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Josh Green, M.D.
Governor

John De Fries
President and Chief Executive Officer

Statement of
JOHN DE FRIES
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Tuesday, February 14, 2023
8:30 a.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL NO. 1233 HD1
RELATING TO TOURISM

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Water & Land,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on HB1233 HD1, which would require the School of Travel Industry Management of the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study that assesses the tourism social carrying capacity for each of the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, and Kaua'i.

Understanding capacity limits is important an important element of destination management. For example, we have seen improved experiences and reduced impacts to natural environments and facilities at state parks that have implemented reservations systems to manage capacity: Wai'ānapanapa on Maui, Lē'ahi (Diamond Head) on O'ahu, and Hā'ena on Kaua'i.

While we ultimately defer to the School of Travel Industry Management on matters related to the implementation of this measure, we offer two recommendations:

Islands To Be Studied. While the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, and Kaua'i are named in this measure to be studied, the effects of large numbers of visitors are often most pronounced on our less populated islands. Kama'āina on Moloka'i in particular, through our community engagement there, have articulated a desire to study this issue on their island. We recommend including the islands of Lāna'i and Moloka'i in this study.

Timeline. For an issue as nuanced as carrying capacity that will require extensive community input, the timeline contemplated in this measure – just shy of six months – may not allow for as thorough of a study as would be useful to decision makers and destination managers. We recommend considering a longer timeline for this study.

Should this measure be adopted, HTA stands ready to assist with its implementation, including utilizing the steering committees, task forces, and working groups convened as part of the Destination Management Action Plan process to assist in finding stakeholders to participate in this study.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments on HB1233 HD1.

HB-1233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2023 9:19:40 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/14/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valerie Barnes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill to assess each island's carrying capacity for tourism. We are inundated and no amount of education or fees solve the problem of just too many people coming to the islands. We need to understand what our infrastructure can support and, more importantly, what the actual residents of Hawai'i are willing to support. Mahalo.

HB-1233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2023 9:34:33 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/14/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of HB1233

I think this is long overdue and needed and will find that Oahu and Maui are heavily over carrying capacities for tourism and thus "overtoured." With the poisoning of our water systems at Red Hill and the potential contamination of our source of freshwater, heavy consideration must be given to our natural resources, especially fresh water.

I recommend amending the bill to include consulting with the county water resource managing systems (i.e. Board of Water Supply) to understand the amount of freshwater available and its impact on the social carrying capacity.

I recommend amending the bill to also include consulting with University of Hawaii College of Engineering Environmental Engineers to assess infrastructure impacts on water, sewer, and roads and its effects on social carrying capacity.

I also recommend amending the bill to include consulting with the Department of Agriculture and the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to assess the amount of food produced and the amount of food available in Hawaii to understand its effects on the social carrying capacity in times of disasters and emergencies.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2023 10:22:26 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/14/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Summer Yadao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives, thank you for hearing HB1233 HD1 to have UH conduct a study on the impacts of tourism on our island home. The lack of conscious, moral and respectful behavior while visiting our island home, needs to be addressed. Taking of our limited precious resources and contributing to our traffic and stress living on these islands, with continually rising costs of everything to LIVE in Hawai`i, needs to be reined in. Kanaka Maoli lived to preserve the island home we live on today. We need to show gratitude and continue to keep our invaluable resources pristine for the future. The pimping of Hawai`i for the benefit of the few needs to end and putting in place hard boundaries for these tourist that just come to Hawai`i to take, take, take. We live on island homes and the greatest level of protection for ALL places throughout Hawai`i needs to be every person in Hawai`i's top priority. Mahalo

HB-1233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2023 7:49:47 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/14/2023 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Policymakers at popular tourist destinations around the world are increasingly seeking estimates of tourism social carrying capacity to allow action to be taken to control visitation before over-tourism occurs. Here in Hawai‘i, the school of travel industry management at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa has proposed a study to provide policymakers and destination managers with estimates of the tourism social carrying capacity for each of the islands of O‘ahu, Maui, Hawai‘i, and Kaua‘i. Please support this initiative.



Restore the Commons

Tuesday, February 14, 2023, 8:30 am

House Committee on Water and Land

HOUSE BILL 1233 – RELATING TO TOURISM

Position: Sport , with comment

Me ke Aloha, Chair Ichiyama, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on

HB1233 calls for the School of Travel Industry Management of the University of Hawai'i to study and assesses the tourism social carrying capacity for each of the islands of Oahu, Maui, Hawai'i, and Kauai, in consultation with the Department of Health and Department of Land and Natural Resources, perhaps others.

Carrying capacity is a great concept, but it means very different things to different people, so it's important to get the marching orders straight in the first place. As an lifetime ecologist and a planner, I have seen this concept misused most of the time.

This bill is clearly well-intended, but in my view bends over backward for the causes that create the need in the first place. The bill notes that the concept is properly oriented both toward the local community and the visitor perspectives, with the expectation that the two can be blended, or that they are mutually informing. It also notes that we typically see the slant toward the visitor industry, with the concern that we try to assure repeat visitorship. This actually the problem. The visitors come for playdates in sun and sand, and for adventure, having no clue about the fragility of the Hawaii setting – environmentally, culturally, or socially – and consequently leaving their scruples at home, adopting an identity as a privileged globe-trotter with no responsibility to the places they visit. They assume that this is covered by local authorities, and that they should rightfully be free to get outside of their normal selves, to blow off a little steam (“leave their brains at home”).

Locals will inform you that this is getting pretty old, and they're not having it. For this reason, the true call in this bill should be to thoroughly explore the meaning of “carrying capacity” to local people. There is general agreement across the board that “tourism destination management” is poorly addressed here, and that locals are angry for two reasons: first, they are overwhelmed by the numbers of visitors, who are free to enjoy roaming absolutely everywhere in the islands, impinging on locals enjoyment and stewardship of the places we love, leaving trash and damage, parking irresponsibly, trampling the landscape and muddying the waters. Second, because tourists are tolerated for acting irresponsibly, locals are insulted as well as disenfranchised, treated like second-class citizens (“tourists spend money; we must keep them happy”).

The pandemic shut-down opened a lot of eyes to how well-treated tourists are compared with local people. For the first time in the lifetimes of many, local people were able to enjoy the local scene among people they knew and trusted, people who shared a sense of responsibility, which is what makes this a “special place” in the first place. The familiar complaint of native Hawaiians that they are treated like second-class citizens is now echoed by kama'āina. It is past time to take a hard look at what is a socially acceptable carrying capacity of existing or potential facilities, from the kama'āina perspective. This will likely be a number for visitors, but also rules for their enjoyment of our environmentally, culturally, and socially fragile home. Ask the right people.

Mahalo for the opportunity to address this issue,

/s/ Charley Ice, Hoa'āina; 35 years a public servant, professional planner and hydrologist.

HB-1233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 5:20:41 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/14/2023 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

i am writing in support of HB 1233. We need a serious study with updated numbers for the carrying capacity of Tourist in Hawaii at any given time in order to plan for the future.

Mahalo,

Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros

Resident, Maui

(808)866-7409

HB-1233-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 9:56:37 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/14/2023 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I'm born and raised in the Hawaiian Kingdom a Kanaka Maoli.

I'm writing in SUPPORT of HB1233.

We need to be able to measure and track the type of harm tourism is causing to the Hawaiian Kingdom.

me ke aloha 'āina,
Nanea Lo, Mō'ili'ili