



Ke'ena Kuleana Ho'okipa O Hawai'i
1801 Kalākaua Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96815
kelepona tel (808) 973-2255
kelepa'i fax (808) 973-2253
hawaiiitourismauthority.org

TESTIMONY OF
Caroline Andersen
Interim President & CEO
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
Tuesday, February 17, 2026
1:11 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 229
In consideration of
SB2906
RELATING TO TOURISM.

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

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) offers comments on SB 2906, which would establish a Tourism Liaison Officer within the Office of the Governor to coordinate tourism strategy, including destination management and regenerative tourism efforts, and to define performance measures for HTA.

Last year, the Legislature passed SB1571, which Gov. Josh Green signed into law as Act 132. Under Act 132, HTA's President and CEO reports directly to the Governor, which clarifies the reporting relationship and centralizes executive accountability. HTA is concerned that SB 2906 would create an additional position within the Office of the Governor with overlapping responsibilities for tourism strategy, potentially making accountability less clear and decision-making more complex.

Additionally, effective destination management requires consistency between what is promoted and what communities can support, which is why, by its practical and codified definitions, "destination management" includes brand marketing functions: "Create, implement, and monitor strategies that attract targeted visitor markets and improve visitor experiences." (§201B-1, SB 2906 p. 5, lines 5-7). SB 2906 shifts key destination-management planning and DMAP responsibilities to the Tourism Liaison, with the intent of leaving HTA to focus on marketing and branding, but in effect puts brand marketing in two different departments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our comments on SB2906.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NALANI BRUN, DIRECTOR



DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Testimony of Nalani Ka'auwai Brun
Director, Office of Economic Development
County of Kauai

Before the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism (EDT)

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 – 1:11 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Re: SB 2906 – Relating to Tourism

Honorable Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully oppose SB 2906.

Tourism marketing and destination management are operationally inseparable functions. Marketing drives visitor demand; destination management absorbs and shapes that demand within the limits of community capacity, infrastructure, and natural resources. Separating these functions into different executive structures risks structural fragmentation at a time when coordinated governance is most needed.

SB 2906 removes destination management and regenerative tourism from the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and places those responsibilities within the Office of the Governor under a Tourism Liaison Officer. While the intent may be to clarify roles, this shift weakens integrated tourism governance by dividing strategic authority between marketing and management functions without statutory requirements for joint planning, shared performance metrics, or formalized coordination with counties.

In state government practice, structural separation often results in operational disconnection. Without mandated integration mechanisms, marketing decisions may proceed independently of destination capacity realities. Counties will continue to manage the roads, parks, water systems, emergency services, and community impacts associated with visitor volume. When marketing and management are not tightly aligned, the burden of that misalignment falls locally.

This bill represents a significant governance restructuring. However, it does not establish:

- Required joint strategic planning between HTA and the Tourism Liaison Officer;

- Shared performance measures linking visitor demand to infrastructure and community impact indicators;
- Formalized county participation in destination management execution; or
- Clear funding alignment between marketing investments and management priorities.

Tourism governance should move toward stronger integration, not structural division. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to defer SB 2906.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



[COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM](#)

Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair

Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

February 17, 2026

Strongly Support SB2906

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

My name is Antoinette Davis, and I have had the honor of serving as Executive Director of the Activities and Attractions Association of Hawai'i (A3H), a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit trade organization, since 1997. A3H **strongly supports** this measure.

This bill appropriately refocuses the duties of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority on **marketing and branding**, rather than destination management and regenerative tourism. It also establishes a **Tourism Liaison Officer** position within the Office of the Governor and assigns **destination management and regenerative tourism** responsibilities to that role.

If the intent is to strengthen destination management while addressing concerns related to the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, we believe this approach provides an excellent and effective solution.

Mahalo for all you do and your time, consideration, and this opportunity to testify.

Toni

Toni Marie Davis
Executive Director
Activities & Attractions Association of Hawaii, Inc.
Statewide 501 (c) (6) not-for-profit Trade Association
PO Box 598, Makawao, Hawaii 96768
(808)871-7947

SB-2906

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:13:21 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Turner	Testifying for Maui-Molokai Sea Cruises	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill is great because it allows HTA to focus on marketing while sifting the complexities of destination management and environment to the Governor and a proposed Tourism Liaison Officer. We want sustainable tourism, and by separating the responsibility of managing sustainable tourism, from the marketing of tourism, a more efficient and specialized approach can be directed to both promoting Hawaii, and protecting Hawaii.

MAUI OCEAN CENTER

*Our Mission: To foster understanding,
wonder and respect for Hawaii's marine life.*

SENATE COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM AND WAYS AND MEANS

**Honorable Chair DeCoite, Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Wakai
and Committee Members**

STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB2906

02/16/2026

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

My name is Tapani Vuori and I am the General Manager of Maui Ocean Center, a public aquarium, Board Director of Maui Visitors Bureau, Board Director of Ma'alaea Village Association advocating for the Ma'alaea community, Board Director of Ma'alaea Triangle Association overseeing the commercial business area at Ma'alaea Triangle and the Founder and President of MOC Marine Institute, a 501c3 marine science non-profit organization. I wanted to highlight the various community organizations besides Maui Ocean Center as our entire community; near and at large is impacted by tourism and depends on it.

I strongly support SB2906 as it attempts to clarify and simplify the decision making structure vis-à-vis tourism here in Hawaii. The clarity of Vision has to come from the top. The fact that we have multiple agencies involved in tourism decision making the clarity of our messaging has suffered greatly creating confusion, hesitation and resistance to visit Hawaii. This is especially acute on outer islands.

Tourism is but one tool in our economic tool box so let's lever it and start shifting the nexus of benefit more to our local communities and take better control of how we manage it. Historically a laissez-faire, more organic capital driven growth in tourism has perhaps not included the impacts to the destination community as we can see from the friction overtourism has generated. Instead of trying to mitigate the negative impacts on the backend why not become more proactive and predictive and have a more systemic and holistic approach to tourism. Hawaii is very special ; let's not lose it.

Aloha,



Tapani Vuori



192 Ma'alaea Road Wailuku, Hawai'i 96793 • mauiocceancenter.com • 808.270.7000



LATE

*Testimony of
Mufi Hannemann
President & CEO
Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association*

*Committees on Economic Development & Technology
Tuesday, February 17, 2026*

SB 2906– RELATING TO TOURISM

Chair Decoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA) strongly supports SB 2906. As the state's largest private sector tourism organization, representing nearly 50,000 hotel rooms, and 40,000 lodging employees, HLTA is committed to a coordinated and effective tourism governance structure which is essential to maintaining Hawai'i's economic stability and community well-being.

Of late, HTA has been burdened with increasingly complex and overlapping responsibilities related to destination management, regenerative tourism, and statewide strategy. This has strained the agency's capacity and created uncertainty regarding leadership, accountability, and long-term planning.

SB 2906 addresses these challenges by clearly separating functions. Under this bill, HTA can concentrate on its primary role of marketing Hawai'i responsibly and maintaining the Hawai'i brand, while destination management and regenerative tourism responsibilities are elevated to the Office of the Governor through the Tourism Liaison Officer.

This approach strengthens statewide coordination among state and county agencies, places destination management strategy within the Governor's policy framework, and improves accountability through clearer lines of authority and centralized oversight, while establishing a single point of leadership for long-term tourism planning. From an industry perspective, aligning marketing and destination management as complementary functions, rather than competing priorities, will lead to better-managed destinations, improved visitor experiences, and greater community support for tourism through proactive and transparent impact management.

SB 2906 also reinforces Hawai'i's commitment to regenerative tourism by embedding these principles in executive-level planning rather than dispersing them across multiple agencies with limited authority.

For these reasons, HLTA supports of SB 2906.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Mufi Hannemann

President & CEO

Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

SB-2906

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:11:20 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bill Caldwell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

LATE

SB-2906

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:48:17 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/17/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB2906.

Gregory Misakian