



Hawai'i Convention Center
1801 Kalākaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815
kelepona tel 808 973 2255
kelepa'i fax 808 973 2253
kahua pa'a web hawaii-tourism-authority.org

David Y. Ige
Governor

George D. Szigeti
President and Chief Executive Officer

Statement of
George D. Szigeti
Chief Executive Officer
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
on
GM 748
Board of Directors of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority
Senate Committee on Economic Development, Tourism, and Technology
Monday, April 30, 2018
9:00am
Conference Room 414

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) offers the following **testimony in support of GM 748**, which submits for consideration and confirmation to HTA's Board of Directors (the Board), Gubernatorial Nominee **Benjamin Rafter** for a term to expire on June 30, 2022.

Mr. Rafter has extensive experience serving Hawai'i's tourism industry, and these experiences as a hotelier will benefit HTA as we work to promote Hawai'i as a premier visitor destination. In his roles leading Aqua Hospitality and Aston Hotels & Resorts, as managing member of Jororo, and as the owner of OLS Hotels & Resorts, Mr. Rafter has gained valuable experience adjusting Hawai'i's hotel market to respond to shifting visitor trends and profiles. Mr. Rafter's knowledge of the industry and understanding of the various stakeholders in Hawai'i's tourism industry will be of tremendous value to HTA's mission.

At HTA, we look forward to collaborating with Mr. Rafter to enhance and highlight Hawai'i's people, place and culture with the goal of delivering an incomparable visitor experience.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer this testimony.



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

Testimony of

Mufi Hannemann
President & CEO

Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

before the

Committee on Economic Development, Tourism, and Technology

GM 748: Benjamin Rafter, Hawai'i Tourism Authority

Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Taniguchi, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the nearly 700 members of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, I am pleased to convey my support for the confirmation of Benjamin Rafter to the Hawai'i Tourism Authority Board of Directors.

Mr. Rafter is a managing member of Jororo, which invests in, renovates, and repositions hotels in the Hawaiian Islands. He is one of the top leaders of the hospitality industry, and through Jororo he has played a major role in managing hotels through their renovation and succeeding sale, one example of which is the popular Surfjack Hotel and Swim Club in Waikiki.

Mr. Rafter's prior experience is considerable. He helped to build Aqua Hospitality to its present status and engineered a merger with Aston Hotels & Resorts to form a 10,000-room portfolio. This achievement was a testament to his bold leadership, foresight, and keen business acumen, honed over years in the hospitality industry. He began his career as a database marketing analyst with Westin Hotels and Resorts, but his abilities quickly earned him greater responsibilities with a number of major hotel properties, ultimately leading to his stint with Aqua-Aston Hospitality and the company's resulting growth and prosperity.

In addition to his active involvement in hotel development, Mr. Rafter has been an invaluable contributor to the growth of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, serving as the chair of our board of directors and as chair of the Visitor Industry Charity Walk, which set a new record for fund-raising during his term.

We firmly believe Benjamin Rafter will bring his leadership, creativity, and decisiveness to the governance of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. We commend the administration for this nomination because it underscores the need for directors who have a strong background and experience in the visitor industry in order to support the state's top industry. We urge you to confirm his nomination. Mahalo.