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David Y. Ige
Governor

John De Fries
President and Chief Executive Officer

Statement of
JOHN DE FRIES

Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & TOURISM

Thursday, February 4, 2021
9:05 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room #312
via videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL NO. 914
MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
RELATING TO COVID-19 EXPENDITURES

Chair Onishi, Vice Chair Sayama, and members of the House Committee on Labor & Tourism: the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) **supports** the intent of House Bill 914, which provides an emergency appropriation in fiscal year 2020-2021 to the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) for COVID-19 response related programs and activities.

On June 5, 2020, HTA sent a letter to Governor David Ige, that requested funds from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to reimburse HTA for COVID-19 related expenditures which included airport support, the call center to check on quarantined travelers, Hotels for Heroes, a web app for traveler self-reporting and data processing, and supplies. Due to the limited amount of available funds, we did not receive a reimbursement for those expenditures; however, to date, the HTA has expended \$2,996,267.99 in support of COVID-related missions. For clarification, the funds requested are not to support costs incurred by the Hawaii Convention Center (HCC) for the activities conducted at HCC by DLIR, DOD, DOH or other Governmental entities. Governmental entities have provided funding for the use of the facility, at cost.

The \$2.5 million included in this request will be used to implement branding strategies in international markets, purposed at reinitiating travel from Canada, Japan, Korea and Oceania source markets. Our focus would be to brand Hawaii as a safe destination, while promoting responsible and respectful travel to our home. Funds would specifically be used for advertising (social marketing, online marketing, TV/Radio/OTT, collateral production & fulfillment, etc.; PR &

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promotions (media blitz, press trips, media fairs, media and consumer events, etc.); and trade Marketing (co-op with airlines/wholesalers/OTAs, travel trade education, trade shows/events/missions, trade fairs, etc.)

It is for these reasons that HTA **supports** HB 914. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony.



LATE

HAWAI'I LODGING & TOURISM
A S S O C I A T I O N

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

Committee on Labor & Tourism
House Bill 914: Relating to making an emergency appropriation to the Hawai'i Tourism Authority relating to COVID-19 expenditures.

Chair Onishi and members of the Committee, mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, the state's largest private sector visitor industry organization.

The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association—nearly 700 members strong, representing more than 50,000 hotel rooms and nearly 40,000 lodging workers — recognizes the role that the Hawai'i Tourism Authority has played in our state's COVID-19 response, as well as the responsibility the agency will have in restoring travel to our state. As such, HLTA supports additional funding being allocated to HTA at this time.

From the earliest days of the COVID-19 public health crisis, HTA has been on the forefront of the State's response efforts. From standing up the Joint Information Center to providing daily informational updates to various stakeholders, HTA has fulfilled vital duties related to the pandemic and will undoubtedly continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Moreover, our State tourism agency will be tasked with a major role in restoring and revitalizing our local tourism economy and will require significant State funding to accomplish this. **For these reasons, HLTA supports House Bill 914.**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony.