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**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 PROVINCE OF AKLAN, REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES AND FORWARD ITS RECOMMENDATION TO THE LEGISLATURE, PURSUANT TO SECTION 229-3, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES, FOR FURTHER ACTION.**

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A Report to the Hawaii State  
Legislature

Submitted by

**The Department of Business,  
Economic Development & Tourism  
on behalf of the Sister-State  
Committee**

**October, 2017**

## **INTRODUCTION**

House Resolution 77, H.D. 1 Twenty-eighth Legislature, 2016 requests 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 Province of Aklan, Republic of the Philippines and forward its recommendation to the legislature, pursuant to section 229-3, Hawaii Revised Statutes, for further action.

## **OVERVIEW**

The Sister-State Committee met on September 29, 2017. Committee members in attendance were Kaho'okeleholu Hannahs, Debra Nakama, Jean Rolles and Eduardo Topenio Jr. DBEDT staff attending were Dennis Ling, Mark Ritchie and Selma Malcolm. Margaret Ahn, Deputy Attorney General also attended.

As part of Hawaii's Sister State application process, the government of Aklan submitted materials to the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) including an application and support letters from a number of individuals in the Aklan government. The support letters included:

1. Letter of Vice Governor Gabrielle V. Calizo-Quimpo (2013-2016) dated March 28, 2016, addressed to Honorable Members of the House of Representatives, 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature, State of Hawaii.
2. Letter of Aklan Governor Florencio T. Miraflores (2013-2016:2016-2019) dated June 20, 2016, addressed to Mr. Brian L. Takeshita, Chief Clerk, House of Representatives, 415 S. Beretania St. Rm. 207, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813.
3. Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Aklan (Provincial Legislative Body) Committee Report No. 078-2016, dated June 13, 2016.
4. Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Aklan (Provincial Legislative Body) Resolution 2016-010, dated July 18, 2016, authorizing Governor Florencio T. Miraflores to enter into a Sisterhood Agreement between the State of Hawaii of United States of America and the Province of Aklan of the Republic of the Philippines.

5. Letter of Governor Florencio T. Miraflores dated September 5, 2016, addressed to Mr. Luis P. Salaveria, Director, State of Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, No. 1 Capitol District Bldg. 250 S. Hotel St. Honolulu, Hawaii 96813.

## **BACKGROUND**

Sister-state relationships serve as a basis to form connections between communities that are mutually beneficial and which address issues that are most relevant for partners. There should be an existing track record of economic and commercial activity to supplement any cultural or educational ties that may have previously existed. Most importantly, there must also be a strong base of support within Hawaii's business community to develop and sustain the relationship. Given these Sister-State Program parameters, the Sister-State Committee discussed the Aklan application and decided the following.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The Sister-State Committee concurs with DBEDT's testimony on HCR 123/HR 77 (2016) particularly on the point that the State of Hawaii already has five sister-state relationships with provinces in the Philippines, which is the most it has with any country, and that exchanges with these sister-states, especially in trade, education, investment and other mutually beneficial economic development areas have been limited so far. The Committee agrees with DBEDT's testimony that efforts be placed on revitalizing existing sister relationships within the Philippines rather than on entering into new ones.

Additionally, only one individual submitted written testimony in support of HCR 123/HR 77 (2016). The testimony was from Dr. Danilo E. Abayon, President of Aklan State University. No Hawaii-based groups submitted written testimony. The primary areas of interest from Dr. Abayon as noted in the testimony were academic exchanges and joint research. A sister-state relationship is not necessarily needed for Aklan State University and the University of Hawaii or some other educational institution in Hawaii to negotiate an MOU covering these areas.

Lastly, one of the main areas proposed for cooperation was tourism. Since the resorts in Aklan are concentrated in a city or municipality, the Sister-State Committee suggests that an

appropriate city in Aklan initially pursue a sister-city relationship with one of the counties in Hawaii.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Given the above, the Sister-State Committee unanimously voted to recommend to the legislature that it defer on the establishment of a sister-state relationship with Aklan.