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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS
Director, Office of Planning
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Thursday, February 4, 2021
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room via Videoconference

in consideration of
HB 502
RELATING TO RURAL DISTRICTS.

Chair Nakamura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and Members of the House Committee on Housing.

The Office of Planning (OP) offers **comments** on HB 502 that amends Chapter 205, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to permit the counties to adopt an ordinance allowing dwellings on each quarter-acre of land in the State Rural District.

OP supports the intent of measures that increase the availability of local housing. HB 502 would provide the counties with some flexibility to accommodate additional housing. However, we would caution that any county ordinance allowing dwellings on each quarter-acre of Rural District lands should at least be consistent with county general plans and community development plans. Otherwise, there is a risk of rural sprawl and increased infrastructure costs.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
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**TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2021
9:00 A.M.
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 502
RELATING TO RURAL DISTRICTS**

Chairperson Nakamura and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 502 that seeks to double the allowable housing density on the minimum one-half acre lot size in the Rural District. Currently, only one dwelling is permitted on one-half acre Rural District lots. The purpose of this proposed amendment is to address the "...need for additional local housing.." and "...permitting the counties to adopt an ordinance to allow dwellings on each quarter-acre will provide the required flexibility..." (page 1 lines 4-7) The Department of Agriculture has strong concerns.

The Rural District is the smallest of the four land use districts in Hawaii. In 2018, the Rural District represented 0.0028 percent (11,747 acres). The total statewide acreage in Rural District has ranged from 10,201 to 11,747 from 1983 to 2018, an increase of 15 percent over 35 years. Maui island has 4,198 acres or 36 percent of Rural District land in the state, followed by Lanai (2,497 acres), the Big Island (2,023 acres), Molokai (1,866 acres), and Kauai (1,253 acres). The Rural District is not found on Oahu.



The locations of most Rural District areas are adjacent to Urban District lands. Notable exceptions to this are found in the Kula-Keokea area in upcountry Maui; along the northeastern and southern shores of Lanai; the south shore of Molokai; and Koloa, Wailua, and Wainiha on Kauai – all of which are surrounded by Agricultural District lands.

Section 205-2(c) describes the State Rural District as “...areas where "city-like" concentration of people, structures, streets, and urban level of services are absent, and where small farms are intermixed with low density residential lots...” The Department questions whether doubling the allowable housing on one-half acre Rural District lots changes the fundamental character of the District. Further, the Department is concerned that the proposed amendment may lead to an increase in petitions to reclassify Agricultural District lands to Rural District. This would have an adverse impact on lands in the Agricultural District similar to subdivision, condominium property regime, and other forms of landownership that result in increasing agricultural land values with little if any agricultural activity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure

February 4, 2021

The Honorable Nadine Nakamura, Chair

House Committee on Housing

Via Videoconference

RE: H.B. 981 Relating to Rural Districts

HEARING: Thursday, February 4, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.

Aloha Chair Nakamura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and Members of the Committee,

I am Ken Hiraki, Director of Government Affairs, testifying on behalf of the Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® (“HAR”), the voice of real estate in Hawai'i, and its over 10,000 members. HAR **supports** House Bill 502, which allows up to one dwelling per quarter-acre in rural districts.

According to the Department of Business Economic Development and Tourism's 2019 report on Housing Demand in Hawai'i, the State needs up to 46,000 housing units to meet demand in Hawai'i by 2030. Ultimately, we have a housing supply problem, and this measure is a creative approach to address those challenges, by providing counties the authority and flexibility to adopt ordinances to permit dwellings on each quarter-acre of rural lands.

A quarter acre is equal to 10,890 square feet. HAR believe that is a sufficient lot size for a single-family home, while keeping within the characteristics of our rural communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.