

**Testimony of Suzanne P. Vares-Lum
President, East-West Center**

Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Tuesday, April 2, 2024

SR123/SCR145

Requesting stakeholders to update the East-West Center study titled “Hawai‘i as an East-West bridge: a survey of the economic value of non-tourist international activities in Hawai‘i”.

Dear Chair DeCoite, Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Senate Committees on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism, and Higher Education:

Mahalo for this opportunity for the East-West Center to provide testimony in **support** of SR123/SCR145 introduced by Senator Chris Lee. As an institution established by the US Congress in 1960, the East-West Center promotes better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue.

The updated study would serve as a beacon of insight into the diverse economic contributions beyond tourism that Hawai‘i offers to the global community. However, in the face of evolving economic landscapes and geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, it is imperative that we ensure the data and analysis provided remain current and reflective of present realities.

Furthermore, updating this study will enable us to adapt to emerging trends, engage in new opportunities, and address evolving challenges, helping to ensure Hawai‘i's resilience and competitiveness in the global arena. The East-West Center recommends that funding be appropriated to ensure the ability to convene stakeholders and move forward with updating this important resource.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SR123/SCR145. We look forward to our continued collaboration with the Hawai‘i State Legislature in elevating Hawai‘i as a bridge between East and West.