiveness and business climate, including the mitigation of regulatory and tax burdens. The results and recommendations of the task force are listed in the task force report.<sup>1</sup>

The bill includes the sum of \$300,000 from general revenues of the State of Hawaii for fiscal year 2026-2027 to cover the costs of independent research, staffing, travel, and other administrative expenses as outlined in this bill. For "staffing" specified in the bill, we would like to request two full time employees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

<sup>1</sup> DBEDT (2025). Business Revitalization Task Force Report.  
[https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/files/2025/12/Business-Revitalization-Final-Report-12\\_4.pdf](https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/files/2025/12/Business-Revitalization-Final-Report-12_4.pdf)



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TO: Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 5, 2026

TIME: 1pm

RE: SB2263 Relating to Business Competitiveness  
Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure. As the measure notes, “Hawaii ranks among the least competitive states for business in national assessments, including CNBC’s America’s Top States for Business, which ranked Hawaii fiftieth in 2024 and forty-ninth in 2025. Businesses in Hawaii face high regulatory burdens, elevated costs, and slow governmental processes, which collectively hinder economic growth and threaten the long-term prosperity of the State and its residents.”

HFIA was please to participate in the Business Revitalization Task Force in 2024 and 2025. We support the goal of improving Hawaii’s Business Competitive Ranking. We believe that immediate progress in this area can be made especially by reducing the tax burden on businesses and consumers, and reducing the regulatory burden on businesses. We look forward to continuing to engage with the legislature and other stakeholders as we work to help businesses in our state survive and succeed.



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, MANAGING DIRECTOR  
HAWAII TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION  
FEBRUARY 5, 2026  
SB 2263 RELATING TO BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS.**

Aloha Chair DeCoite and members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development & Tourism. I am Tina Yamaki, Managing Director of the Hawaii Transportation Association and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Hawaii Transportation Association (HTA Hawaii) was founded in 1938 and incorporated in 1963, and is a private, non-profit trade organization dedicated to the service and assistance to the commercial ground transportation industry in the State of Hawaii. Our members include family owned small and medium sized businesses, independent owner operators, and national motor carriers range from delivery services to passenger carriers - as well as allied industry partners.

HTA Hawaii supports SB 2263. This measure establishes a goal for the State to achieve a ranking among the top 10 states in the nation for business competitiveness by 2045; establishes a ranking metric and interim goals; requires the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish a working group to develop and recommend policies that improve Hawaii's business competitiveness; requires annual reports to Legislature; and appropriates moneys.

HTA Hawaii represents the commercial transportation industry, including trucking companies, passenger carriers, tour transportation providers, and other operators that form the backbone of Hawaii's supply chain and visitor transportation network. The efficiency, reliability, and affordability of transportation services are directly tied to the State's overall business climate. For this reason, improving Hawaii's business competitiveness is not an abstract goal — it is fundamental to keeping goods moving, supporting jobs, and stabilizing the cost of living.

Hawaii consistently ranks among the most expensive states in which to do business. Transportation companies face high fuel costs, equipment expenses, regulatory compliance requirements, insurance premiums, and labor costs, all compounded by geographic isolation and supply chain constraints. These pressures are not unique to transportation, but they are magnified in an industry that every other sector depends on. When business conditions improve, transportation efficiency improves — and when costs rise, those increases ripple through the entire economy.

Setting a statewide goal to reach top 10 business competitiveness by 2045 provides a strategic direction that transcends individual administration and economic cycles. Long-term clarity helps businesses make investment decisions with greater confidence.

Accountability is critical. By identifying ranking metrics and interim goals, the measure ensures progress can be tracked and policy effectiveness evaluated. Data-driven benchmarking allows the State to identify where Hawaii lags such as regulatory burden, permitting timelines, tax structure, workforce readiness, and infrastructure and address those areas systematically.

Requiring DBEDT to convene a working group brings together stakeholders who experience Hawaii's business climate firsthand. Including industry voices ensures recommendations are grounded in operational realities, not just theory. For transportation, this may include streamlining permitting, modernizing infrastructure planning, improving freight mobility, and reducing unnecessary regulatory duplication.

Regular reporting to the Legislature promotes transparency and continuity. It ensures competitiveness remains a sustained priority rather than a short-term initiative.

A more competitive business environment benefits our residents directly. When businesses can operate more efficiently, it helps stabilize prices, attract investment, support job creation, and reduce the economic pressures that drive outmigration. For transportation providers, improved competitiveness means better service reliability, stronger workforce retention, and more capacity to support local industries and communities.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.



# holomua

COLLABORATIVE

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## OUR MISSION

To support and advance public policies that make Hawai'i affordable for all working families.

## OUR VISION

Collaborative, sustainable, and evidence-based public policies that create a diverse and sustainable Hawai'i economy, an abundance of quality job opportunities, and a future where all working families living in Hawai'i can thrive.

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Page 1 of 1

**Committee:** Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
**Bill Number:** SB 2263, Relating to Business Competitiveness  
**Hearing Date and Time:** February 5, 2026 at 1:00pm (Room 229)  
**Re:** Testimony of Holomua Collaborative- Support

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Committee Members:

We write in support of Senate Bill 2263, Relating to Business Competitiveness. This measure establishes a clear business competitiveness goal for Hawai'i: achieving a top ten national ranking for our business climate by 2045, supported by necessary interim milestones.

Holomua supports initiatives that help keep all local working families in Hawai'i by addressing issues of affordability. For Hawai'i to be affordable for local working families, we need to ensure that our local business community is provided with the opportunities necessary to expand and succeed in an uncertain economy. The struggles that businesses face to thrive in Hawaii are an unfortunate reality that has permeated the public consciousness. *Only 19% of respondents in a recent survey of 3200 local residents agree that "Hawai'i is a good place to do business."* This statement also shows a high percentage of disagreement, with 44 percent *disagreeing* that Hawai'i is a good place to do business. And 9 out of 10 respondents agree that Hawai'i needs to recruit and retain critical workforce members.<sup>1</sup>

Establishing a formal business competitiveness goal can reverse these trends. In the short term, passing this measure signals to the public that leadership recognizes the status quo is unsustainable. In the long term, this bill will cultivate thriving small businesses and a more resilient economy statewide.

Small local businesses are essential to a strong economy. They diversify income, create jobs, and ensure that wealth stays within our communities while preserving the unique culture of Hawai'i. We respectfully ask for your support of SB 2263.

Sincerely,

Matthew Prellberg  
Policy and Communications Director

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<sup>1</sup> 2025 Affordability Survey, Holomua Collective. [www.holomuacollective.org/survey-25](http://www.holomuacollective.org/survey-25).

**Date:** Monday, February 2, 2026

**Time:** 2:00 p.m.

**Place:** State Capitol, Conference Room 329

## **TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 2663 - Relating to WC Treatment Plan Approvals**

Dear Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Lamosao, and the Committee on Labor and Technology

My name is **Ka`ohimanu Dang Akiona, MD,** and I am a Physician, one of very few remaining who treats injured workers in Hawaii- on the Big Island and Moloka`i. I am submitting testimony in **strong support of SB 2663.**

As a treating provider, I cannot begin care for many injured workers without clear, written authorization. Bill review companies such as Solera/IMS routinely refuse to reimburse treatment unless I can provide written approval from the employer or insurer. When no written response is provided, these companies deny payment, leaving me with unpaid claims and significant administrative burden. This puts my practice at financial risk and forces me to delay or decline treatment until written approval is received.

SB 2663 addresses this problem by requiring employers to send a written approval or denial of a treatment plan within seven days. This simple requirement will prevent unnecessary delays in care and give providers the clarity we need to treat patients without fear of non-payment.

This bill's purpose is to clarify and codify the treatment plan requirements currently found in HAR 12-15-32. While existing rules state that a treatment plan is "deemed accepted" if the employer does not object, there is **no required timeframe** for employers to respond. In practice, bill review companies do not accept "deemed accepted" as proof of authorization. They demand written approval, and without it, they deny payment. This leaves providers stuck—and patients waiting for necessary care.

To ensure fairness and consistency, I respectfully ask the Committee to preserve the following protections already in existing law:

- **A complete, reasonable, and necessary treatment plan may not be denied**, while an incomplete plan may be denied only if the physician is given the opportunity to correct deficiencies.
- **Employers may not approve treatment plans with amendments or modifications.** Treatment decisions should be made by licensed medical professionals, not altered by non-medical entities.
- **Physicians must retain the right to request review of a denial by the DLIR Director.**

I also encourage the Committee to consider clarifying and codifying HAR 12-15-34, which governs treatment plans for providers other than physicians, to ensure consistency across all provider types.

SB 2663 is a practical and necessary reform. It ensures timely communication, reduces disputes, and allows providers like me to treat injured workers without risking months—or years—of unpaid claims. Most importantly, it helps injured employees receive the care they need without unnecessary delays.

Thank you for your consideration.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
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e-mail [info@hfbf.org](mailto:info@hfbf.org); [www.hfbf.org](http://www.hfbf.org)

February 5, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2263**  
RELATING TO BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice-Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

**The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports SB 2263**, which establishes long-term business competitiveness goals for the State of Hawai'i and requires the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to track progress using objective benchmarks and metrics.

Agriculture is a business, and the challenges facing Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers are directly tied to the State's overall business climate. Issues such as the high cost of doing business, regulatory complexity, workforce availability, infrastructure constraints, land access, and access to capital all affect the ability of agricultural producers to remain viable and competitive.

SB 2263 builds upon prior efforts to improve Hawai'i's business climate by setting clear, measurable benchmarks over time and establishing a structured process to evaluate progress. The use of recognized national rankings and metrics provides transparency and accountability, while allowing policymakers to better understand how Hawai'i compares to other states in areas that directly impact economic activity, including agriculture.

We appreciate that SB 2263 establishes a working group to help guide implementation. Agriculture should be meaningfully included in these discussions, as policies affecting land use, permitting, infrastructure development, transportation, and workforce training have direct and long-lasting impacts on local food production and rural economies.

Improving Hawai'i's business competitiveness is essential not only for existing businesses but also for attracting investment, supporting entrepreneurship, and creating pathways for growth in key sectors such as agriculture. A more competitive business environment

will help farmers and ranchers invest in their operations, adopt new technologies, and contribute to broader State goals such as increasing local production, strengthening food security, and diversifying the economy.

HFB supports SB 2263 as a framework for advancing long-term economic competitiveness and encourages continued engagement with the agricultural community as the State works toward these goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 1:00PM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**RE: SB2263 Relating to Business Competitiveness**

Aloha e Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports Senate Bill 1612 (SB2263), a goal for the State to achieve a ranking among the top 10 states in the nation for business competitiveness by 2045.

SB2263 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This bill unifies the state under a north star goal that will improve Hawaii's economic competitiveness so that business growth is less encumbered and business resilience is strengthened.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii recognizes that the state ranking of #49 Top States for Business in 2025 reflects the challenging economic environment our members are faced with. The Chamber, by virtue of its programming across business advocacy, education, and workforce development, is already dedicated to creating impact across the ten board categories of competitiveness listed in the bill language. Further, the Chamber believes that the CNBC ranking is a fair and accurate ranking system that evaluates business competitiveness and supports a statewide initiative to improve the state ranking.

For these reasons we support SB2263 and respectfully ask for its passage. 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.



**MAUI**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
VOICE OF BUSINESS

**LATE**

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 229  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026 AT 1:00 P.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Economic Development & Tourism

**STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB2263 RELATED TO BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of establishing clear, measurable goals to improve the state's business climate. SB2263 is significant to our mission, as it sets a statewide target to rank among the top thirty states for business climate by 2045, with interim benchmarks and annual progress reporting. This approach provides much-needed direction for economic strategy, particularly as Maui and other communities continue to recover from recent economic disruptions.

Improving Hawaii's business climate is essential to our mission. Setting a competitive business climate goal aligns with our support for long-term economic growth and diversification. By focusing on business climate improvements, the state can encourage investment, job creation, and innovation across multiple sectors—including technology, manufacturing, and the creative industries. The bill's reporting requirements also promote transparency and accountability, which are essential for tracking progress and making data-driven policy adjustments over time.

We appreciate that SB2263 recognizes the need for ongoing assessment and resource allocation to achieve its objectives. However, we note that improving business climate rankings typically requires a comprehensive approach, including regulatory reform, infrastructure investment, workforce development, and support for emerging industries. It is important that implementation of this measure avoids placing additional tax burdens or regulatory hurdles on



# MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

local businesses, as this could counteract the intended benefits and hinder economic recovery, especially for small and struggling enterprises.

Committee on Economic Development & Tourism  
February 5, 2026  
Page 2.

To maximize the bill's positive impact, we recommend that the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism engage regularly with business stakeholders and chambers of commerce statewide, including those on Maui, to ensure the benchmarks reflect real-world challenges and opportunities. We also encourage ongoing evaluation of policies that affect business costs and competitiveness, with a focus on supporting both established and emerging industries.

We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure Hawai'i's economic future is resilient, inclusive, and prosperous.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support of SB2263.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap  
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

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Statement of  
**Meli James and Brittany Heyd**  
Cofounders  
Mana Up

**LATE**

SB2263, Relating to Business Competitiveness

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and committee members,

We support SB2263, which establishes a long-term business competitiveness goal for the State of Hawai'i with interim benchmarks and annual reporting.

Mana Up is a statewide initiative that provides entrepreneurs in Hawai'i with the resources and tools to grow their businesses and scale globally. As these entrepreneurs continue to grow, they also contribute to the expansion of our local economy. As part of our mission, we aim to sustain the local economy through economic diversification, local job creation, community giveback, investment, and a regenerative culture of entrepreneurship, providing a better future for generations to come here in Hawai'i.

Improving the State's business climate directly supports local entrepreneurs' ability to grow, hire, and invest in Hawai'i. Low business competitiveness rankings reflect structural challenges that affect all sectors, particularly small and emerging companies striving to enter new markets, hire talent, access capital, and compete globally. A transparent, measurable framework for competitiveness will help policymakers and stakeholders identify barriers, track progress, and collaborate on solutions that benefit Hawai'i's entire economic ecosystem.

Mana Up supports efforts to strengthen Hawai'i's business climate because doing so expands opportunities for homegrown brands to thrive, creates jobs, and grows Hawai'i's economy in ways that honor local culture, place, and values.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to pass SB 2263.

Sincerely,

Meli James | Cofounder, Mana Up  
Brittany Heyd | Cofounder, Mana Up



TITLE GUARANTY  
HAWAII

February 5, 2026

**Testimony in support of SB 2263, Relating to Business Competitiveness**

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Committee Members,

We write in support of SB 2263, Relating to Business Competitiveness, which supports local businesses and workers by establishing clear, long-term goals to improve Hawai'i's business climate and by promoting accountability and transparency in how the State measures progress.

Title Guaranty of Hawai'i is the oldest and largest title company in the State, but at our core, we remain a locally rooted, family-owned business. Since 1896, we have been owned and operated by a kama'aina family and have grown alongside Hawai'i's communities. Today, we employ more than 250 local residents statewide, many of whom have built long-term careers with our company.

A predictable, efficient, and competitive business environment is essential for locally owned companies like ours to continue investing in Hawai'i's workforce and communities. Hawai'i's consistently low national business ranking reflects systemic challenges, including high costs and slow, complex government processes, highlights the uncertainty for employers, workers, and consumers alike face in today's economy.

SB 2263 recognizes that improving the business climate requires sustained focus, measurable goals, and coordination across state agencies. By establishing interim benchmarks and requiring annual reporting, this measure creates a framework for long-term planning rather than fragmented or reactive policymaking. Improving Hawai'i's business climate will also help uplift the economic security and overall well-being of local working families by supporting job stability, workforce retention, and long-term investment in our communities.

For these reasons, Title Guaranty of Hawai'i urges the Committee to pass SB 2263 and support policies that strengthen Hawai'i's local business ecosystem and economic future.

Sincerely,

Mike B. Pietsch  
President and Chief Operating Officer  
Title Guaranty of Hawai'i



**SB-2263**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:36:50 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/5/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Since the end of the pandemic, socioeconomic conditions continue to put significant pressure on working- and middle-class families. Our state ranks very lowly in terms of economic competitiveness and opportunity. These low marks have a direct and negative impact on our people. We need to decisively break with the past and become more economically competitive. We have to enhance our dynamism and opportunity.

I **STRONGLY URGE** the committee to **SUPPORT** SB2263!