



HAWAI'I LODGING & TOURISM
A S S O C I A T I O N

Testimony of
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Honolulu City Council
Bill 80 (2020) – Relating to the Right of Recall

October 7, 2020

Dear Chair Kobayashi and members of the Honolulu City Council, mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, the state's largest private sector visitor industry organization.

The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association—nearly 700 members strong, representing more than 50,000 hotel rooms and nearly 40,000 lodging workers — is cognizant of the need to protect everybody from local residents, to tourists, to hospitality industry workers, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Tourism is a critical sector of Hawai'i's economic landscape and will play a key role in our economic recovery. Visitors spent more than \$17 billion here in Hawai'i in 2019 and supported more than 200,000 jobs directly related to tourism. Thousands of these workers have been laid off for months, their healthcare has run out, and their situations are beyond dire. Bill 80 (2020), as it is currently written, will not only make re-opening more difficult for hoteliers around O'ahu, but will also keep local residents out of work longer than is needed for no discernably good reason.

No one understands better than us the importance of a vibrant tourism economy that is the key to recovery across all small business sectors. We take seriously the responsibility of caring not only for our guests, but also the thousands of men and women who comprise our industry's workforce. We have made this utterly clear throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in myriad ways. Not only have we created, and had approved by the State Department of Health, a set of health and hygiene standards aimed at keeping hotel staff safe, but O'ahu's lodging industry has gone to great lengths to protect the overall well-being of its workers. It started with the heavy investment in PPE, which was extremely difficult to come by during the early weeks of the pandemic. This grew to including everything from free food drives for lodging employees and their families, to continued employee health coverage for months despite most hotels having suspended their operations. We better than anybody else know how to care for our people.

As it stands, various hotels, small and large, brand name and union, are all on different timetables for re-opening that are based upon both demand and the circumstances of the hotels in question. Some have remained open throughout the pandemic. Others are set to open in two weeks, others later this year, while some have delayed their re-opening dates until 2021. Bill 80 (2020) will only hinder the re-opening plans that countless hotel properties have already spent months preparing. It is an egregious

overreach by local government, which has no business mandating neither the timeframe, nor the manner in which our industry brings its people back to work. It would cast a black eye upon the City & County of Honolulu to have this measure enacted into law. **We therefore stand in strong opposition to Bill 80 (2020).**

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony.