



**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
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Thursday, February 13, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of
SB817
RELATING TO OUT-OF-STATE OFFICES

Chairs Lee and DeCoite, Vice Chairs Inouye and Wakai, and members of the Committees. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports the intent of **SB817** which establishes an out-of-state office in the Philippines.

There exists a long history of cultural and business ties between Hawaii and the Philippines. An office in the Philippines can strengthen, expand and promote these ties for economic development and cultural exchanges between the two jurisdictions.

An appropriation in the amount of \$200,000 in fiscal year 2025-26 is needed for salaries, operating expenses, programmatic expenses, and start-up costs including a study as to where best to locate the office. An appropriation in the amount of \$175,000 is needed for fiscal year 2026-2027 and thereafter on a recurring basis.

We support the intent of this measure provided it does not replace or adversely affect the Administration's priorities indicated in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



OAHU FILIPINO COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Honolulu, Hawaii

Testimony in Support of SB817: Relating to Out-of-State Offices

To: Chair Chris Lee, Chair Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair Glenn Wakai, and Members of the Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts and Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

From: The Oahu Filipino Community Council

Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Subject: Support for SB817 - Relating to Out-of-State Offices

Aloha Chair Lee, Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts and Committee on Economic Development and Tourism,

The Oahu Filipino Community Council strongly supports SB817, which requires, and appropriates funds for, the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish an out-of-state office in the Philippines. This initiative is a significant step towards enhancing economic ties between Hawaii and the Philippines, benefiting both regions.

Key Points:

1. Strengthening Economic Ties:

- a. SB817 aims to strengthen economic ties between Hawaii and the Philippines, fostering mutual economic development.
- b. Establishing an out-of-state office will facilitate trade cooperation and economic partnerships.

2. Support for the Filipino Community:

- a. Filipinos represent a significant portion of Hawaii's population and play crucial roles in various sectors of the economy.

- b. The out-of-state office will support small businesses in developing and marketing products, promoting cultural exchanges, and leveraging the Filipino community in Hawaii.

3. Economic and Cultural Benefits:

- a. The initiative will enhance economic and cultural partnerships between Hawaii and the Philippines, leading to sustained growth and mutual benefits.
- b. It aligns with President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s emphasis on expanding trade cooperation between the two regions.

Arguments in Support:

1. Economic Opportunities:

- o Establishing an out-of-state office in the Philippines will create new economic opportunities for both Hawaii and the Philippines.
- o It will help diversify trade opportunities and promote economic development in both regions.

2. Community Engagement:

- o The initiative will foster community engagement and collaboration, strengthening the bonds between Hawaii and the Filipino community.
- o It will provide a platform for cultural exchanges and mutual learning.

3. Long-term Sustainability:

- o Investing in economic partnerships and trade cooperation will contribute to the long-term sustainability of both regions.
- o It will support the growth of small businesses and promote economic resilience.

In conclusion, we urge the Committee to favorably consider SB817 and support its passage. This bill represents a significant step towards enhancing economic ties between Hawaii and the Philippines, benefiting both regions and fostering mutual growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Melodie Aduja

Chair, Social Action Committee

Director, Oahu Filipino Community Council

SB-817

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 4:48:30 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/13/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Testifying for Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Amy Agbayani and Patticia McManaman co-chairs

Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights

We strongly support establishing an office in the Philippines that will support increasing trade with the Philippines and Hawai'i. There is a long history between these two communities and currently 25% of the state has Filipino heritage and immigrants from the Philippines continue to be the largest immigrant group. This bill will benefit Hawai'i and the Philippines.

SB-817

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:35:34 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/13/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandy Ma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees,

I support SB817. This bill requiring and appropriating funds for the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to establish an out-of-state office in the Philippines is an innovative way to strengthen relationships with the Philippines. The Filipino community is the second largest population in Hawaii. It is therefore prudent to build ties to the Philippines. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB817. I urge you to pass SB817 out of your Committees.

LATE

SB-817

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:30:16 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/13/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen Awai	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have a lot of concerns about SB817. Many of the Filipinos were brought in by the Plantation owners knowing that the Japanese and Chinese would be able to own land and vote. From what I've heard they were not supposed to stay in Hawaii once their contract was up. But many of them did not learn to read and write or communicate in English so may not have realized this. Immigrants that don't want to learn English and depend only on what the youth tell them from school in their own native tongue do not care about our Native Hawaiian culture or the laws that govern us locally and federally. Why was President Marcos allowed to come to Hawaii when he escaped from the Philippines with Imelda and his children?

Filipinos build monster homes here sometimes with not enough bathrooms for their entire family members, break laws such as the fireworks displayed out in Waipahu and Ewa, take 2 or 3 jobs that locals should have gotten, but like me was labeled disabled and couldn't find jobs, and are unionized. They do not have the aloha spirit and treat visitors and residents disrespectfully and talk in their own tongue about you right in front of you. Deny knowing any English if visitors try to ask them questions. Have over run our care homes, hospitals, and hotels protected by unions.

Why are we teaching people in the Philippines when they don't even want to learn when they live here. I have shared with you my experiences in working at Straub Clinic and HMSA where five people didn't speak English and gossiped about me, making the whole work environment unbearable. Why was I told when I was so depressed working at HMSA that my 240 claims a day was accurate and not coming back in Human Services by my own supervisor Claire Sierra, 5 other employees who bragged and teased me that they were doing 350 claims/day!

In depression, during Desert Storm, in a mania from Prozac prescribed to me by Dr. Purtzer of Biodyne, HMSA's Mental Health organization. I got into a car accident in Maui, refused by Maui Memorial ER 3x, arrested for criminal property damage, beaten up by 6 women, then sent to Hawaii State Hospital to start a lifetime of believing that doctors were right, but they were all wrong! They just want to be paid by insurance companies with any diagnosis they can create!

I have been yelled at by City bus drivers that they didn't care about our government local or federal and they just wanted to get money to take home. Look at all the illegality, who are doing it, immigrants that don't care about what happened to the Native Hawaiians and think that our Queen was also stupid for giving up our islands! Let the truth be known, this is the BS of colonization! No we should no longer support the Philippines, let them remain in their own country and be illegal there, not in our Hawaiian Kingdom!

