



**Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce**

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April 8, 2021

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair

Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

RE: Testimony In **Opposition** to HB862, HD2, SB2 Proposed, Relating to State Government

Aloha e Chairs Dela Cruz and Baker; Vice Chairs Keith Agaran and Chang; and Committee Members:

The Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce (NHCC) humbly submits this written testimony in strong **OPPOSITION** to HB862, HD2, SB2 Proposed, relating to State Government (hereinafter the “Bill”).

The mission of the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) is *to “strategically manage Hawaii tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, community desires and visitor industry needs.”* On January 30, 2020, the agency adopted HTA’s Strategic Plan 2020-2025, which focuses on the following 4 pillars:

- 1) Land and Natural Resources
- 2) Hawaiian Culture
- 3) Community
- 4) Brand and Marketing

HTA serves a critical function and provides valuable programs and resources. In addition, HTA provides the Native Hawaiian community with the opportunity to perpetuate culture, educate visitors and provide an authentic visitor experience, and have a voice relative to the tourism industry. This Bill proposes to: eliminate many of HTA’s key functions; eliminate HTA’s ability to fund programs that perpetuate the Hawaiian culture; and restrict the Agency’s ability to work toward a regenerative tourism model. In essence, this Bill will strip HTA of all essential functions and authority except for strictly marketing tourism.

In particular, NHCC opposes this Bill because of the following negative and potentially devastating effects it will have:

- This Bill will prohibit HTA from fulfilling its mission.
- This Bill will, for all intents and purposes, dispense with HTA's Strategic Plan by eliminating 3 of the 4 articulated pillars.
- This Bill will prevent HTA from supporting Hawaiian culture, natural resources and community programs.
- Under this Bill, there will no longer be a State Agency responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing policies and direction for tourism.
- Under this Bill, HTA will no longer be able to support educational, training, and career counseling programs, thereby leaving the community with no opportunity to gain critical knowledge and skills to advance in the visitor industry. As a result, all of HTA's workforce development efforts and programs will be forced to cease.
- Under this Bill, HTA will no longer be available as a resource to provide technical or other assistance. In past years, HTA has been able to collaborate with partners and assist organizations and businesses through cultural training programs, festivals, events workshops, agritourism webinars, and nonprofit financial management webinars.
- Under this Bill, HTA will no longer be able to support projects and programs that work to manage, improve, and protect of Hawaii's natural environment and other areas frequented by visitors.
- Under this Bill, HTA will no longer be able to support the perpetuation of Hawaiian culture and community, including the work HTA has done to ensure that the Hawaiian culture is accurately portrayed by the visitor industry, that Hawaiian language is supported and normalized as our official State language, that Hawaiian cultural practitioners and cultural sites are supported and nurtured, and that a native Hawaiian cultural education and training program exists for the visitor industry workforce.

For these reasons, NHCC **STRONGLY OPPOSES** HB862 HD2, SB2 Proposed. Accordingly, we request that the Committees do not move forward with this bill.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide testimony on a matter of significance to the Native Hawaiian community.



Shannon H. Edie  
President  
Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce