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Statement of  
**MIKE MCCARTNEY**  
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the

**SENATE ON LABOR, CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

Monday, March 22, 2021  
3:05 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

In consideration of  
**SCR 241**

**REQUESTING THE HAWAII SISTER-STATE COMMITTEE TO EVALUATE AND DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INITIATION OF A SISTER STATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE OF HAWAII AND THE PREFECTURE OF YAMAGUCHI, JAPAN, AND FORWARD ITS RECOMMENDATION TO THE LEGISLATURE, PURSUANT TO SECTION 229-3, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES, FOR FURTHER ACTION.**

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara, and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports SCR 241 to establish the Hawaii-Yamaguchi Sister-State Relationship.

Yamaguchi Prefecture and the State of Hawaii have had a strong relationship from the early days of the Kanyaku-Imin when the first immigrants left Japan, with over 10,000 people from Yamaguchi Prefecture, for Hawaii to work as contract laborers. Enabling the official sister-state relationship to be signed will contribute to ongoing people-to-people exchanges in education, culture, business and government between Hawaii and Yamaguchi to thrive.

On March 15, 2021, the Hawaii Sister State Committee (established by the Legislature) recommended unanimously that a sister state relationship between the State of Hawaii and Yamaguchi Prefecture be established.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

To: Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts  
From: Honolulu Yamaguchi Kenjinkai  
Re: Testimony in support of SCR 241

To Be Heard: Monday, March 22, 2021 3:05 P.M.

We enthusiastically support the creation of a Hawaii-Yamaguchi sister state relationship because we believe it would be mutually beneficial and promote opportunities to develop educational, cultural and governmental partnerships, thereby encouraging the exchange of ideas and the strengthening of bonds for future activities.

Here are a couple of examples of ongoing activities to support this.

There are a total of 5 Yamaguchi Kenjinkais on the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i and the Big Island. Whenever there are big events at these clubs, the Yamaguchi Prefectural Government has sent representatives to come to Hawaii to join in the celebrations. More often than not, the Governor of Yamaguchi himself also comes. Most recently, Governor Muraoka came to Honolulu in 2018 to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Honolulu Yamaguchi Kenjinkai, and to participate in the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants called the *Gannenmono*.

Another example ...

Each year, a fisheries high school in Yamaguchi Prefecture sponsors a hands-on learning experience for their students by sending them on a long, educational voyage in the Pacific aboard their ship, the *Kaiyu Maru*. These students learn firsthand of the many skills involved in being a part of the fishing industry. During this voyage, they stop in Honolulu for a few days of R&R and a chance to meet up with members of the Honolulu Yamaguchi Kenjinkai. They welcome us to visit onboard the ship where we are always so impressed with how many workers are needed to run the ship, and bring a successful catch safely back to their home port. Additionally, they host a reception on board where we all have a chance to meet and socialize. In turn, the Honolulu Yamaguchi Kenjinkai hosts the students, teachers and crew at a picnic with games and local-style food. It's an annual tradition that we look forward to.

The *Kaiyu Maru* also brings onboard a ton of beautiful brochures on Yamaguchi, along with some prefectural products, and delivers them to us when they arrive. These are from the Yamaguchi Prefectural Government, and we happily and proudly give them out at our annual Honolulu Festival booth.