

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
DBEDT DIRECTOR

DANE K. WICKER
DBEDT DEPUTY DIRECTOR



BRENNON T. MORIOKA
CHAIR, STADIUM AUTHORITY

CHRIS J. SADAYASU
INTERIM STADIUM MANAGER

An Agency of the State of Hawaii

Statement of
CHRIS J. SADAYASU
Interim Stadium Manager
Stadium Authority
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Friday, February 28, 2025
10:35 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of
S.B. 891, SD2
RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the Committee.
The Stadium Authority offers the following comments on Senate Bill 891, SD2, which proposes to establish a Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. SB 891, SD2 specifically asks the Gaming Working Group to examine the potential for gaming activities at the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District (NASED).

The Stadium Authority is currently negotiating a Master Development Agreement and Stadium Development and Operations Agreement with Aloha Halawa District Partners (AHDP) for the construction of the new Aloha stadium and development of the surrounding NASED project. One of the requirements under the agreement is for AHDP to operate and maintain the new stadium for 30 years. If the NASED project is able to generate revenues from legal gaming activities taking place at hotels and commercial

establishments within the NASED project, AHDP will be able to use this revenue source to meet its stadium maintenance and repair obligations. We look forward to reading the Working Group's report on its findings and recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

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DIRECTOR

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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Friday, February 28, 2025
10:35 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of
SB891, SD2
RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the Committee.

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) offers **comments** on SB891, SD2, which Establishes a Gaming Working Group within DBEDT and requires a report to the Legislature. DBEDT offers the following comments:

1. The co-chairpersons of the working group are the Senate and House Economic Development Committees. It might be more efficient to have the staff of the two legislative committees to support the working group in terms of communications, scheduling, and agenda development.
2. DBEDT is currently leading the Sports Wagering Working Group as required by HCR70 HD1 of the 2024 legislature. The working group had five meetings between December 2024 and February 18, 2025. According to our experience, a working group may not be an effective way to obtain policy recommendations since gaming has never existed in Hawaii. Without historical data, the members may not know what to recommend. Furthermore, the members have different views and positions, and this makes it difficult to come to consensus for recommendations.
3. The three representatives named in the bill, Boyd Gaming, DraftKings, and MGM Resort International, are directly involved in running the operations in many states and they can

provide data, analysis, and policy recommendations based on the operations of other states, especially on regulatory agency, the regulating agency's organization structure and funding sources, tax rates, licensee qualifications, and restrictions of patrons. Legislators can work with the industry to develop a policy that would be technically and financially feasible and maximize the welfare of the people in the state of Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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hawaii tourism authority.org

TESTIMONY OF
DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I
Interim President & CEO
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Friday, February 28, 2025
10:35 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 211

In consideration of
SB 891 SD1 SD 2
RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is pleased to provide comments on SB891, SD2, which establishes a Tourism and Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. It also requires a report to the legislature and sets the effective date as of July 1, 2050.

HTA recommends having a seat on the working group since it will examine "how gaming activities may support the work being done 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 on SB 891 SD2.

**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 DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawai'i**

February 28, 2025

RE: S.B. 891, S.D.2; RELATING TO ECONOMY.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following testimony in **strong opposition** of S.B. 891, S.D.2.

The purpose of S.B. 891, S.D.2 is to create a working group of which one of the objectives of this group would be to develop a comprehensive tourism gaming policy framework. The Department strongly opposes the creation of such a group to legalize gambling in the state of Hawaii. In years past, our state has gotten through difficult economic times without relying upon the legalization of illegal activities that could be harmful to our residents. Passing this bill is the first step in the legalization of gambling which will be detrimental to our community.

Gambling is illegal here for good reason. To date, multiple studies show a clear correlation between casinos and increased crime and societal ills among their surrounding community. Whether it is casino gambling or online gambling, gambling is shown to have negative effects on communities who have legalized it. The National Council on Problem Gambling "estimates that about 2.5 million adults in the U.S. have severe problems and another 5 to 8 million have significant issues."¹

Even the opening of a single casino, in other states, has been shown to have a substantial negative impact on public safety and welfare. A nationwide study in 2004 found a sharp increase in crime after the opening of any new casino, with a relatively low effect shortly after the casino

¹ See Gambling problems are mushrooming. Panel says we need to act now. With recent leap in legalized sports betting and online options, public health experts outline therapeutic, legislative strategies; The Harvard Gazette; January 28, 2025; <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2025/01/online-gambling-is-on-the-rise-panel-says-we-need-to-act-now/>.

opens, which grows over time. Overall, the study calculated that approximately 8% of crime in “casino counties” was attributable to the casino, resulting in an average social cost of approximately \$75 per adult. Another study indicated that—nationwide—the opening of a new Indian-owned casino resulted in a 10% increase in violent crime, auto thefts, larceny & bankruptcies in the area. Notably, crime in the surrounding communities also increased, suggesting an overall increase in aggregate crime, rather than just switching from one community to the next.

Locally, a study was commissioned by the Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women (“HSCSW”), in 2021 when S.B. 1321 proposed to legalize the building of a casino on Hawaiian Homelands. This study points to the serious risk of increased sex trafficking in our community, if a casino were built in Hawai‘i.² “In 2020, Child and Family Services...identified 97 sex trafficking victims among its clients,” statewide; this spanned five different islands, and “[t]he majority of the victims (64%) identified as Native Hawaiian.”³ Another community-based service provider, Susannah Wesley Community Center, reported a 65% increase in the number of people needing sex trafficking-specific therapy, during the COVID-19 pandemic alone.⁴

Seeing that Hawai‘i’s sex trafficking industry is clearly subject to increase, given changes in the economic climate, one can only infer that adding a casino into the mix would further exacerbate this already staggering problem. As pointed out in the HSCSW report, casinos would be expected to attract large numbers of men with disposable income, and a 2010 federal study found that “casino patrons were 17% more likely than the average survey respondent to have paid for sex in the past year.”⁵ Moreover, indigenous women are particularly susceptible to victimization, and already account for a majority of known sex trafficking victims in Hawai‘i, yet the proposed casino is anticipated to be located near one of the largest Native Hawaiian communities in Hawai‘i.⁶

On a more granular level, multiple studies—including the HSCSW report—have also shown a correlation between casino gambling and domestic violence, divorce, bankruptcy, drug and alcohol use, and risky or illicit sexual behavior.⁷ Legalizing a casino will require an increase in resources to address these public health issues that will increase once gambling is legalized.

Lastly, a casino will take up a very precious resource—land. Land that could be used for affordable housing to help our kama‘āina afford to live, work, and raise families here at home.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu **strongly opposes** the passage of S.B. 891, S.D.2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

² Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women, “Gambling With Women’s Safety: A Feminist Assessment of Proposed Resort-Casino,” January 26, 2021. Available online at https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/1.26.21-r2.1.21-GIS-FINAL_DHHL-Casino.pdf; last accessed February 4, 2021.

³ *Id.*, at page 3.

⁴ *Id.*, at page 4.

⁵ *Id.*, at page 4. Internal references omitted.

⁶ *Id.*, at pages 5-6.

⁷ *Id.*, at page 3. *See also* Wu, Shou-Tsung and Chen, Yeong-Shyang, “The social, economic and environmental impacts of casino gambling on the residents of Macau and Singapore,” *Tourism Management*, Vol. 48 (June 2015), pp. 285-298, Section 2.1, Social Impacts. Internal citations deleted. Available online at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261517714002441>; last accessed February 3, 2021.



Iron Workers Stabilization Fund

T. George Paris
Managing Director

February 28, 2025
10:35 am

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

CR 211 & Videoconference

Re: SB 891 SD2- Relating to Tax Credits

Testimony in Support of SB891- Tourism and Gaming Working Group

The Ironworkers Stabilization Fund in strong support of SB891 which establishes a Tourism and Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT). Creating this working group is a crucial step in understanding the complex relationship between tourism and the potential introduction of legalized gaming in Hawaii with proposed amendments

A comprehensive and thoughtful approach is essential when considering such a significant policy shift. This working group will provide a valuable forum for stakeholders to discuss the potential impacts – both positive and negative – of legalized gaming on our state's economy, communities, and existing tourism industry. The required report to the Legislature will ensure transparency and inform data-driven decision-making.

Furthermore, we propose an amendment to add a representative from a labor organization on the task force. Labor organizations, like ours, have a unique understanding of the needs of our communities and the potential impacts of legalized gaming on working families. Our members are often the ones who build the infrastructure associated with such projects, and therefore have a vested interest in their responsible development. Including labor's perspective is vital for several reasons:

- * Workforce Development: Labor organizations can provide valuable insights into the workforce needs of a potential gaming industry, ensuring that local residents have the skills and training necessary to fill available jobs.
- * Community Impact: Our members are deeply rooted in their communities and understand the potential social and economic impacts of gaming on local residents.
- * Responsible Development: Labor organizations can advocate for responsible development practices that prioritize worker safety, fair wages, and community well-being.

Including labor's voice in this process will ensure that any decisions regarding legalized gaming are made with the best interests of Hawaii's workers and communities in mind.



Iron Workers Stabilization Fund

We believe that a balanced and inclusive approach, incorporating the perspectives of all stakeholders, is essential for the success of this working group.

I urge the committee to approve SB891 with the proposed amendment. This is a crucial step towards understanding the complexities of this issue and making informed decisions about the future of tourism and gaming in Hawaii. Thank you.

T. George Paris
Managing Director



Testimony of Les Bernal, National Director of Stop Predatory Gambling, Opposing SB891: A Bill Authorizing a Gambling Expansion Working Group

Hawaii Senate Ways & Means Committee
February 28, 2025

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members:

I am testifying on behalf of our Hawaii members of Stop Predatory Gambling, a national nonprofit organization with members in all 50 states whose mission is to reveal the truth behind commercialized gambling to advocate for those who have suffered harm, to prevent more victims, and to champion policy reforms that stop *predatory* gambling.

We are writing in strong opposition to SB891 that would create a partnership between a state agency and powerful out-of-state corporate gambling companies to roll out predatory gambling across Hawaii. We urge you to vote NO.

There is no citizens grassroots movement for commercialized gambling in Hawaii or in any other state. The lobbying effort in Hawaii is being driven by the greed of powerful, out-of-state financial interests who stand to reap hundreds of millions of dollars in profits at the expense of your constituents.

What is NOT “Predatory Gambling”?

Predatory gambling is NOT the Friday night poker game with friends. Or the March Madness Bracket. Or buying a square in the Super Bowl office pool. Or the bingo night at a local Catholic church. Or a wager on the golf course with the guys from work.

These informal events are examples of *social gambling*. There is no “house” skimming a large profit, guaranteeing the participant will inevitably lose over the long-term. No one is wagering continuously at rapid speeds of every five seconds, hour after hour. Very few

people feel an intense “buzz” or high from the experience. There’s no aggressive and deceptive marketing to get people to gamble more often with bigger sums of money. No one is lending or borrowing cash to participate or ends up losing their entire pay check. It doesn’t go on 24 hours day, every day of the week, year round. And it doesn’t require the majority of Americans who rarely gamble to subsidize it with any of their own money.

What IS “Predatory Gambling?”

Predatory gambling is when state governments partner with powerful corporate gambling interests to use *commercialized gambling - gambling being run as a business* - to exploit citizens and their communities. Unlike any other business, in commercialized gambling there is *a predatory and adversarial relationship* between the gambling operator and its customer, the gambler. *They are trying to take you down.*

Commercialized gambling operators, their partners in government, and gambling industry lobbyists like to call it “regulated gaming.” But for the rest of us, the only term that accurately describes it is predatory gambling.

Why Vote NO on SB891 - A Bill Authorizing a Gambling Expansion Working Group

The proposed “working group” this bill calls for is nothing more than a rollout strategy for commercialized gambling across Hawaii. It’s recycled public affairs, tactic to try to push through casinos into a state.

A genuine, independent working group looking at the truth about regional casinos (not one that partners with entities with a massive financial stake in seeing casinos forced into Hawaii as SB981 calls for) would arrive at one inevitable conclusion: predatory gambling is an antiquated, outdated public policy and a relic of past failures of leadership. It has inflicted life-changing financial losses on tens of millions of Americans.¹ Its profits are

¹ H2 Gambling Capital, 2025. h2gc.com

based upon cultivating an addiction that causes a degree of human misery like very few things can including significant increases in rates of personal bankruptcy, divorce, domestic violence, and suicides.² And lastly, it has proven to be the ultimate budget gimmick as a state government revenue source, leading to higher taxes for less services over the long term.³ *You pay even if you don't play.*

Over the last forty years, the citizens of Hawaii have experienced better economic mobility out of poverty, more stable families, less addiction, less domestic violence, stronger communities, less state budget problems, and lower taxes because state officials said No to predatory gambling.

If you need further information about this issue, I invite you and your staff to please contact me by email mail@stoppredatorygambling.org or phone (202) 567-6996.

Thank you for your work.

Sincerely,



Les Bernal, National Director
Stop Predatory Gambling

About Stop Predatory Gambling

Stop Predatory Gambling believes people are worth more than money. We are a national nonprofit organization with members of all political stripes in all 50 states whose mission is to reveal the truth behind commercialized gambling to advocate for those who have suffered harm, to prevent more victims, and to champion policy reforms that stop *predatory* gambling. We do not accept financial contributions from commercialized gambling interests.

² Institute for American Values, Why Casinos Matter Institute for American Values, Council on Casinos, Why Casinos Matter, Thirty-One Evidence-Based Propositions from the Health and Social Sciences, September 2013, at 29, <https://stoppredatorygambling.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013-Why-Casinos-Matter-FINAL.pdf>

³ "State Revenues from Gambling: Short-Term Relief, Long-Term Disappointment," Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, SUNY-Albany, April 2016, http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/government_finance/2016-04-12-Blinken_Report_Three.pdf



OPPOSE SB891

February 28, 2025

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Committee:

HI Good Neighbor strongly opposes SB891, which would establish a tourism and gaming working group within DBEDT.

HI Good Neighbor is a group of working class residents who are concerned about the commercialization of our residential neighborhoods, which drive up property values and price out local families. We care deeply about the future of Hawai'i.

We need to continue to keep gambling/online sports betting out of our state. Thus, there is no need for a gaming working group. Can our state be that desperate for money to consider profiting off of people's misfortunes and addictions?

At a time when our residents are living paycheck to paycheck, let's not legalize a highly addictive activity that will tear down families instead of build them up. We can't make it easier for families to enter into the cycle of poverty, or remain there. All evidence shows that gambling is a loser's game. The only winners in gambling are predatory businesses, while families, nonprofits and government agencies bear the social and economic consequences of the broke and broken.

Please put our people over profits and vote NO on SB891.

Mahalo,

Christine Otto Zaa
HI Good Neighbor



Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Friday, February 28, 2025 – 10:35 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

RE: SB 891 SD2 – Relating to Economic Development – In Support

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee:

Boyd Gaming appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 891 SD2, which establishes a Tourism and Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), and requires a report to the Legislature.

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 believe this bill 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 activity, employment, 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 SB 891 SD2 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 would respectfully request the Committee to consider the following two amendments:

- Section 1(e): Extend the timeframe for submitting a report of the working group's findings and recommendations to December 31, 2026 to allow for sufficient time for the working group to meet and develop its report for the Legislature's consideration.
 - Similar reports that include comprehensive research and development of final recommendations generally require 10 to 12 meetings with time in between to research, develop findings and prepare presentations and final reports. With that understanding, we recommend 12 to 18 months to complete the work and therefore recommend this change to Section 1(e) and corresponding change to Section 1(g) below.
- Section 1(g): Extend the timeframe for the dissolution of the working group to January 1, 2027 to correspond with the extended timeframe for the report of findings and recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this measure. We urge the Committee to pass this measure with the above amendments.

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 SB 891, SD2 Committee on Ways and Means

Hearing Date: February 28, 2025

Aloha Legislators,

Hawai'i has a unique opportunity to develop an economic framework that supports local industries, protects cultural integrity, and ensures that revenues generated here stay in Hawai'i. Unfortunately, SB 891, SD2 does not accomplish this. Instead, it sets up a process where gaming corporations will have a direct hand in dictating our policies, allowing them to influence the rules in ways that primarily benefit their bottom line, no different in the already rejected Senate Bill 893.

For decades, outside interests have shaped economic policies in Hawai'i to their advantage while Native Hawaiians and local businesses are left to deal with the consequences. SB 891 continues this pattern. If gaming is going to be part of Hawai'i's future, it should be approached in a way that prioritizes local control, supports sustainable revenue generation, and ensures that economic benefits are reinvested into our communities.

INDEPENDENT & SOVEREIGN NATION STATE OF HAWAI'I



EXECUTIVE

Office of the Foreign Minister

41-1300 Waikupanaha Street Waimānalo, HI 96795

This working group, as currently designed, does the opposite. Instead of an independent body that fairly considers the future of gaming, it provides an outsized role to corporations with clear financial interests. The development of gaming policy in Hawai'i must be led by those who live here, understand our unique economic landscape, and have the best interests of Hawai'i's people at heart - not mainland corporations looking to expand their footprint.

I urge this committee to reject SB 891 and instead advocate for a process that truly serves the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

John Kealoha Garcia

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

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/27/2025 9:49:17 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pu'uhonua Bumpy Kanahele	Testifying for NATION OF HAWAII	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Pu'uhonua Dennis B.K. Kanahele

In Opposition to SB 891, SD2
Committee on Ways and Means
February 28, 2025

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

Hawai'i stands at a crossroads. This bill is not just about forming a working group - it is about determining who gets to shape the future of gaming in our homeland. For Native Hawaiians, this is more than just an economic issue. It is a matter of sovereignty, self-determination, and ensuring that our people are not pushed aside in favor of outside corporate interests.

For decades, Native Hawaiians have fought to reclaim our rights - to our land, our resources, and our ability to determine our own economic future. Yet, SB 891 proposes to establish a working group dominated by gaming corporations, with minimal Native Hawaiian representation. This is not a study of what is best for Hawai'i - it is an invitation for outside operators to write the rules for themselves. We cannot let the fox into the hen house.

History has shown what happens when economic decisions are made without us at the table. Time and again, Native Hawaiians have been left out while others profit from our lands, our resources, and our people. This bill continues that cycle. If gaming is to be considered in Hawai'i, it must be developed in a way that respects Native Hawaiian rights and ensures that economic benefits remain in our communities.

I urge you to reject this measure and instead work toward a framework that puts Native Hawaiians in control of our own future. Anything less is a continuation of the historical injustices that have denied our people their rightful place in Hawai'i's economy.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

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

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/27/2025 9:53:51 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Makaawaawa	Testifying for Nation of Hawai'i	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Brandon Maka'awa'awa Testimony

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

February 28, 2025

RE: Opposition to SB 891 SD2 - Gaming Working Group

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

SB 891, SD2 presents a serious concern - this bill does not establish a fair and inclusive process for shaping gaming policy in Hawai'i. Instead, it gives gaming operators a privileged role in deciding what our gaming future should look like, while Native Hawaiians, the people most impacted by these decisions, are given a token presence.

Regulatory structures cannot be built by those who stand to profit the most. Allowing major gaming corporations to shape this process is a clear conflict of interest. If gaming is to be considered in Hawai'i, the framework must be led by those who have a vested interest in protecting the long-term well-being of our communities - not just outside companies looking to expand their market.

Additionally, there is no urgency into forming this group as this legislation was turned in overnight from a shell bill. This bill is skipping steps, prioritizing the involvement of operators before we have all the facts. We cannot afford to move forward on such a major issue without due diligence.

I urge you to oppose SB 891, similar to SB 893, and instead support a process that prioritizes fairness, transparency, and the voices of Native Hawaiians.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

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

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 11:51:19 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Chinen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

First off, I must admit that I do enjoy gambling even though it is a fool's game of chance. My friends and I go to Vegas, lose all of our wallet money, and indulge in the MegaBucks machine even though we know the odds are terribly stacked against us. We do because it is fun, and we can afford to lose a few hundred dollars at a distant place that takes us months to plan and get there. I have seen Vegas locals who are gambling addicts take out their paychecks in order to stay in games and even the dealers roll their eyes and tell me "there goes their rent for the month."

If gambling is legalized in Hawaii and just down the street, it could cause economic tragedy to families with members who love to gamble. Instead of once or twice a year vacations to Vegas, it could become weekly drives to a local casino. Paychecks could disappear, rent money thrown away, desperate behaviors and stupid mistakes compounded with the hope that the next roll of the dice or the next turn of the cards will bring massive fortune to the fool at the table.

Already our beautiful Hawaii is changed with concrete, foreign investors, and the exodus of local people because of our economy. Introducing gambling to our shores will bring more concrete, more foreign and non local interests who don't give a damn about the special place that we live and love. It is all about money, money, money.

Please be careful how you proceed. Please help to protect the fragile beauty and spirit of aloha in our islands. I rather my grandchildren go to concerts and listen to horrible new wave music for entertainment rather than spend their time and money on machines and the hope of winning big bucks.

I rather see a State run lottery if you feel that you must allow gambling. Let the people of Hawaii benefit from the proceeds in programs that encourage education, agriculture, housing, and local culture. Lottery tickets are not as addictive as gambling on tables and machines, and not as much fun. If anyone bets all their money on lottery tickets, then they really need to get some help.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sarah Chinen

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 11:02:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support SB891.SD2. In the day, I believe, Kamehameha the Great's succesor along with Kamehameha II, who was young, Kuhina Nui Kaahumanu, along with his mother Keopulani??, sought to keep out many customs from the colonizers and traders, but somehow liquor and prositution, the oldest profession in the world snuck into our islands. Only those with financial means can travel to what is called the 9th island, Las Vegas. Others have to find other means to gamble and dice or "craps" was always played by the younger boys, or some other forms of gambling even with marbles, or probably in team sports. So I'd support gambling as an economic development in our islands. Unless we plan to set aside a part of each populated island, since many people haven't even left their own homes. But controls are needed that we don't end up in poverty. Our Oahu Governor Boki who was married to Liliha, who left her in charge, left in search of sandalwood to pay off his gambling debt which his cousin Kaahumanu was against. Just a bit of history I read about. Mahalo for listening to the people economically disadvantaged that are unable to travel off island and not just to developers wanting to profit!

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 12:28:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeannine Johnson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There is no need for a gaming working group to develop a gaming policy because Hawai'i has never allowed gambling and never should. Why would you even consider passing this bill, if only to line the pockets of people seeking to profit off of people's addiction or misfortune? They are the only winners if gambling is ever allowed here. Aue. A'OLE!

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 2:43:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen H. Yuen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Name: Stephen Yuen

Email: stevey@g70.design

Cell ph 808 341-6597

Zip 96816

Representing SELF

I wish to provide WRITTEN TESTIMONY

9 dec 2024

Written Testimony in OPPOSITION to SB891

I am submitting written testimony in opposition to Bill SB891.

At a time when our residents are living paycheck to paycheck, let's not legalize a highly addictive activity that will tear down families instead of building them up. We can't make it easier for families to enter the cycle of poverty or remain there. All evidence shows that gambling is a loser's game. The only winners in gambling are predatory businesses, while families, nonprofits and government agencies bear the social and economic consequences of the broke and broken.

Placing government-restricted caps on profits for businesses, of any type of business, are challenging at best. Revenue sharing to the State via payments or taxes are similarly challenging,

since businesses, lenders, and investors are reluctant to front start-up capital and change any order of priority in returns on investment.

I am happy to discuss issues and recommendations further.

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 6:45:29 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Legrande	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I see no need for this as gambling does not belong in our state. There are far too many dangers involved. Thank you, Linda Legrande

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 6:40:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I am glad to see SB891 continue advancing through our legislative process. Hawaii's economy remains critically dependent on tourism and we're losing our global tourist edge. Key metrics haven't rebounded since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and resurgent global tourist competitors are competing too much on us.

Gambling can make our tourist sector competitive again. We've got to get it right. I urge this Committee to SUPPORT this bill!

SB-891-SD-2

Submitted on: 2/27/2025 10:29:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2025 10:35:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kehaulani Lum	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and the Distinguished members of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to share my mana'o on SB891 SD2, RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT through the establishment of a Tourism and Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

My name is Kehaulani Lum, and I am the Pelekikena of the Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club, a 50-year-old Native Hawaiian organization chartered with the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs in 1973. Our club was founded by esteemed elders in diverse fields, including education, real estate, health, business and cultural practice, and it is in their memory that I express my comments.

I respectfully request that the Committee consider including at least one public member to the working group, in light of the measure's significance and potential impact on economic, social, cultural, educational and spiritual indicators affecting every member of society. To limit the working group's composition only to one side of the issue (mainly, economic) does not ensure the holistic outcome intended in the Aloha Spirit Law, HRS 5-7.5. I urge your serious consideration of this comment so that the original intent of the legislation is honored and in order to ensure that the life spirit of Hawai'i remains in the name and practice of the Stadium, that the project may truly be a success.

As a club that is located in 'Aiea, the ahupua'a that is to be most affected by the Working Group's report, we would be deeply grateful to know that the voice of the community is heard, in the very foundation of the work.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kehaulani Lum

99-045 Nalopaka Place, 'Aiea, Hawai'i

aliipauahi@gmail.com

LATE

Chair Donovan M Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2025

RE: **STRONG SUPPORT** for SB 891 SD1 -Relating to Economic Development
Hearing Date: February 28, 2025, at 10AM Room 211

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the committee's

My name is Dwayne Bautista, thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony in strong support for SB 891 SD1 Relating to Economic Development, which establishes a Tourism and Gaming Working Group within DBEDT.

This working group is crucial for a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of the complex relationship between tourism and potential legalized gaming in Hawaii. Prior to any major policy shifts, a structured evaluation is essential. The group will provide a vital forum for stakeholders to analyze economic and social impacts, with transparency assured through a required legislative report.

To ensure balanced representation, I propose amending the bill to include a labor organization representative. Labor organizations bring critical expertise regarding Hawaii's working families and communities. Our members' direct involvement in construction and infrastructure underscores our commitment to responsible development. Including labor's voice is critical for:

- **Workforce Development:** We can provide expertise on workforce needs and ensure residents receive the necessary training for new job opportunities.
- **Community Impact:** Our deep community ties allow us to assess and mitigate potential social and economic impacts on residents.

- Responsible Development: We advocate for worker safety, fair wages, and overall community well-being, ensuring responsible project development.

We urge the committee to approve SB891 SD2 with our proposed amendment. This is a crucial step towards informed decision-making regarding Hawaii's tourism and gaming future.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

LATE

Chair Donovan M Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2025

RE: **STRONG SUPPORT** for SB 891 SD1 -Relating to Economic
Development

Hearing Date: February 28, 2025, at 10AM Room 211

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the committee's

Aloha, and thank you. I strongly support SB 891 SD1, creating a Tourism and Gaming Working Group within DBEDT. This group is vital for a data-driven analysis of tourism and potential gaming in Hawaii.

To ensure balanced representation, I urge you to amend the bill to include labor. Labor's expertise is crucial for workforce development, community impact assessment, and responsible development.

Please approve SB 891 SD2 with this amendment for informed decision-making.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Laboy".

Cliff Laboy