

RES25-048
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 146

INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY & ENTERTAINMENT (ITE)

**INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY & ENTERTAINMENT
(ITE) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Mar 6, 2025 @ 02:30 PM

Support: 1

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Aaron Sala	Email: ajsala@hvcb.org	Zip: 96815
Representing: Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 6, 2025 @ 10:43 AM
Testimony: Aloha Chair Waters, Vice-Chair Weyer, and members of the Council, My name is Aaron J. Salā; I serve as the President and CEO of the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB). I submit this testimony in strong support of the resolution before you today, which will initiate the development of an O'ahu Tourism Strategic Plan. O'ahu is at a turning point as has to do with our visitor industry. For years, we have navigated the complexities of a tourism industry that has shaped our economy, our communities, and the daily lives of our people. We have seen its benefits, but we have also felt its burdens. The opportunity before us now—the opportunity before us now—the opportunity this resolution represents—is the chance to take control of our tourism future, to design it with intention rather than to find ourselves reactionary after the fact. Tourism is not simply about visitor arrivals and spending; it is about the kind of future we want to build for O'ahu and its people. This strategic plan will be a vehicle for alignment—aligning the needs of our communities with the opportunities of our industry, aligning visitor expectations with the reality of what we can and should offer, and aligning tourism management with a set of clear, community-driven priorities. If we do this right, this plan will accomplish more than just policy recommendations; it will serve as a guide for a new kind of leadership in tourism—one that is data-driven, forward-thinking, and built on a foundation of collaboration. It will give us the tools to move beyond old models of tourism that prioritize volume over value and towards a future where our visitor industry is a source of pride, not contention. This resolution is the necessary first step in ensuring that the O'ahu Tourism Strategic Plan is not just another document, but a true framework for managing tourism in a way that reflects who we are as a people, as a place, and as a destination. I strongly urge the Council to pass this resolution that will provide an opportunity to craft a tourism future that is in service of O'ahu. Mahalo nui in advance for your consideration. Aaron J. Salā, PhD President and CEO Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau		

