RES25-018
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 34

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Jan 29, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 1

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Carey Johnson	quarkcsj@hotmail.com	96815
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Custom Island Tours, LLC	I wish to comment	Jan 24, 2025 @ 03:22 PM

Testimony:

LAURA THIELEN and Tommy Waters had a good idea with Bill 19 (2023), but was apparently spineless when shouted down by a small group from the community and the vile Esther Kia'aina. The bill only made it to 1st Reading and then was referred to Parks and never heard from again.

This was a more common sense bill. It would have been a good compromise between the tour companies and the communities.

Without this bill, tour companies and commercial activities are banned from even stopping at all of the beaches from Makapu'u to Castle Point, and from Sunset Beach to Kai'aka Bay in Waialua, as well as all State Parks such as Kahana Bay, Mala'ekahana, and Ka'ena Point.

Even more tourists are opting to take rental cars, or Turo cars to get to these beaches which is increasing the number of individual cars on the road, and more vehicles taking up parking spots at the beaches.

The root problem is enforcement. There is nobody from the Parks Department, or the City and County at these beach parks to enforce the rules that were in place, and so certain companies were breaking the rules, but instead of fining those companies, they just made all of the beaches off limits to all tour companies. So the tourists who want to get to these places are taking cars instead of tour vans or buses.

I sent an email to the Laura Thielen, Jan 15, 2024, asking to discuss how resolve these problems, but she never replied to my email from a year ago.

I used to be one of only 5 companies that bothered to apply for the Permit for Commercial Stops at beach parks, but the New Rules that were passed in 2020 has made that permit worthless and not worth the time to even apply for it.

https://www.honolulu.gov/rep/site/dpr/rules/Recreational_Stops_Rules_Effective_9-25-2020.pdf

Tour companies are now basically banned from all of the beaches, unless you get this permit, which with these new rules, is way too restrictive to even use. You basically only get to stop at 1 beach, and it's a beach that no tourist would want to go to.

So, it seems that Laura Thielen, along with Tommy Waters, tried in the beginning, but then just gave up.

Tourism brings in $17 Billion annually into the Hawaii economy. In 2023, my little company paid $20,204.28 in Honolulu General Excise Tax, and employed 7 tour guides. I'm down to 2 tour guides now. When tourists find out that tour guides can't even stop at a beach, they're either going to get a rental car, or choose to vacation somewhere else, like the Caribbean which is even closer to most people in the mainland.

The HTA, and the Hawaii Tourism and Lodging Association, the Governor, and the Mayor of Honolulu, have all publicly stated that their goal is to reduce the number of tourists coming to Hawaii, and only wanting to attract the type of tourists that would spend more money, so that they can make the same amount of money from fewer tourists. Statistics on the DBEDT website show that the price of lodging in Hawaii has gone up over 50% in recent years. So the hotels are making their money, but after the average tourist pays for their airfare and their hotel, there's not much money left for them to spend in the community outside of Waikiki, and they're not taking tours around the island and therefore not spreading

their money around the island. Who would want to take a tour of Oahu if you can't stop at the beach. If they go on their own, that increases the number of cars on the road and at the beaches, and the tourists don't have a guide to keep them safe and to tell them about the history and culture of Hawaii.

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Johnnie-Mae Perry	waianaenb569@gmail.com	96792
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 24, 2025 @ 07:41 PM

Testimony:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, SUPPORT

Selected Agenda Item: RES25-018

CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION OF LAURA H. THIELEN TO SERVE AS THE DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU.