The Hawaii State Legislature adjourned its 2019 session on May 2. Throughout the session, the Chamber tracked over 200 bills that would impact our members. We thank our legislators for engaging with us on a variety of issues from innovation to environment and labor issues.

We successfully advocated for several bills to move the business community forward—including funding for manufacturing and innovation research, the creation of a plastic waste reduction group to evaluate how we can protect our environment, and authorization to redevelop and revitalize Aloha Stadium.

The Chamber also weighed in on a number of bills that address Hawaii’s cost of living issues. We see every day that Hawaii families are struggling. But weakening the business community will further hurt our economy, not address these longstanding, complicated manners. We were proud to advocate for the passage of bills that would create affordable housing and increase access to produce for families who are struggling. But weakening the minimum wage would have driven them out of business.

Our local businesses recognize that employees are a big part of what make their businesses a success and do everything they can to take care of them and retain them through wages and benefits. Throughout the legislative process, we heard from many of our members who would have to cut hours, benefits and jobs if a drastic minimum wage increase was enacted.

They face the same cost of living issues that Hawaii families grapple with and, in some cases, another increase in the minimum wage would have driven them out of business.

The Chamber was proud to bring their stories to our lawmakers through each hearing and into the conference committee. We know that the decision to defer an increase was difficult for our lawmakers, and we thank them for their careful consideration of all sides of this issue.

Out of the more than 3,000 bills that were introduced this legislative session, less than 10 percent passed final reading. Mahalo to our legislators for their hard work and thoughtfulness in considering each bill’s merit and impact.

Our motto “Our Future Is Our Business” will continue to drive our legislative agenda into 2020, and we look forward to engaging with lawmakers to support and strengthen our local business community.