

**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

Friday, March 21, 2025
10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 423

In consideration of
HCR192
**REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
AND TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A TOURISM AND GAMING WORKING GROUP.**

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey and members of the Committee.

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) offers its support with comments on HCR192, which requests the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism to establish a tourism and gaming working group:

1. A clear line of communication with DBEDT will be key as the staffing for the working group needs to be defined to ensure that the necessary scheduling, management of logistics, and development of agendas can take place.
2. Since gaming activities may impact all the citizens in the state, the working group membership may need to be expanded to ensure that we are gathering input from as many communities and stakeholders as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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TESTIMONY OF
DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I
Interim President & CEO
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Friday, March 21, 2025
10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 423

In consideration of
HCR 192
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND
TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A TOURISM AND GAMING WORKING GROUP

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is pleased to provide comments on HCR 192, which requests the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish a tourism and gaming working group.

HTA recommends having a seat on the working group since it will examine "how gaming activities may support the work conducted by the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism and the Hawaii Tourism Authority." Additionally, the legislature should appropriate funds to prevent this from becoming an unfunded mandate.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our comments.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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THOMAS J. BRADY
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HOPE MUA LOIO HO'OPI'I

**THE HONORABLE GREGGOR ILAGAN, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawai'i**

March 21, 2025

**RE: H.C.R. 192; REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A TOURISM AND GAMING
WORKING GROUP.**

Chair Ilagan, Vice-Chair Hussey, and members of the House Committee on Economic Development & Technology, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following testimony in **strong opposition** of H.C. R. 192.

My name is Steve Alm and I am the Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu. My number one job is to protect the people of our county. This resolution, if passed, would promote an activity that would be harmful to the residents of Hawai'i. Gambling is illegal for good reasons.

The purpose of House Concurrent Resolution 192 is to request that the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism set up a gaming working group. One of the charges that this group will have is to "...[d]evelop a comprehensive tourism gaming policy framework that would serve as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation, capital investment, and a significant source of tax revenue for the State..." We stand in *strong opposition* to this resolution because it will be the crack in the door to legalize gambling in our state. Legalizing gambling will not serve our community and will only increase the societal harms from gambling that citizens already suffer from because they partake in illegal gambling.

The societal costs are real for many people in our state despite gambling being illegal. In a 2016 article in the Hawai'i Journal of Medicine & Public Health, the estimated "social and financial damage from problem gambling" was \$26,300,000.¹ This study found that each

¹ Piliwaiwai: Problem Gambling in Hawai'i; Hawai'i J Med Public Health. 2016 Mar; 75(3):73-77;
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4795333/>

problem gambler could "cost society \$1200 each year." This was the cost in 2016. Since then these costs have risen which means that we are paying more, already. Problem gamblers also "suffer from other addictions, mental illness, and medical problems", all which "place a high burden on our healthcare system."²

Research from the University at Buffalo Clinical and Research Institute on Addictions found:

- An estimated 750,000 of America's youth — between the ages of 14 and 21 — are problem gamblers (they gamble more than intended or steal money to support gambling).
- 11% of youth gamble twice per week or more; 68% report gambling at least once in the past year.
- Problem gambling rates for adult and young males were identical, 4%. Adult female gambling rates were high, 3% when compared to young females, less than .1%. Black youth gambled less than white youth but if they did gamble, it was more likely to be frequent, 30% to 12%.
- Problem gambling is considerably more common than alcohol dependence among U.S. adults (21 and older), even though alcohol dependence receives more attention.
- Gambling, frequent gambling and problem gambling increases in frequency during the teen years, reaches its highest level in the 20s and 30s and then falls off among individuals over 70.
- Frequent gambling is twice as great among men (28%) than among women (13%).
- Frequent and problem gambling numbers rise as socioeconomic status (SES) declines; gambling involvement tends to decrease as SES rises.³

These statistics beg the question--Why do we need to study an activity that we already know will cause harm to our citizens? Many will pose the argument that people are already gambling, even though it is illegal. This is a very flawed argument because the illegality of this activity in our state is the very tool that is keeping many more from participating in it. Once we allow legalized gambling and put the societal stamp of approval on it, the many individuals who are deterred from wasting their lives and finances away, will then participate. This is not worth the few extra tax dollars legal gambling would generate.

According to WalletHub, the number one state that is the most gambling addicted is Nevada.⁴ This is a top 10 list that Hawai'i does not want to be on because it will only mean that our citizens will be the ones to pay. Given the availability of gambling in other locations, no one will be coming to Hawai'i to gamble. Any tourist who gambles means its money not spent on dinner at a local restaurant or a visit to the Polynesian Cultural Center.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu **strongly opposes** the passage of H.C.R. 192. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

² Id.

³ RIA Expert Summary Gambling, published April 24, 2012;
https://www.buffalo.edu/cria/news_events/es/es3.html#:~:text=An%20estimated%20750%2C000%20of%20America's,%2C%2030%25%20to%2012%25.

⁴ <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-most-addicted-to-gambling/20846>



Aloha Hālawā District Partners

Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

Friday, March 21st

10:00 a.m.

Hawaii State Capitol, Room 423

**Re: HCR192 - Requesting the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
to Establish a Tourism and Gaming Working Group**

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chairs Hussey, and members of the Committee,

We strongly support HCR192, which establishes a Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT). This measure seeks to explore a comprehensive gaming policy framework to drive economic growth, job creation, investment, and tax revenue for the State of Hawai'i. Notably, the resolution directs the working group to examine the potential for gaming activities at the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District (NASED).

Aloha Hālawā District Partners (AHDP) respectfully requests an amendment to HCR192 to include AHDP as a member of the Gaming Working Group. AHDP was selected through a competitive bidding process to partner with the State in developing NASED, a vibrant, community-focused mixed-use district anchored by a new sports and entertainment venue. Given our role in shaping this transformative project, AHDP's inclusion in the working group would ensure that any discussions on gaming align with NASED's long-term vision, infrastructure, and economic goals.

AHDP supports the formation of a working group to explore new revenue opportunities that can enhance the district's sustainability while balancing responsible development and community interests. A thoughtful and well-planned approach to gaming could provide significant economic benefits, but it is essential that any considerations complement NASED's broader goals and maximize public benefit.

Additionally, AHDP has been actively engaged in community outreach, hosting public meetings to gather input and address concerns regarding NASED's development. Ensuring AHDP has a seat at the table would help incorporate community voices into discussions on potential gaming activities.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to amend HCR192 to include Aloha Hālawā District Partners as a member of the Gaming Working Group.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this measure. We appreciate your time and consideration.

HCR-192

Submitted on: 3/20/2025 9:38:40 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/21/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Makaawaawa	Nation of Hawai'i	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Updated Testimony of Brandon Maka'awa'awa

In Opposition to HCR 192

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

March 21, 2025

Gaming policy in Hawai'i must be developed with fairness, transparency, and a commitment to serving the people first. HCR 192 does not meet that standard. Instead, it establishes a working group that gives corporate gaming operators a direct role in shaping policy while Native Hawaiians and other key stakeholders are left without meaningful representation.

If this working group is truly meant to evaluate gaming in Hawai'i, it must begin with integrity. No other industry is given a seat at the policymaking table, yet this resolution allows gaming operators to do just that, setting the rules for themselves and even picking winners before the rules are set. The people of Hawai'i should be the priority, not industry representatives seeking to shape regulations to their advantage. Their expertise may be useful as they can provide input to the group but they should not be in decision-making roles. This is the fox guarding the hen house.

We have seen this pattern before. Industries have come to Hawai'i, extracted profits, and left local communities to deal with the consequences. If gaming is to be explored, it must be structured to include strict oversight, reinvestment into Native Hawaiian and local communities, and a robust regulatory framework that prevents exploitation. This resolution does not provide those protections, nor does it ensure that gaming will serve the long-term interests of the state.

Gaming may have a place in Hawai‘i, but only if it is developed with the right structure. Without that, it will become yet another industry that takes benefits from Hawai‘i while leaving little behind. That is why leadership in this process must come from those who understand Hawai‘i’s economy, history, and cultural values. Outside corporations should not dictate the future of these islands.

The Nation of Hawai‘i has always stood for self-determination and economic sovereignty. If gaming is to be considered, it must be done in a way that strengthens Hawai‘i, not weakens it. That requires leadership from within our communities, not from those looking to expand their business interests.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject HCR 192 and instead push for a fair, community-led approach that prioritizes Hawai‘i’s future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Brandon Maka‘awa‘awa
Vice President, Nation of Hawai‘i

INDEPENDENT & SOVEREIGN NATION STATE OF HAWAI'I



EXECUTIVE

Office of the Foreign Minister

41-1300 Waikupanaha Street Waimānalo, HI 96795

Testimony of John Kealoha Garcia

In Opposition to HCR 192 House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

March 21, 2025

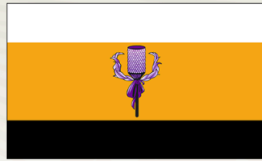
Aloha Chair Ilagan, Chair Tam, and Members of the Committee,

Gaming in Hawai'i is not a new debate. For years, certain outside interests have opposed gaming to protect their own business models. Now, some of those same voices are calling for a working group to assess gaming's future. This sudden shift raises serious concerns about who this process is truly meant to serve and benefit.

A working group should be a neutral, fact-finding effort that brings together diverse perspectives to develop a gaming policy that benefits Hawai'i. Instead, HCR 192 allows gaming corporations to take a formal role while failing to guarantee meaningful representation from Native Hawaiians, economic experts, and community leaders.

If gaming is to be considered, it must be shaped by those who will live with the consequences, not just those looking to profit. Operators should never be in a decision making role and if this were to remain, they should recuse themselves from participation in the activity in Hawaii.

INDEPENDENT & SOVEREIGN NATION STATE OF HAWAI'I



EXECUTIVE

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Successful gaming jurisdictions establish strong regulatory frameworks, reinvest revenue into local communities, and ensure independent oversight that prioritizes the public interest. This resolution does not outline those essential safeguards. Without them, there is no assurance that gaming, if introduced, will truly benefit Hawai'i's people.

Hawai'i has seen what happens when outside industries dictate economic policy. Without clear protections, profits leave the islands while local communities are left behind. If the state is serious about gaming, then this process must be led by those with a vested interest in protecting Hawai'i's people, culture, and economy.

The Nation of Hawai'i supports economic opportunities that are built on integrity, accountability, and reinvestment in our people. If a working group is to be formed, it must ensure fair representation for those who will be most affected, not those who have long opposed gaming until it suited their interests.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject HCR 192 and instead pursue a process that truly puts Hawai'i's people first.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

John Kealoha Garcia

Second Vice President, Foreign Affairs & Commerce, Nation of Hawai'i



Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
Representative Ikaika Hussey, Vice Chair
House Committee on Economic Development and Technology
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Friday, March 21, 2025 – 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

RE: HCR 192 – Requesting the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to Establish a Tourism and Gaming Working Group – Testimony in Support

Aloha Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey and Members of the Committee:

Boyd Gaming appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR 192, requesting the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) to establish a tourism and gaming working group.

Founded in 1975, Boyd Gaming is now a nationwide gaming company operating 28 casinos in 11 states, and has a presence in 19 distinct markets including our online presence in online gaming and sports wagering. Our perspective that we are sharing with you today has been shaped by 50 years of experience in the gaming industry, operating in all facets of gaming including brick-and-mortar casinos, sports wagering, online real money and social gaming, among others.

Our Company has strong ties to Hawai'i, as the state and its residents were a critical component of Boyd's foundational beginnings and continue to be an important part of the Company's success today. Boyd Gaming also owns and operates Vacations Hawaii, which has served over 1.5 million Hawai'i residents with convenient and affordable direct flights to Las Vegas since 1996. Vacations Hawaii is proud to be an established part of Hawai'i's local history, community and economy with employees based in both Hawai'i and in Las Vegas.

We strongly support HCR 192 and thank the introducer of this resolution for bringing this measure. We believe this resolution is an appropriate first step for the Legislature to take before passing any gaming policy legislation. Given that Hawai'i currently does not have any form of legalized gaming, the state has a unique opportunity to create a comprehensive gaming policy framework that is specifically tailored to Hawai'i's unique culture and tourism economy. The data, information and analysis done by the working group will be critical to help shape public policy for the Legislature to consider that will serve as a catalyst of economic growth, job creation, capital investment, and state and local tax revenue. Any gaming policy considered in Hawai'i

should be complementary and additive to Hawai'i's existing robust tourism and hospitality industry. However, if done correctly, the main focus of gaming policy should not be solely to authorize gaming, but drive significant private capital investment to build upon and enhance Hawai'i's existing tourism infrastructure while supporting local priorities. The working group established by HCR 192 could establish a comprehensive tourism framework to best position Hawai'i to take advantage of the intersection of tourism, sports, entertainment and gaming as part of the state's own "Fun Economy."

With this objective in mind, we believe that HCR 192 convenes a broad group of diverse stakeholders with specific experience and expertise to provide the data, information and research necessary to develop a comprehensive tourism and gaming policy framework as outlined in the measure. Additionally, the timeline set forth in HCR 192 allows for sufficient time for the working group to meet, research, develop findings, and prepare presentations in order to submit its final findings and recommendations to the Legislature for consideration.

Boyd Gaming respectfully requests that the Committee pass HCR 192 for the reasons outlined above. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HCR-192

Submitted on: 3/20/2025 9:44:46 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/21/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pu'uhonua Bumpy Kanahele	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Testimony of Pu'uhonua Dennis B.K. Kanahele

In Opposition to HCR 192

House Committee on Economic Development & Technology

March 21, 2025

Hawai'i is at a crossroads. The discussion on gaming is more than policy; it is about who will shape the future of these islands. This is why this process must begin with fairness, transparency, and a commitment to the people of Hawai'i. HCR 192 does not provide that foundation. Instead, it creates a working group that prioritizes industry influence over community voices.

If gaming is to be considered, it must be approached with care and accountability. This resolution gives gaming corporations a direct seat at the table in shaping policy, while those who will be most affected are sidelined. Why should companies that stand to profit be allowed to set the rules? No other industry is given this level of influence over its own regulation as we have seen with other bills this session.

The goal of any gaming discussion should be to establish a framework that benefits the people and its policy goals, not just the industry. Without clear protections, oversight, and reinvestment into our communities, this becomes another instance where outside entities extract wealth while local residents see little in return.

History has shown that when economic policies are crafted without Native Hawaiian leadership, our people are often left behind. We have seen industries come to these islands, take advantage of our resources, and leave our communities struggling. This cannot happen again. Any conversation about gaming must be built on strong oversight, accountability, and a commitment to reinvesting in Hawai'i's people and culture.

The Nation of Hawai'i believes in responsible economic development that strengthens local communities rather than exploits them. If gaming is to be explored, it must be done on our terms, with Native Hawaiians and the people of Hawai'i leading the way.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject HCR 192 and ensure that any discussion about gaming is built on a process that puts Hawai'i first.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Pu'u'honua Dennis B.K. Kanahele
President, Nation of Hawai'i