Letter to Governor Ige from the Business Community

On behalf of the business community of Hawaii Island and the State of Hawaii, we respectfully ask for your support for the Thirty Meter Telescope to begin its permitted construction under safe passage. We believe this is an urgent situation and any further delay could undermine the overall benefits of this project.

Hawaii’s business community stands together in support of astronomy, science, culture and environmental stewardship. This stalemate has already wrought too much damage within the State of Hawaii.

HAWAII ISLAND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

For the past two decades, Hawaii Island community members have been actively engaged in improving the management and stewardship of Mauna Kea. The Office of Mauna Kea Management (OMKM) and its two respective voluntary community boards have invested significant time and effort to ensure active and effective stewardship of cultural and environmental resources.

SUPPORT HIGH TECH INDUSTRY

Astronomy on Mauna Kea, now 50 years old, is one of Hawaii’s first high tech industries. Hawaii has worked diligently to diversify its economic sectors and to attract high tech industry. Hawaii’s astronomy is a source of national pride. We believe it would be in the state of Hawaii’s best interest to continue to support the entire astronomy industry in Hawaii.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

According to UHERO, Hawaii’s astronomy sector has a total statewide impact of $167 million and generates $8 million in taxes annually. With over $1 billion in observatory infrastructure, astronomy employs 1,400 people in our state. Hawaii County, with the highest rates of poverty and unemployment statewide, garners nearly 70% of that total, generating 800 jobs. In fact, the 2000 Mauna Kea Management Plan calls for a next generation large telescope such as TMT.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS REPUTATION

Business and industry cannot function under uncertainty. We believe that following an eight-year public process, the project should proceed. The current status surrounding TMT’s inability to proceed has brought national and international attention which we are afraid could further undermine Hawaii’s reputation as a place to do business.

RULE OF LAW

Business cannot operate without laws being enforced. Selective enforcement of laws by State, County and HPD is discriminatory. Citizens place their trust in government that laws will be enforced equally without the need for political pressure to do so. The result of the faulty law enforcement surrounding Mauna Kea is fostering tension, aggression, racism and business uncertainty. Ambiguity surrounding the rule of law has prompted a poor economic climate.

In summary, we reaffirm our request that you make it possible for the Thirty Meter Telescope to begin its permitted construction under safe passage. Mahalo for your urgent response to Hawaii’s business community.