



# DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

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Statement of  
**THEODORE E. LIU**

Director

Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism  
before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INTERNATIONAL  
AFFAIRS**

Wednesday, February 20, 2008

1:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 224

in consideration of

**GM 420**

**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Sister State  
Committee, Gubernatorial Nominee, THANH-LO SANANIKONE, for a term to  
expire 6-30-2012**

Chair English, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Committee members:

The Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism strongly supports the nomination of Ms. Thanh-lo Sananikone to the Hawaii Sister State Committee. Ms. Sananikone was nominated by the East-West Center.

Members of the Hawaii Sister State Committee are responsible for developing and evaluating recommendations for all Sister-state or province relationships, and forwarding their recommendations to the Legislature. They are also responsible for periodically evaluating established sister-state relationships. This could include recommending that a relationship be terminated.

The ideal candidate for the Sister State Committee would have a broad range of international experience, through membership in international organizations and extensive overseas travel. The candidate should also have a strong interest in, and

support of, the development of Hawaii as an international global leader, especially through DBEDT's Office of International Affairs (OIA). Active involvement in an existing Sister tie would be a plus.

Ms. Sananikone is superbly qualified to be a member of the Committee. Over the course of a distinguished career, she has served in international leadership positions with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. These positions include a wide range of responsibilities, from consulting on business opportunities to assisting immigrants and refugees. DBEDT has had the pleasure of working closely with her on trade missions to Vietnam, and found her to be knowledgeable of the local business-investment environment, and energetic and enthusiastic about assisting Hawaii companies.

In addition to her business experience, Ms. Sananikone has a background in education and training, which will be of considerable value to our department. We see training--especially short-term training--as a major opportunity for Hawaii.

Ms. Sananikone's background also includes health care, holding a Masters in Public Health degree and having coordinated medical missions to Vietnam and Laos. Once again, this is an area that we have identified as an important opportunity for our state.

A true internationalist, Ms. Sananikone was born in Vietnam, speaks three Southeast Asian languages fluently and has work experience in two countries where Hawaii enjoys Sister relationships: China and the Philippines. She has worked tirelessly with DBEDT, the Vietnamese-American Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii and other organizations to establish a Sister relationship with the Province of Thua Thien-Hue in Vietnam. From this experience, she knows what qualifications are needed for establishing a Sister tie, and how to achieve that tie.

Ms. Sananikone has given generously of her time to serve on the boards of Hawaii organizations with a strong international focus that will be closely involved with the activities of our Office of International Affairs. These include the East-West Center, the Pacific & Asian Affairs Council, and the Hawaii/Pacific District Export Council. The Committee should greatly benefit from her experience with these groups.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't mention her awards as Outstanding Minority Import-Export Services Business Advocate in 2002 and the State of Hawaii 2003 Hawaii Minority Small Business Advocate of the Year.

In sum, Ms. Sananikone can provide outstanding service to the Hawaii Sister State Committee, and the Committee would be extremely fortunate to have her as a member. I urge you to give her nomination your strongest consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.