



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

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

**DANE K. WICKER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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Statement of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
**Director**  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism**

Tuesday, February 11, 2025  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
**SB891, SD1**  
**RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the Committee.

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) offers **comments** on SB891, SD1, 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, the bill does not specify DBEDT's role in the leadership of the working group. 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 four meetings between December 2024 and February 4, 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.

**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 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Tuesday, February 11, 2025  
1:00PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
**S.B. 891, SD1**  
**RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and members of the Committee.

The Stadium Authority offers the following comments on Senate Bill 891 SD1, which proposes to establish a Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. SB 891 SD1 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 agreements 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.



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TESTIMONY OF  
**DANIEL NĀHO'OPI'I**  
Interim President & CEO  
Hawai'i Tourism Authority  
before the

**LATE**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

Tuesday, February 11, 2025  
1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Room 229

In consideration of  
**SB 891 SD1**  
**RELATING TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is pleased to provide comments on SB891, SD1, which establishes a gaming working group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. It also requires a report to the legislature.

HTA recommends having a seat on the working group since the working group 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 SD1.



Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 – 1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

**RE: SB 891 SD1 – Relating to Economic Development – Testimony in Support**

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

Boyd Gaming appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 891 SD1, which establishes a 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 strongly support SB 891 SD1 and thank the introducer of this bill for bringing and hearing this measure. 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 SD1 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 amendments to SB 891 SD1:

- Section 1(a): Broaden the scope of the working group from a "gaming working group" to a "tourism and gaming working group"
- Section 1(b)(2): Revise and add additional language to read: "Perform a gap analysis in order to develop a comprehensive tourism and gaming policy framework that would serve as a catalyst for economic activity-growth, employment job creation, capital investment, and a significant source of state and local tax revenue for the state."
- Section 1(c)(5)-(6): Replace these members of the working group with one representative from the Sports Betting Alliance
- Section 1(c)(1)-(8): Consider including additional stakeholders integral to Hawai'i's economy and tourism infrastructure to assist the working group through a Technical Advisory Committee, including:
  - The Director of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism or the Director's designee;
  - The Director of The Department of Transportation or the Director's designee;
  - A Representative from the Hawai'i Law Enforcement Community to be selected by the Director of the Department of Law Enforcement;
  - The Chair of the Governor's Sports Task Force;
  - The Chair of the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau;
  - The Chair of the Hawai'i Lodging and Tourism Association;
  - A Responsible Gaming Expert from the International Gaming Institute or the International Center for Responsible Gaming;
  - An Expert in Economic and Financial Analysis Appointed by the Co-Chairpersons of the Working Group;
  - A Representative from a Professional Sports Team;
  - A Representative from The Live Event and Concert Industry; and
  - Other interested parties with relevant experience and expertise, as invited by the co-chairpersons of the working group
- 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.

Boyd Gaming respectfully requests that the Committee pass this measure with amendments as outlined above. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





STANFORD CARR DEVELOPMENT, LLC

▪ February 10, 2025

The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Chair  
The Honorable Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair  
And Members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Re: Testimony: SB 891, SD1 Relating to Economic Development  
Hearing: February 11, 2025, at 1:00 PM in Conference Room 229

Dear Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and Committee Members:

Stanford Carr Development (SCD) submits this testimony in support of SB 891, SDI, which establishes a Gaming Working Group within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

The working group will include local policy leaders and gaming industry experts tasked with developing a comprehensive gaming policy aimed at catalyzing our local economy. Gaming presents an opportunity for job creation and a new source of tax revenue for Hawaii. However, it is also controversial due to concerns about the social ills linked to legalized gambling.

As a member of the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District development team, I urge the committee to keep an open mind regarding the potential benefits and allow the working group to thoroughly evaluate both the pros and cons. Additionally, the working group meetings will offer our community an opportunity to voice their opinions on the matter.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this measure.

Respectfully,

Stanford S. Carr

**SB-891-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:14:11 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Kealoha Garcia	Testifying for Nation of Hawaii	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TESTIMONY OF JOHN KEALOHA GARCIA**

**2nd Vice President, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Commerce**

**Nation of Hawai‘i**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

**REGARDING SB 891 & SB 893 – RELATING TO GAMING**

**FEBRUARY 11, 2025 | 1:00 PM | CONFERENCE ROOM 229**

The Nation of Hawai‘i strongly opposes **SB 891 and SB 893**, which were drafted without consultation or inclusion of Native Hawaiians. Decisions impacting our lands and economy **must** be made with our participation, ensuring **equity, self-determination, and direct benefits** for our people.

As an internationally recognized sovereign entity, the **Nation of Hawai‘i has the expertise, governance framework, and partnerships** to oversee responsible economic development. We work with **Indian Country leaders, gaming regulators, and global industry experts** to ensure that if gaming is introduced, it is done **on our terms, with Native Hawaiians in leadership, and with revenue reinvested into our communities**.

We urge the Legislature to **vote NO on SB 891 & SB 893** and engage in direct consultation with the Nation of Hawai‘i. Any discussion of gaming must **begin and end with Native Hawaiian leadership**—not external interests. We welcome dialogue and a seat at the table to ensure any decisions align with **our values, sustainability, and the long-term well-being of our people**.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**John Kealoha Garcia**

2nd Vice President, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Commerce

**Nation of Hawai'i**

**SB-891-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:41:33 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Makaawaawa	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair DeCoite, Vice Chair Wakai, and members of the committee,

My name is Brandon Maka'awa'awa, and I am a Native Hawaiian educator and community leader.

Education and economic opportunity go hand in hand, yet SB 891 & SB 893 ignore the very people who need economic empowerment the most- Native Hawaiians. The revenue from gaming should be used to uplift our people through education, workforce training, and community reinvestment, not be absorbed into a state-controlled fund with no direct benefit to Native Hawaiians.

For over two years, the Nation of Hawai'i has worked on a gaming model that is sustainable, culturally aligned, and puts Native Hawaiians first. Yet we were never consulted on these bills.

I urge you to vote NO and sit down with the Nation of Hawai'i to develop a solution that truly supports our lāhui.

Mahalo,

Brandon Maka'awa'awa

Vice President

Nation of Hawai'i

**SB-891-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:13:46 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pu'u'honua Bumpy Kanahele	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Re: Strong Opposition to Senate Bills 891 and 893**

Aloha Legislators,

The Nation of Hawai'i writes to express our strong opposition to Senate Bills 891 and 893. These bills have been crafted without consultation with the Native Hawaiian community and, if passed, will perpetuate the historical economic exclusion and systemic marginalization of our people. We believe that granting control over gaming development to external entities that do not represent the true interests of Hawaiians would be a grave disservice to our community. We respectfully urge you to vote against both of these bills.

For over the past two years, the Nation of Hawai'i has been working diligently to develop a viable, sustainable, and Indigenous-led gaming initiative that aligns with our cultural values and economic needs. Any move toward gaming must ensure that economic benefits remain with the Native Hawaiian people, rather than flowing into corporate hands that have historically overlooked our population. Furthermore, the state-controlled regulatory framework has a track record of excluding us, and we cannot support bills that continue this trend.

**Why These Bills Must Be Stopped:**

- 1. Failure to Include Native Hawaiian Representation:**  
Both SB 891 (Gaming Working Group) and SB 893 (Gaming Control Commission) were created without consultation with the Nation of Hawai'i or any other recognized Native Hawaiian governing entity. This exclusion is unacceptable.
- 2. State-Controlled Revenue Model:**  
These bills direct gaming revenue into a state fund, reinforcing economic structures that have marginalized Native Hawaiians for over a century. The funds should benefit our community directly, not be siphoned off into external entities.
- 3. No Consideration of Hawaiian Sovereignty or Land Rights:**  
As an internationally recognized sovereign entity under Public Law 103-150 (Apology Resolution), the Nation of Hawai'i must have a say in any development involving gaming in Hawai'i. The absence of this consideration in both bills is a clear oversight.
- 4. Environmental & Cultural Risks:**  
The proposed sites for gaming, such as the Neal S. Blaisdell Center and the Hawai'i Convention Center, are not suitable for long-term, community-driven gaming

development. These locations lack the necessary cultural grounding and environmental sustainability to ensure the success of such an initiative.

5. **Flawed Legislative Premise:**

SB 893 presumes a structure that should instead be the result of discussions stemming from SB 891. Additionally, the inclusion of specific companies with no history of supporting Hawai‘i’s best interests or engaging with the Native Hawaiian community is deeply troubling. Legislation should not pick corporate “winners” at the expense of the people of Hawai‘i.

### **The Nation of Hawai‘i’s Superior Alternative:**

The Nation of Hawai‘i is committed to an Indigenous-led, culturally grounded, and sustainable approach to gaming development. Our model offers significant advantages, including:

- **Revenue Stays in Hawai‘i:**  
Our approach ensures that funds are reinvested directly into Native Hawaiian communities, benefiting education, housing, healthcare, and land restoration.
- **Cultural & Environmental Responsibility:**  
Our gaming initiative identifies culturally and environmentally appropriate locations that align with the land and its people, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- **Stronger Regulatory Oversight:**  
Our model includes a Native Hawaiian-led regulatory body that ensures compliance, accountability, and protection against problem gambling, surpassing the standards set in SB 893.
- **Job Creation & Economic Empowerment:**  
Unlike the external corporate interests outlined in these bills, our model creates job opportunities, career pathways, and workforce training programs specifically for Native Hawaiians, contributing to economic self-sufficiency.

### **Our Demand: The Legislature Must Act in Good Faith**

We call upon the Hawai‘i State Legislature to halt the advancement of SB 891 and SB 893 immediately. We request a direct meeting with key legislative leaders to present our comprehensive plan, which has been developed with respect for the culture, rights, and self-determination of Native Hawaiians.

The United States, through Public Law 103-150, acknowledged the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and affirmed our inherent right to self-determination. This right extends to economic development initiatives, especially those involving gaming, which will dramatically alter Hawai‘i’s economic landscape. It is imperative that such initiatives be led by and for Native Hawaiians, not by external forces that continue cycles of economic oppression.

We urge you to stand on the right side of history and work with the Nation of Hawai‘i to create a gaming framework that truly benefits our people and respects our rights. We look forward to your response and a formal commitment to meet and engage on this matter.

Mahalo for your attention to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,  
Pu‘uhonua D.B.K. Kanahele  
President, Nation of Hawai‘i

**SB-891-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 2:45:47 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

For years and years, Hawaii has continued to debate whether to legalize gambling. During previous attempts, I generally opposed legal gambling, however as our economic situation has developed, I think we should legalize gambling.

Hawaii faces worldwide competition in the tourism industry. Despite our natural beauty and unique charms, that's not enough for today's tourists, especially high-dollar ones. More naturally beautiful locations are increasingly available to global, high-dollar tourists. In the Pacific region specifically, we also are competing against the legal gambling destinations of Macau and Las Vegas. We're being left behind.

Ultimately, tourism remains a critical pillar of Hawaii's economy. If we don't constantly tend to it we'll lose out to increasingly fierce global competition. Done right, gambling can be a benefit. Let's use this bill to set a proper regulatory framework and identify which areas of our state are right for gambling.

I strongly urge this Committee to SUPPORT this bill!



**SB-891-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 7:32:56 AM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Graham-Wood	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB 891. My name is Natalie Graham-Wood and I live at Sunset Beach, Oahu.

**SB-891-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:33:47 PM

Testimony for EDT on 2/11/2025 1:00:00 PM

**LATE**

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine Otto Zaa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

I strongly oppose all gambling/sports wagering related bills: HB1308, SB1569, SB891 and SB893.

**At a time when our residents are living paycheck to paycheck, let's not legalize gambling. 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.**

Many of us have seen or experienced, family members and friends who have lost everything to gambling...marriages, jobs, family, friends, homes. Addiction doesn't just affect the person addicted, it affects the whole family. The financial gains for the state are not worth the damage to families and our communities.

All evidence shows that gambling is a loser's game. The only winner in gambling is predatory businesses, while families, nonprofits and government agencies bear the social and economic consequences of the broke and broken.

Please consider reading the below articles:

**[The Predatory Gambling Industry Is Misleading Voters:](#)** "Gambling companies are convincing states to legalize sports betting with promises of tax-revenue windfalls. The benefits are often less than promised--and they come at a severe human cost."

**['Addictive, Exploitive, Manipulative': Les Bernal Breaks Down Predatory Gambling Ahead of Super Bowl:](#)** "When gambling is used as a business, there is a predatory and adversarial relationship between the gambling operator and its customer. That's how they make their money. It's the only business in the world where the business owner or the business operator is trying to hurt you."

**[Is Gambling More Addictive Than Drugs?:](#)** "Gambling and drugs overlap in some ways...Both addictions leave devastating consequences on the individuals and their families. It can result in

people losing their jobs and leaving their loved ones homeless...a gambling addict is five times more likely to die via suicide than an alcoholic or a drug addict."

Please prioritize the well-being of our residents over profits.

Thank you,

Christine Otto Zaa