

April 10, 2025

TO: Chair Chang and members of the Senate Committee on Housing
RE: HCR 66

Dear Chair Chang and Committee Members,

Housing Hawai'i's Future is a nonprofit dedicated to creating opportunities for Hawai'i's next generation by ending the workforce housing shortage.

We support HCR 66, requesting that the State Building Code Council consider **Point Access Block Construction (PABC)** for residential buildings up to six stories in the State.

The United States is very different from most of the world, where PABC buildings are common. These buildings cost less to build and require less space for more units. They also permit a greater diversity of unit mixes, including 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units. Known as 'point-access' blocks, these buildings will be found across Europe and Asia.

Historically, the construction of multistory buildings with PABC was rendered illegal across the United States due to the use of poor, fire-prone building materials. In February 2025, the Pew Charitable Trusts (PCT) and the Center for Building in North America (CBNA) found that single-stairway buildings as tall as six stories are as safe as other types of housing; such buildings could also provide more efficient, more cost-effective housing (including homes for people with modest incomes) in urban communities throughout places like Hawai'i.¹

Across the United States, cities like Seattle and New York City already permit PABC construction.² On May 9, 2023, Washington State passed Senate Bill 5491 into law as Chapter 372, Session Laws 2023.³ The legislation, similar to HCR 66, called for the study of single-stairway residential buildings. To date, sixteen cities and states have passed legislation that provides for this mode of construction.

Building policy has not evolved with the times. The State of Hawai'i, through the Building Code Council, should consider the implementation of PABC across the State of Hawai'i. **Let's advance HCR 66.**

Thank you,



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¹ PCT & CBNA: <https://pew.org/4hljvsy>

² Larch Lab: https://www.larchlab.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Larch-Lab-PAB_Policy-Brief.pdf

³ See SB 5491's legislative journey here: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5491&Year=2023>.

April 10, 2025, 1 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

To: Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Sen. Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Sen. Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Housing
Sen. Stanley Chang, Chair
Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: HCR66 — REQUESTING THE STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL TO ADOPT, AMEND, OR UPDATE THE STATE BUILDING CODE TO AUTHORIZE POINT ACCESS BLOCK CONSTRUCTION FOR RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS UP TO SIX STORIES IN THE STATE.

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and other members of the committees,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [HCR66](#), which would request that the State Building Code Council allow “point access block” construction for residences up to six stories.

“Point access block” refers to buildings with only one means of egress — in other words, one staircase. Honolulu County authorized such buildings in 2020.¹

Stephen Smith, executive director of the Center for Building in North America, has documented that allowing single-stair apartment buildings could slash land costs for homebuilders² — one of the most significant cost components of construction in Hawaii.

¹ Alex Horowitz, “[Small Single-Stairway Apartment Buildings Have Strong Safety Record](#),” Pew Charitable Trusts, Feb. 27, 2025.

² “[Staircase proposal could be small step toward more housing](#),” Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, Aug. 8, 2023.

In addition to Honolulu, New York City and Seattle permit single-stair apartment buildings, as do numerous Asian and European countries. Hawaii should join their lead and take this proposed small step toward solving its housing crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns,
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

HCR-66

Submitted on: 4/7/2025 1:13:38 PM

Testimony for PSM on 4/10/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Frank Schultz	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this initiative.