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Statement by George D. Szigeti, President and CEO, Hawai'i Tourism Authority

RE: Proposed Legislation Impacting Hawai'i's Tourism Future

HONOLULU – George D. Szigeti, president and CEO of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), issued the following commentary about House Bill 1471 and Senate Bill 704, as they relate to transient accommodations, and Senate Bill 658, relating to the establishment of a Hawai'i Airport Corporation.

“With the 29th Legislature entering its final weeks, three bills significant to the future of Hawai'i tourism and our communities statewide are being reviewed by lawmakers, House Bill 1471, Senate Bill 704 and Senate Bill 658.

“HB1471 and SB704 seek to establish a process for collecting taxes from operators of transient accommodations, while SB658 would create a Hawai'i Airport Corporation within the State Department of Transportation to develop, manage and operate all State airport facilities.

“In considering the proposed legislation, the quality of the experience and safety for users, both residents and visitors, need to be top priorities during the evaluation process. Maintaining the excellence of Hawai'i's brand as a premier global destination is of paramount importance, as our State strives to improve its diversity of accommodations, quality of airports and way of life.

“We know from a recent study commissioned by HTA that 15 percent of visitors would not travel to Hawai'i if alternative accommodations were not offered, and that these visitors contributed \$1.87 billion in spending to the State's economy last year.

“Ultimately, we need to continually strive toward ensuring that all facets of our tourism industry are making our communities stronger. Alternative accommodations have become essential to Hawai'i tourism. As lawmakers determine an appropriate method to collect taxes from operators, there should also be measures in place ensuring guests are being provided with necessary safety information and quality accommodations befitting of Hawai'i's brand, and that users are not disruptive to neighborhoods.

“The first place any resident or visitor experiences when flying to and within the Hawaiian Islands are our airports. We all want the culture, beauty and pride we feel about Hawai'i reflected in our airports. It's imperative we move forward collectively with a strategy for improving our airport infrastructure as expeditiously and efficiently as possible.

“Having a world-class airport system is important to our residents' quality of life, vital to the future of our State's tourism industry, necessary to accommodate new and larger aircraft, and crucial to Hawai'i's brand as a global destination. With a strategic, cooperative focus, the needs of travelers, airlines and businesses can be accomplished in a timely, responsible manner.

“These proposed bills on transient accommodations and our airports can be instruments of change in supporting the future of Hawai'i's tourism industry. We appreciate the analysis and collaboration by lawmakers in determining the proper action for this legislation, but request that the core values of safety and quality of the experience be factored into their assessment and decision-making.”

About the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

The [Hawai'i Tourism Authority](#) is responsible for strategically managing the State of Hawai'i's marketing initiatives to support tourism. HTA's goal is to optimize tourism's benefits for Hawai'i, while being attentive to the interests of travelers, the community and visitor industry. Established in 1998 to support Hawai'i's leading industry and largest employer, HTA continually strives to help ensure the sustainability of tourism's success.

For more information about HTA, please visit www.hawaiiauthority.org. Follow updates about HTA on Facebook, Twitter (@HawaiiHTA) and its YouTube Channel.

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