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Testimony of
Lloyd Unebasami
Interim President and Chief Executive Officer
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on
H.B. 960
Relating to the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

House Committee on Tourism, Culture & International Affairs
Monday, February 2, 2009
8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 312

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) strongly supports H.B. 960 which defines "tourism emergency" and directs the HTA to develop plans and programs that can be executed to respond to the emergencies.

H.B. 960 amends the provisions relating to tourism emergency by defining "tourism emergency" to be an event or condition, which adversely affects Hawai'i's tourism industry and results in "...a substantial interruption in the commerce of the state and adversely affecting the welfare of the people..." The current law requires the "occurrence of a world conflict, terrorist threat, natural disaster, outbreak of disease, or other catastrophic event..." Under the current law, it may be questionable whether the Tourism Emergency Trust Fund can be used to address events caused by the current economic conditions, or other events that are not caused by a catastrophic event.

H.B. 960 also directs HTA to develop plans and programs to respond to tourism emergencies, such as programs to provide assistance to victims of the emergency, to coordinate the activities of public and private organizations that may be mobilized to provide assistance during an emergency, to execute programs that are designed to respond to economic downturns with carefully targeted strategies to sustain Hawai'i's visitor industry, to expedite the procuring of supplies, equipment, and services as part of a relief plan, and to execute a public information strategy.

The amendments proposed by H.B. 960 will allow the HTA to respond quickly when it determines that a tourism emergency exists.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

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