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Josh Green, M.D.
Governor

John De Fries
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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. 1162
RELATING TO VISITOR IMPACT FEES

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 in support of the intent of HB1162, to collect fees to fund the protection and increased resilience of Hawai'i's natural and outdoor recreational resources, and to establish the Environmental Legacy Commission to guide and approve the disbursement of those revenues.

The ethic of mālama – care and stewardship – is the core of our visitor education efforts. HTA's work is framed by four interacting strategic pillars: Natural Resources, Hawaiian Culture, Community, and Branding – the last of which is dependent upon the strength of the first three.

Hawai'i's environment is a treasure, and it is our collective kuleana to protect it for the generations to come. Fulfilling that responsibility takes funding. We agree with the intent of this legislation as it is in alignment with our Strategic Plan priorities in the Natural Resources pillar, as well as action items in our community-generated Destination Management Action Plans.

We have consistently been supportive of site-specific user fees as our preferred model, but no matter the model this Legislature decides upon to facilitate visitor contributions to the care of our natural resources, we advocate the reinvestment of those collections into improving the experience for kama'āina and visitors alike at public parks and trails.

We support the intent of HB1162. We stand ready to assist in educating visitor industry stakeholders and visitors, and will gladly designate a person to serve as an ex officio member of the Environmental Legacy Commission. We defer to our colleagues at the Department of Land and Natural Resources on matters related to the implementation of this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments.