



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

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

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT DIVISION

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
DIRECTOR

DANE K. WICKER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DENNIS T. LING
ADMINISTRATOR

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804
Web site: dbedt.Hawaii.gov

Telephone: (808) 586-2355
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Statement of
Dennis T. Ling
Administrator

Business Development and Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY**

Friday, April 17, 2026
8:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

In consideration of
SCR169, SD1
**ESTABLISHING A SISTER-STATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE OF
HAWAII, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND THE PREFECTURE OF
YAMAGATA, JAPAN.**

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports **SCR 169 SD1**, which seeks to establish the Hawai'i–Yamagata Sister-State relationship.

Yamagata Prefecture and the State of Hawai'i share many similarities in agriculture, food production, manufacturing, sustainability, and rural revitalization. Our regions also share core economic development priorities, including sustainable tourism, workforce development, food security, clean energy and climate resilience, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

From an economic perspective, a formal sister-state relationship would create new opportunities for bilateral collaboration. Expanded engagement with Yamagata Prefecture can strengthen Hawai'i's economy through increased visitor travel, business and educational exchanges, and cultural tourism. Sister-state partnerships often support sector-specific trade and investment, including agricultural exports, food product

innovation, and joint research initiatives—areas where both Hawai'i and Yamagata have complementary strengths. Enhanced government-to-government and business-to-business cooperation can also facilitate workforce training partnerships, exchange programs, and innovation in sustainability and clean energy technologies.

The Hawai'i Yamagata Kenjin Kai has been instrumental in laying the foundation for this relationship, maintaining longstanding engagement through cultural exchanges, programs, and reciprocal visits that consistently generate community, cultural, and economic benefits.

DBEDT welcomes the opportunity to explore expanded collaborative activities with the Yamagata Prefectural Government and the local Kenjin Kai to advance shared economic goals and strengthen ties between our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology (ECD)
Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair**

**Friday, April 17, 2026, at 8:30AM
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

**RE: SCR169 SD1 ESTABLISHING A SISTER-STATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE OF HAWAII,
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND THE PREFECTURE OF YAMAGATA, JAPAN.**

Aloha e Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports SCR169 Senate Draft 1, which establishes a sister-state relationship between the State of Hawai'i and Yamagata Prefecture in Japan.

SCR169 SD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This resolution offers an encouraging opportunity to deepen Hawaii's trade relationships and support diplomatic progress at a time when international economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific is increasingly important. Sister-state partnerships provide a structured pathway to facilitate business-to-business connections, expand export opportunities for local producers, and support the development of long-term trade relationships. With Hawaii's small businesses and value-added producers facing significant economic pressure, these partnerships can serve as an important mechanism to access overseas markets and build consistent export channels for the State. In all, these benefits improve Hawaii's economic security.

Decreasing Hawaii's import reliance is one of the states most important priorities. Institutionalizing international trade relations through sister-state declarations supports Hawaii's stimulates small businesses activity and generates crucial tax revenue while improving Hawaii's trade deficit. Furthermore, expanding market access for small businesses helps these businesses more easily achieve economies of scale, making their products are more affordable for residents and further improving Hawaii's trade deficit.

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 SCR169 Senate Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.