



## - 2024 Policy Priorities –

### Guiding Principles

- *Support efforts that maintain, grow and strengthen opportunities for Kaua'i businesses*
- *Reduce the costs and regulatory burdens of doing business*
- *Manage growth and support infrastructure improvements so that the quality of life for the people of Kaua'i is elevated and the visitor experience is optimized*
- *Help businesses succeed with today's reduced workforce*
- *Improve the quality of life for all who live and work on Kaua'i*

### Key Policy Priorities

**Addressing the Housing Crisis on Kaua'i:** The Kaua'i Chamber vigorously advocates for affordable housing as a critical component to providing our island's workforce with the opportunity to live and thrive here. We acknowledge that the lack of affordable housing has negative impacts on our businesses, our residents and our local economy. Therefore, we are steadfastly committed to actively promoting and supporting the implementation of policies and initiatives that bring about a sustainable supply of affordable housing for all who call Kaua'i home.

**Adapting to the Workforce Shortage in the Post-Pandemic Era:** In the post-pandemic landscape, the Kaua'i Chamber recognizes a new normal in the workforce, marked by a persistent workforce shortage. This shortage stems from complex, multifaceted causes, some of which are irreversible. The passage of time since the pandemic has done little to alleviate this issue, and we anticipate its continuation in the near future.

Understanding these challenges, the Chamber is committed to advocating for innovative policies and programs designed to assist businesses in thriving under these new conditions. Our focus is on solutions that are both practical and progressive, aligning with today's evolving workforce demands.

The Kaua'i Chamber is dedicated to moving beyond traditional recruitment and retention strategies, which are no longer sufficient in today's dynamic labor market. Together, we can forge a path that not only addresses the immediate workforce shortage but also lays the groundwork for a robust and resilient economic future for Kaua'i.

**Championing Universal Access to Early Childhood Education:** The lack of access to universally available early childhood education is having an immediate and detrimental impact on our businesses. Childcare challenges lead to increased employee absenteeism and cause some individuals to remain outside the workforce altogether due to the combination of high costs and limited availability. Additionally, early childhood education programs play a vital role in producing a skilled and adaptable workforce. Our local businesses benefit when workers have a strong foundation of knowledge and soft skills developed during their early years. Therefore, the Kaua'i Chamber is firmly committed to policies, programs, and initiatives that advance equitable access to high-quality early childhood education for every child on Kaua'i.

## Priority Policy Areas

**Economic Growth and Diversification:** Promote and support policies that incentivize innovation and entrepreneurship as a means of achieving economic growth and diversification through a competitive business environment.

- Agriculture: Support the expansion of diversified agriculture on Kaua'i through adoption of sensible land-use policy and preventing excessive regulatory and financial burdens that interfere with the ability of farmers to succeed.
- Creative Industries: Support financial incentives, policies and the development of local resources that will attract creative industries that benefit Kaua'i.
- Military/PMRF: Advocate for the continued viability of the Pacific Missile Range Facility's research and testing operations on Kaua'i.
- Tourism: The Chamber strongly supports a holistic approach to responsible tourism that elevates prosperity for our community, perpetuates and celebrates our unique cultural heritage, and preserves the pristine beauty of our environment. We advocate for continued state and county funding of the Kauai Visitors Bureau (KVB) to drive this mission forward.

**Environmental Stewardship:** Support legislation that recognizes that environmental quality and economic development are not mutually exclusive goals and that creates a balance to ensure businesses have the ability to grow and remain competitive.

- Clean Energy: Support policies that encourage the development of reliable sources of affordable and diverse renewable energy.
- Water: Ensure access to and encourage responsible use of Kauai's water resources to meet the social, environmental, and economic needs of our community in accordance with local, state and federal law and regulation.

**Promote a Thriving Economy:** Work to roll back and/or prevent excessive regulatory and financial burdens that interfere with the ability of companies to succeed; promote policies that encourage appropriate economic expansion and job creation.

- Education & Development: Support educational, employment and training systems including universal access to high-quality early childhood education and work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships and paid internships. Systems must be driven by the needs of employers and based on accurate and timely local labor market data.
- Land Use/Housing: Support maintaining and improving infrastructure, housing affordability and land uses which promote business and economic development in accordance with the County of Kaua'i General Plan.
- Regulatory Reform: Promote the creation of reasonable, fair, cost-effective, fiscally and technically sound, streamlined and simplified regulatory environment that is business-friendly and does not put Kaua'i businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

- Taxes including Transient Accommodations Tax (TAT): Advance tax policies that encourage job creation, attract capital investment and facilitate Kauai's ability to attract and retain businesses; advocate for an appropriate share of the TAT to be allocated to the counties.
- Transportation/Roads/Infrastructure: Support further investments into Kauai's infrastructure in partnership with the private sector and by securing the County's fair share of state and federal allocations; Promote a well-maintained community infrastructure supporting economic expansion, and the efficient movement of people, goods and services.

**Health and Safety:** Support legislation and reasonable budgetary proposals that enhance the health and safety of Kauai's residents and the visitor population.

- Public Safety/Emergency Preparedness: Support a strong federal, state, and county public safety emergency response system including police, fire, medical treatment and disaster preparedness components that enhance the safety of residents and workers and the preservation of life and property.
- Healthcare: Advocate for policies that improve health outcomes and experiences while controlling and reducing the cost of care.