Testimony to the University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents
Sunday, April 26, 2015 at 11:30 A.M.
University of Hawai‘i at Hilo, Performing Arts Center
200 West Kawili Street, Hilo, HI 96720

RE: UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT HILO – THE MANAGEMENT OF MAUNA
KEA AND THE MAUNA KEA SCIENCE RESERVE (THIRTY METER TELESCOPE
PROJECT)

To the University of Hawai‘i Board of Regents:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") supports the Thirty Meter Telescope project.

The Chamber is Hawaii’s leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing about 1,000 businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the “Voice of Business” in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state’s economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

TMT has followed a lengthy seven-year public and agency review. During this time, it has engaged in community outreach efforts recognizing the cultural significance of Mauna Kea. Furthermore, TMT went through legal challenges and in the end, was granted a Final Judgment in the affirmative and obtained the necessary permits and approvals to move forward with the construction of the telescope. Additionally, TMT conducted an EIS, which was approved after a two-year public review and input process.

TMT can help Hawaii's students reach for the stars by supporting science and culture. TMT launched The Hawaii Island New Knowledge (THINK) Fund in 2014 to support Big Island students with STEM education. THINK is administered by Hawaii Community Foundation and Pauahi Foundation. TMT will make an annual contribution of $1 million to THINK. Funds have gone to over 30 classrooms; and $500,000 has gone to schools and nonprofits through Hawaii Community Foundation.

TMT also initiated a Workforce Pipeline Program, working with the State DOE, Hawaii County, and nonprofits to strengthen STEM skills infrastructure at UH Hilo, HCC and K-12 education organizations serving low income and first-generation college-attending students. TMT is committed to spend additional funds each year on the program when fully operational.

TMT will provide much needed economic support with employment opportunities for local businesses to assist in development, operations and maintenance. During the 8-10 year construction period, TMT will create about 300 construction jobs. Once completed, TMT will
generate about $26 million annually in operations and employ about 140 employees. TMT has committed is to fill these positions with as many Hawaii residents as possible.

In 2014, TMT paid $300,000, then will pay for three subsequent years; $400,000 for the next two years; $600,000 when the structure is built; $700,000 when the instruments and mirrors are placed; and $900,000 in the 10th year of construction. TMT then will pay $1 million/year while the telescope is in operation. 80% goes to the Office of Mauna Kea Management to steward the mountain and the remaining 20% percent goes to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

TMT took the time and effort to go through all the necessary procedures; to halt the project now would leave a black eye on Hawaii’s business climate as it did when other major initiatives had decisions reversed after completion of projects or processes. We must show that Hawaii is a community that is able to work collectively on divisive issues to benefit the people of our State. We need to show that Hawaii is capable of embracing economic and educational opportunities to improve our State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.