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Statement of
MARSHA WIENERT
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Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, CULTURE & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Monday, February 2, 2009
8:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 312

in consideration of
HB 754
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY.

Chair Manahan, Vice Chair Tokioka and Members of the House Committee on Tourism, Culture and International Affairs.

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) respectfully opposes HB 754, which removes the directors of DBEDT and transportation (DOT), the chairperson of the BLNR, and executive director of the state foundation on culture and the arts (SFCA) from the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) board, changes the appointment process of the board members and develops an advisory group to the HTA.

We oppose HB 754 because we do not believe that there is a reason for changing the way in which the HTA board members are currently appointed. We also do not believe that there is justification for removing DBEDT, DOT, BLNR and SFCA from the board of the HTA.

We feel strongly that the process and the makeup of the board have been effective and operating in a satisfactory manner for many years and the rationale for changing it is unclear.

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We also question why there is a need to appoint the HTA board members in a different manner than directed by Section 26-34, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

We believe that the existing appointment process is fair and equitable and it provides oversight by the governor with concurrence by the senate.

We also believe and agree with the findings and recommendations in the State Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP). Having DOT, BLNR, and DBEDT involved in tourism policy development at the HTA board level will ensure that the action plans identified in the TSP and the HTA plan will be taken into consideration in their respective departments' plans and visions.

Therefore, we must strongly oppose HB 754 because of: 1) the lack of justification for changing the appointment process of board members—we believe the current process is fair and equitable, 2) the lack of justification to exempt the HTA board appointment from Section 26-34, Hawaii Revised Statutes and 3) the lack of justification for removing DBEDT, DOT, BLNR and SFCA as non-voting members of the board.

We request that HB 754 be held for lack of justification and need to change the existing statute.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice our strong opposition to HB 754.