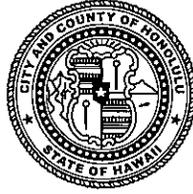


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PETER B. CARLISLE
MAYOR



ANN CHUNG
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

March 19, 2012

The Honorable Tom Bower, Chair
House Committee on Tourism
and
The Honorable Karen L. Awana, Chair
House Committee on International Affairs
Twenty-sixth Legislature
Regular Sessions of 2012

**RE: HR 25 / HCR 46, URGING THE INCLUSION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF CHINA IN THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM.**

and

**HR 97 / HCR 129, SUPPORTING THE VISA IMPROVEMENTS TO STIMULATE
INTERNATIONAL TOURISM TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ACT.**

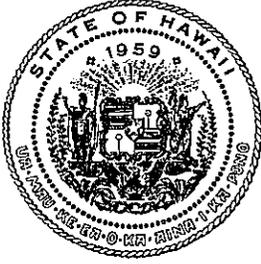
Chair Brower and members of the Committee on Tourism and Chair Awana and members of the Committee on International Affairs, Director Ann Chung of the Mayor's Office of Economic Development submits the following testimony in support of the aforementioned resolutions urging the inclusion of the People's Republic of China in the visa waver program to the Committee on Tourism and Committee on International Relations and supporting the Visa Improvements to Stimulate International Tourism to the United States of America Act.

The purposes of these resolutions are to ease visa restrictions for Chinese and Canadian citizens.

As tourism is Honolulu's largest single source of private capital and the People's Republic of China is world's second largest economy and a major trade partner with the U.S., we feel that these resolutions that ease visa restrictions will result in a significant increase in economic growth especially in Honolulu's sister-cities of Chengdu, Qinhuangdao, Haikou, and Zhongshan.

Chinese travelers cite that the paramount issue in traveling to Hawaii is the difficulty in obtaining travel visas, and any restriction that impedes visitors' access to Hawaii correspondingly hurts Honolulu's economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for these resolutions.



Hawai'i Tourism Authority

Hawai'i Convention Center, 1801 Kalākaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815
Website: www.hawaii-tourism-authority.org

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor

MIKE MCCARTNEY
President and
Chief Executive Officer

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Testimony of
Mike McCartney
President and Chief Executive Officer
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
on
H.R. 25/H.C.R 46
**Requesting the Visa Improvements to Stimulate International
Tourism to the United States of America Act**

House Committee on Tourism
House Committee on International Affairs
Monday, March 19, 2012
9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 312

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) strongly supports H.R. 25 and H.C.R. 46, expresses legislative support of the Visa Improvements to Stimulate International Tourism to the United States of America Act.

Since the passage of the Travel Promotion Act of 2007, the federal government has established the goal of increasing international travel to the United States, and establishing a nationally coordinated promotion program that involves changes to security policies and create public-private partnerships to conduct a nationally coordinated campaign to attract foreign visitors. Improvements to the visa program, including the implementation of the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and the expansion of visa waiver are important to achieving the goal.

International visitors are an important part of Hawai'i's visitor industry, making up about 30 percent of visitor arrivals and contributing about \$3.7 billion in expenditures to the industry. An important component in the expansion of this market is creating a more efficient visa processing system.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.