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Statement of
JOHN DE FRIES
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
before the
COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

February 2, 2023
10:00 a.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL NO. 1233
RELATING TO TOURISM

Aloha Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hussey-Burdick, and members of the Committee on Tourism,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on HB1233, which would require the School of Travel Industry Management of the University of Hawai'i to conduct a study that assesses the tourism social carrying capacity for each of the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, and Kaua'i.

Understanding capacity limits is important an important element of destination management. For example, we have seen improved experiences and reduced impacts to natural environments and facilities at state parks that have implemented reservations systems to manage capacity: Wai'ānapanapa on Maui, Lē'ahi (Diamond Head) on O'ahu, and Hā'ena on Kaua'i.

While we ultimately defer to the School of Travel Industry Management on matters related to the implementation of this measure, we offer two recommendations:

Islands To Be Studied. While the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, and Kaua'i are named in this measure to be studied, the effects of large numbers of visitors are often most pronounced on our less populated islands. Kama'āina on Moloka'i in particular, through our community engagement there, have articulated a desire to study this issue on their island. We recommend including the islands of Lāna'i and Moloka'i in this study.

Timeline. For an issue as nuanced as carrying capacity that will require extensive community input, the timeline contemplated in this measure – just shy of six months – may not allow for as thorough of a study as would be useful to decision makers and destination managers. We recommend considering a longer timeline for this study.

Should this measure be adopted, HTA stands ready to assist with its implementation, including utilizing the steering committees, task forces, and working groups convened as part of the Destination Management Action Plan process to assist in finding stakeholders to participate in this study.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments on HB1233.