

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi  
Director

Shawn K. Nakama  
First Assistant

Research 808-587-0666  
Revisor 808-587-0670  
Fax 808-587-0681



LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU  
State of Hawaii  
State Capitol, Room 446  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

## Written Comments

### **HB1814, HD1 RELATING TO CONDOMINIUMS**

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi, Director  
Legislative Reference Bureau

Presented to the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 9:31 a.m.  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Chair Keohokalole and Members of the Committee:

Good morning, Chair Keohokalole and members of the Committee. My name is Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi, and I am the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau (Bureau). Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written **comments** on H.B. No. 1814, H.D. 1, Relating to Condominiums.

The purpose of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Bureau to study and submit a report on the approaches employed by California, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, Nevada, and other relevant jurisdictions regarding the following condominium subjects:
  - (A) A condominium ombudsman or similar position to specifically oversee condominiums;
  - (B) Required licenses for individuals involved in the management of condominiums;
  - (C) The availability of dedicated alternate dispute resolution or similar programs that are specifically for the prevention or resolution of

condominium-related disputes and are separate from alternate dispute resolution programs available for other disputes;

- (D) Governmental regulation and enforcement of condominium operations and governance that are separate from an ombudsman;
  - (E) Requirements for owner education at the point of sale of a unit; and
  - (F) Requirements for owner access to condominium documents;
- (2) Require that, to the extent feasible, each subject shall include:
- (A) Descriptive information detailing the approach of each jurisdiction;
  - (B) Identified strengths and weaknesses of each particular approach; and
  - (C) Identified best practices in the jurisdiction;
- (3) Require the Bureau to submit its report to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2026;
- (4) Appropriate an unspecified sum of moneys from the general fund for the Bureau to conduct the study;
- (5) Authorize the Bureau to contract the services of a consultant with the funds appropriated;
- (6) Exempt the contracting of services under the measure from Chapter 103D, Hawaii Revised Statutes (the Hawaii Public Procurement Code); and
- (7) Extend the deadline for the Condominium Property Regime Task Force's final report and termination date to June 30, 2026.

The Bureau takes no position on this measure but submits the following comments for your consideration.

If adequate funding is provided for the contracting of services to perform the study, the services of a competent contractor are available, the scope of the measure is not amended, and the exemption from the Hawaii Public Procurement Code remains in the place, then the Bureau believes the study required of the Bureau should be manageable, and the Bureau should be able to submit the required report to the Legislature by the measure's deadline. The foregoing is subject to the caveat that the Bureau's interim workload is not adversely impacted by too many additional responsibilities, such as conducting other studies, writing or finalizing other reports, drafting legislation, or any combination of these responsibilities for the

Legislature or for other state agencies, task forces, or working groups that may be requested or required of the Bureau under other legislative measures.

The Bureau also notes that the term "*alternate* dispute resolution," which appears on page 2, lines 8-9 and 11-12 of the measure, should be corrected to read "*alternative* dispute resolution."

Thank you again for your consideration.



P.O. Box 976  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96808

March 16, 2024

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair

Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

Re: **SUPPORT FOR HB 1814 HD1**

Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Time: 9:31am

Place: State Capitol Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Dear Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Fukunaga and Committee Members:

CAI supports HB 1814 HD1. It should be passed because it reflects the unanimous recommendation of the Condominium Property Regime Task Force. It also enables the Task Force to continue in effect.

Per Act 189 (2023), the Task Force was tasked to:

(1) Examine and evaluate issues regarding condominium property regimes governed by chapter 514B, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and conduct an assessment of the alternative dispute resolution systems that have been established by the legislature;

(2) Investigate whether additional duties and fiduciary responsibilities should be placed on members of the boards of directors of condominium property regimes; and

(3) Develop any legislation necessary to effectuate the purposes of this subsection.

As a member of the Condominium Property Regime Task Force, I have heard extensive testimonies from condominium unit owners and industry professionals. From these testimonies it is evident that the current condominium alternative dispute resolution system has not addressed or settled the concerns of the unit owners and residents.



The study to be conducted by the Legislative Reference Bureau ("LRB") will provide objective data to the committee. Objective data will be instrumental in enabling the committee to formulate recommendations and propose changes to legislation modeled after objective data and what has been proven effective in other states.

The Community Associations Institute (CAI) provides information, education and resources to the homeowner volunteers who govern communities and the professionals who support them. Our mission is to inspire professionalism, effective leadership, and responsible citizenship – ideals reflected in associations that many call home. CAI strongly supports HB 1814, HD1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Elaine Panlilio  
CAI Legislative Action Committee, Vice Chair

**The Senate  
The Thirty-Second Legislature  
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Wednesday, March 20, 2024  
9:31 a.m.**

To: Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Re: HB 1814 HD 1, Relating to Condominiums

Aloha Chair Keohokalole, Vice-Chair Fukunaga, and Members of the Committee,

I am Lila Mower, president of Kokua Council, one of Hawaii’s oldest advocacy groups which has continuously served our State since 1972. I also serve on the board of the Hawaii Alliance for Retired Americans, with a local membership of over 20,000 retirees. And I am the leader of a coalition of hundreds of property owners, mostly seniors, who own and/or reside in associations throughout Hawaii and served as an officer on three condominium associations’ boards.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on **HB 1814 HD 1**, adding to concerns addressed when you heard the similar measure, SB 2726.

As I have disclosed earlier, I was selected to participate on the Condominium Property Regime Task Force and attended all four meetings in 2023. It was my hope that the Task Force’s work would be impactful because the State’s housing goals magnify the importance of improving condominium association governance and enhancing community harmony through education.

A home is, for most people, the most significant asset they have, and protecting the value of that asset and mitigating and resolving disputes over that asset should be an important policy goal.

But the CPR Task Force decision to delegate the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) to *“study and submit a report on the approaches employed by certain other states...no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2026,”* only defers action, shelving urgently needed improvements, and replaces them with studies, that even when completed, may be unheeded, as were previous studies performed by the LRB<sup>1,2</sup> and the Real Estate Commission (REC).<sup>3</sup>

In prior legislative sessions, mediation and arbitration were promoted as inexpensive avenues to dispute resolution, however, owners’ experiences contradict that assertion. The cost of mediation and arbitration, even when subsidized, is beyond the means of many condo owners

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://lrb.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/1989\\_CondominiumGovernance.pdf](https://lrb.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/1989_CondominiumGovernance.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://lrb.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/1996\\_FightingBattlesInModernAmericanCastles.pdf](https://lrb.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/1996_FightingBattlesInModernAmericanCastles.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Condominium Dispute Resolution: Philosophical Considerations and Structural Alternatives – An Issues Paper for the Hawaii Real Estate Commission, by Gregory K. Tanaka (January 1991).

already burdened with increased insurance costs, increased maintenance fees, special assessments, and increased property taxes.

Mediation case summaries in the Real Estate Commission publication, the *Hawaii Condominium Bulletin*,<sup>4,5,6</sup> reveal that since September 2015 and updated to December 2023, **a large majority of the mediation cases reported, nearly 80%, were initiated by owners against their association and/or board.**

Additionally, only 35.505% of these cases were mediated to an agreement, leaving **more than 3 out of every 5 mediation cases unresolved or withdrawn**, a metric that disputes unsubstantiated claims that “mediations are successful.” Please refer to Exhibit A.

Of the cases that reached an agreement, many of those which were settled in favor of owners were allegedly disregarded, lacking enforcement.

Many of Hawaii’s condominium owners urgently need relief from expenses rising beyond our control, and rather than looking at merely relieving the symptoms (e.g., rising insurance premiums), robust efforts to address the problems that cause these symptoms should be made.

The unchecked power of association boards and the vulnerability of association owners to abusive practices is substantiated by reports from the insurance industry that nationally, Hawaii has the most Directors-and-Officers-Insurance-claims (D&O claims) and among the highest-insurance-settlements,<sup>7,8</sup> despite Hawaii having only a small fraction of homeowners’ associations of more populous states like Florida, California, and New York.

Rather than owners retaining attorneys as their only recourse in their disputes to assert or defend their own rights against their associations or boards, proposals for an Ombudsman’s Office was initiated by Kokua Council, SB 3205 (companion, HB 2680) and SB 3206 (companion, HB 2681), in the belief that justice that is availed to only those who can afford justice, is not justice.

Kokua Council’s proposals also provide alternatives to existing ADR mechanisms and include provisions requiring the education and certification of directors and the individuals who serve as community association managers.

SB 3205 was deferred by your committee, perhaps influenced by misinformation erroneously repeating that this proposal and the other ombudsman proposals attempts to circumvent Constitutional rights and prevent access to the Courts.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://cca.hawaii.gov/reb/hawaii-condominium-bulletin-2011-2015/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://cca.hawaii.gov/reb/hawaii-condominium-bulletin-2016-2020/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://cca.hawaii.gov/reb/hawaii-condominium-bulletin-2021-2025/>

<sup>7</sup>ThinkTech “Condo Insider” program, “How Condo Disputes Can Increase Your Maintenance Fees,” September 19, 2019

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wOM10cgYS0&t=353s>

This misinformation is documented in the excerpts of testimonies opposing SB 3205,<sup>9</sup> especially the last quotation, found in dozens of boilerplate opposition testimony. (Please note that one of the following quotations came from the Chair of the CPR Task Force who has long opposed an ombudsman’s office to aid homeowners.):

- *“The proposed Bill seems to take away constitutional rights of parties by denying any appeal. It is my understanding that the Hawaii Supreme Court has previously ruled that the relationship between an owner and the association is contractual in nature and cannot be impaired by legislation or the denial of the court system.”*
- *“...SB 3205 is based on a faulty premise, embodies an approach that has been repeatedly rejected, and is constitutionally infirm...LRB data will be useful to facilitate the development of policy proposals that remain within constitutional limits.”*
- *“this bill is an extremely bad bill. It will mandate that associations participate in investigations and contested case hearings before an ombudsman, whose decisions are binding, with a limited right to a trial de novo. This bill will deprive condominiums with full access to the Hawaii courts and deprive them of due process. In all likelihood, some aspects of the bill are unconstitutional... Any denial of access to the Hawaii courts is likely unconstitutional.”*

However, misstatements and mischaracterizations, no matter how often they are repeated, cannot alter the truth, that **access to the Courts is upheld**, as proven by this excerpt from SB 3205 (pages 63 to 64 in the pdf version):

“SECTION 19. Section 514B-163, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

**"[~~§~~514B-163] Trial de novo and appeal.** (a) The submission of any dispute to ~~[an arbitration under section 514B-162]~~ the ombudsman's office shall in no way limit or abridge the right of any party to a trial de novo.

(b) Written demand for a trial de novo by any party desiring a trial de novo shall be made upon the other parties within ~~[ten]~~ sixty days after service of the ~~[arbitration award]~~ final decision by the ombudsman or the ombudsman's office upon all parties and the trial de novo shall be filed in circuit court within ~~[thirty]~~ ninety days of the written demand. Failure to meet these deadlines shall preclude a party from demanding a trial de novo.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2024/bills/SB3205\\_.PDF](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2024/bills/SB3205_.PDF)



~~[(c) The award of arbitration shall not be made known to the trier of fact at a trial de novo.~~

~~(d)~~ (c) In any trial de novo demanded under this section, if the party demanding a trial de novo does not prevail at trial, the party demanding the trial de novo shall be charged with all reasonable costs, expenses, and attorneys' fees of the trial. When there is more than one party on one or both sides of an action, or more than one issue in dispute, the court shall allocate its award of costs, expenses, and attorneys' fees among the prevailing parties and tax ~~such~~ the fees against those nonprevailing parties who demanded a trial de novo in accordance with the principles of equity."

An Ombudsman's Office as proposed by Kokua Council can address long overdue improvements to condominium governance. The proposed legislation would create a self-funded office with no financial burden to taxpayers to review condominium (and HOA) owners complaints concerning violations of condominium laws and the association's governing documents by the association's board of directors, officers, professional managers, and owners.

In Connecticut, Attorney General Richard Blumenthal pressed for a condo ombudsman<sup>10</sup>:

"Blumenthal said his office has received hundreds of grievances from condo owners over the past year involving disputes with condo associations.

"A condominium ombudsman would provide help to outmatched, overwhelmed unit owners who are fighting for their basic rights under our condominium laws," Blumenthal said. "Many of the complaints received by my office concern failures by association boards of directors to follow basic governance principles such as adopting an annual budget with notice to the unit owners, holding fair elections for the board of directors, providing key financial information about the association, and fairly imposing association fines."

"Blumenthal is urging creation of a self-funded state commission to be paid for by a \$4 per unit annual assessment on condominium associations in the state. There are approximately 240,000 condominium units in Connecticut so the \$4 charge will yield \$960,000."

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/blumenthal-presses-for-condo-ombudsman>

Although only a few states have condo or HOA ombudsman offices, the lack of offices belies the need. In conversations with colleagues nationwide, California, Georgia, and Washington states they have had measures drafted to address this need.

But, as we condo and HOA advocates have noted, the association trade industry has a disproportionate influence on legislation. Please see Exhibit B, copied from this site, <https://nevadacurrent.com/2023/10/30/hoa-regulators-captive-to-deep-pockets-of-developers-property-management-industry-say-critics/>.

“Hawaii was the first state to enact a statute for the creation of horizontal property regimes.”<sup>11</sup>

We should not be among the last to improve condominium association governance while waiting for studies that will only replicate the findings of previous LRB and REC studies.

Instead, **Hawaii should be the first in the nation to create livable and fair condominium statutes.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit these comments.

---

<sup>11</sup> *State Savings and Loan Ass'n v. Kauaian Development Co., Inc.*, 50 Haw. 540, 546 n. 8, 445 P.2d 109, 115 n. 8 (1968)

**EXHIBIT A**  
**TALLY OF MEDIATION CASES REPORTED IN HAWAII CONDOMINIUM BULLETIN**  
**SINCE JULY, 2015 INCEPTION OF CETF FUNDED EVALUATIVE MEDIATION PROGRAM**

CONDO EDUCATION TRUST FUND SUBSIDIZED MEDIATION CASES											
HI Condo Bulletin	AOAO/BOD V	OWNER V	OWNER V	OWNER V	TOTAL	mediated	mediated	assn did not	owner did not	resolution	elevated
ISSUE MONTH	OWNER	AOAO/BOD	OWNER	CAM	CASES	to agreemnt	w/o agreemnt	mediate*	mediate**	outside medtr	to arbitration
December-23	5	13			18	8	6		1		1
September-23	0	8			8	3	4				1
June-23	4	10			14	4	5	1.5	3.5		
March-23	3	15			18	1	14		2	1	
December-22	3	8			11	1	7	0.5	2.5		
September-22	2	4			6	3	1	0.5	0.5	1	
June-22	5	14			19	4.5	10.5			4	
March-22	2	15			17	8	4			4	1
December-21	1	8			9	3	4			2	
September-21	3	13			16	8	5			3	
June-21	5	12			17	8	5	2		2	
March-21	1	9			10	4	3		2	1	
December-20	5	15			20	7	12		1		
September-20	2	4			6	2	3	0.5	0.5		
June-20	1	2			3	3	0		.		
March-20	3	13			16	5	9		1	1	
December-19	2	13		1	16	5	6		2	3	
September-19	3	8			11	6	4			1	
June-19	0	10			10	5	3	0.5	1.5		
March-19	2	13			15	7	4	1	1	2	
December-18	1	2			3	0	3				
September-18	3	7			10	4	2	1.5	1.5	1	
June-18	1	4.5	0.5		6	2	3	1			
March-18	5	5	1		11	3	3	1.5	3.5		
December-17	3	13			16	5	6	3	2		
September-17	1	10			11	3	5	2	1		
June-17	0	6			6	3	3				
March-17	2	4			6	4	2				
December-16	2	6			8	2	4	2			
September-16	2	8			10	2	5	1	2		
June-16	1	3	1		5	3	0	0.5	1.5		
March-16	2	10			12	3	2	1.5	5.5		
December-15	2	7			9	3	2	3	1		
September-15	0	2	1		3	1	1	1			
total cases	77	294.5	3.5	1	376	133.5	150.5	24.5	36.5	26	3
total by percent	20.479%	78.324%	0.931%	0.266%	100.000%	35.505%	40.027%	6.516%	9.707%	6.915%	0.798%
*association declined, refused, nonresponsive, or withdrew											
**owner declined, refused, nonresponsive, or withdrew											
*based on interpretation of comments											



GOVERNMENT

HOUSING

LEGISLATURE

## HOA regulators captive to deep pockets of developers, property management industry, say critics

BY: **DANA GENTRY** - OCTOBER 30, 2023 5:18 AM



 Most homeowners are oblivious to the goings on in their HOAs and the complex laws that govern them. (Photo: Ronda Churchill/Nevada Current)

The state agency charged with regulating homeowners' associations is a smokescreen, designed to do the bidding of the multi-million dollar industry it oversees, at the expense of homeowners subject to HOA control, according to critics.

More than half a million Nevadans live in properties subject to homeowners' associations. Wielding powers generally reserved for government tribunals, HOAs can assess fines, deny property rights, and even foreclose.

But with the exception of seeking occasional architectural reviews, most homeowners are oblivious to the goings on in their HOAs and the complex laws that govern them.

“No one reads the CCRs,” Ken Richardson, a former staff member of the state’s HOA Ombudsman’s office, says of the Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions that govern homeowners in HOAs.

“It’s apathy,” says Centennial Hills homeowner Sam Covelli, who admits he ignored his HOA for years. “That seems to be common. People don’t have time to go to these meetings, and there’s really something wrong on the regulatory side.”

Covelli, a retired state corrections officer, has been around long enough to remember how state regulators turned a blind eye to a [scandal](#) involving control of local HOAs. An FBI investigation resulted in the largest political corruption case in Southern Nevada history – marked by the pre-trial suicides of four defendants and multiple convictions of co-conspirators – HOA officers, attorneys, and retired police.

Covelli and others contend little has changed, and that industry insiders are embedded in the regulatory landscape. He says a task force [created](#) by the 2019 Legislature was prematurely killed for fear it would lead to exposure of the system’s flaws.

The task force, the brainchild of former Sen. Joyce Woodhouse, met twice in 2020 and was disbanded. It has not met in more than three years. Minutes from its second and final meeting in September 2020 have never been posted, presumably for lack of a subsequent meeting where they could be approved.

Woodhouse declined to comment.

“It was like, ‘well, we’re kind of done for now,’ and that was it,” recalls Richardson, a member of the task force during its brief existence. “I thought when the task force was created that it would be more of an ongoing body, organized to review and recommend the enactment of legislation or regulations that would be helpful to homeowners in HOAs. I did expect that it would be much more involved than it actually turned out to be.”

A spokeswoman for the Nevada Real Estate Division (NRED) says the legislation creating the task force was permissive. It allowed but did not require the director of the state’s Business and Industry Division to establish a task force and meet when needed.

“Ultimately, the pandemic led the Real Estate Division to prioritize it’s (sic) work after returning to in-person operations due to staffing shortages, reduced budgets, backlogs, etc.,” spokeswoman Teri Williams said via email. She says subsequent bills involving HOAs have been “vetted during the legislative process,” and cites “a lot of legislator engagement related to HOA issues and ongoing discussions.”

Nevada’s legislature meets every two years for 120 days, and is often hard-pressed to complete its business. Complex issues, such as HOA laws, are sometimes given short shrift.

“It is in the nature of a gubernatorial transition and a short legislative session that there is just not the time to do that kind of deep dive now, but we can come back next session with ideas on how we can better enforce these,” then-Business and Industry Director Michael Brown told lawmakers in 2019 of the proposed task force’s function.

“These are very complex issues. And they take some time to study and sort out,” observes Ferguston. “And of course, they’re written in legalese that often is subject to interpretation. Therefore, you need to ask, what does this actually mean? So I think the task force could be beneficial in that way.”

Covelli, a Las Vegas homeowner, points to a 2023 [bill](#) that increased the fine for filing a “false or vexatious complaint” from \$1,000 to \$10,000 – an amount critics say is designed to deter complaints. It also allows an HOA to ban a homeowner from serving on its board for up to 10 years for filing a vexatious, defamatory, or false complaint with the state.

“It would have had such a chilling effect on homeowners that are already on the short end of the stick in this whole process,” says Covelli.

The bill [would have allowed](#) HOAs to use community funds to recover compensatory damages, attorneys fees, and costs from a person who takes “retaliatory action” against a board, as determined by NRED. The provision was eliminated from the final version, which was signed into law by Gov. Joe Lombardo.

Williams, the state’s Real Estate Division spokeswoman, notes the division has “conducted regulation workshops during which stakeholders are brought to the table to address pertinent issues.”

NRED's website indicates the division held one workshop in 2020, none in 2021, three in 2022 and none this year.

### **'The appointments probably could have been broadened'**

Southern Highlands homeowner Mike Kosor, a vehement critic of the state's regulatory scheme, says the workshops are a ruse designed to further the goals of a cadre of community association management companies and attorneys, and generally result in anti-homeowner regulations, such as a 2022 workshop-prompted change that prohibits HOA board members from acting without the consent of the board.

"What is the definition of 'act'? If I want to hold a town hall meeting for my constituents, I have to get approval from the board before I can do so or it's a fiduciary violation," says Kosor. "It's silencing the minority."

Kosor has long been at odds with Southern Highland's developer Garry Goett over Goett's refusal to turn over the board to homeowners. Goett sued Kosor for defamation over comments Kosor made in materials disseminated to homeowners. Kosor filed a countersuit alleging Goett was trying to chill his right to free speech.

The Nevada Supreme Court [agreed](#) with Kosor. Justice Kris Pickering wrote that Kosor's statements were intended to "drive civic engagement" among his neighbors.

The Southern Highlands Community Association employs and shares an address with Goett's Olympia Management Services. The five-member HOA board is controlled by three developer-appointed members, a balance of power that would shift to homeowners if Goett relinquished control. Southern Highland's development agreement calls for the developer to transfer control to homeowners after selling 75% of the community's properties, a threshold Kosor contends has been reached.

In 2015, lawmakers increased the previous threshold for transferring control from 75%, the national standard, to 90%, prolonging developer control, sometimes at the expense of homeowners.

The increased threshold is one of several issues Kosor says could be addressed by the task force, if it existed.

“The Task Force process holds value if the discussion results in a conclusion, as the Legislature intended,” says Kosor, who says the expectation was the task force would hear concerns, and determine whether to recommend legislative action, regulatory change, more education, or embrace the status quo.

Kosor has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on legal battles he says could have been avoided by effective regulation.

“The task force’s role was to get the stakeholders together and discuss potential changes to the laws and regulations,” says Kosor. “For instance, the statute is unclear as to whether HOAs are required to seek competitive bids, and that’s never been addressed.”

But NRED administrator Sharath Chandra, who declined to be interviewed for this story, said in response to written questions the task force “was not meant to represent the State’s HOA members.”

The law specifies the task force have a member from the Real Estate Division, the Ombudsman’s office, the Attorney General’s office, and the HOA industry, to be appointed by the director of Business and Industry, who serves as chair.

“The appointments probably could have been broadened to include homeowners who maybe don’t have quite the same perspective, but nevertheless, have something to contribute to the issues that they face in their own communities,” says Ferguson, who served as a training officer for the HOA Ombudsman.

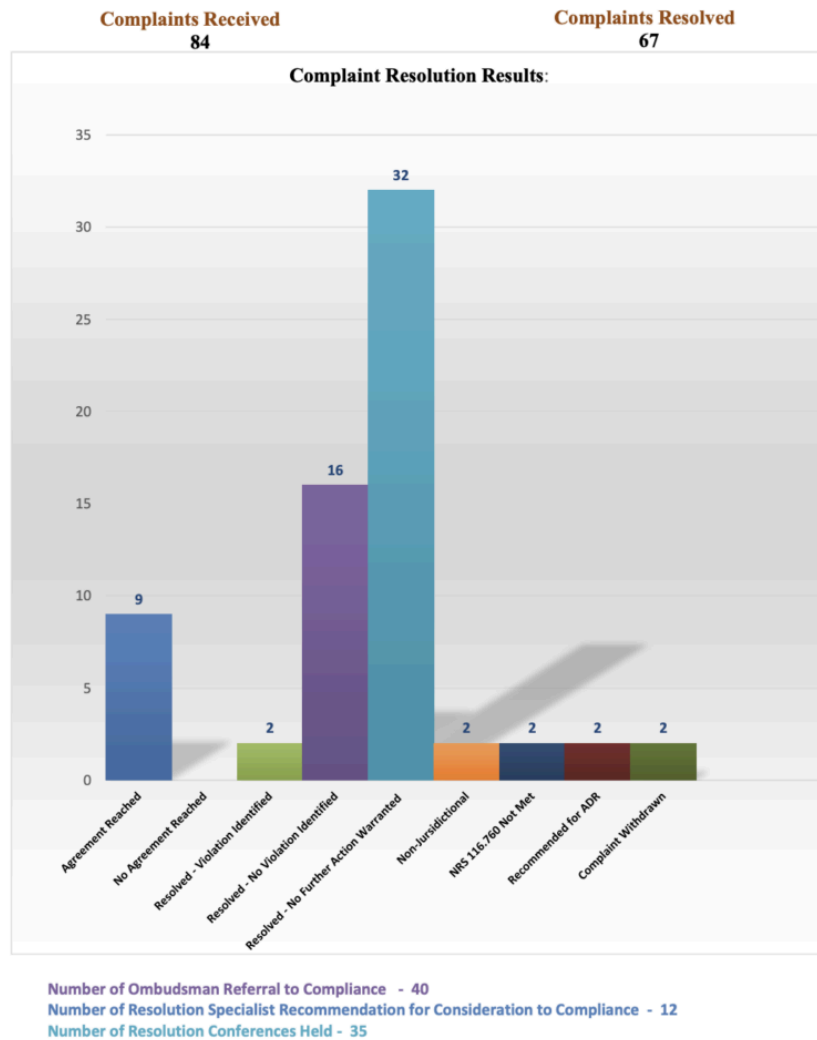
Chandra notes the division’s seven-member HOA commission, which is appointed by the governor, meets regularly, and “acts in an advisory capacity to the Division, adopts regulations, and conducts disciplinary hearings.” Four members are industry representatives, including a lawyer, accountant and developer. Three members must own property governed by HOAs.

Kosor notes the Attorney General’s office serves not only as prosecutor before the commission, but also provides its legal advice.

“Why would I want to take any complaint before the Commission under that scheme?” asks Kosor, adding the complaint process involves a maze of red tape, and the majority of complaints are dismissed for lack of evidence, with no direction from NRED on what’s missing. The division provides no option for appeal other than legal action.



The state's report for fiscal year



(Graph from Nevada Real Estate Division Ombudsman Report)

2022/2023 through April of this year says of 84 complaints received about HOAs, NRED identified violations in two cases, making them eligible for a determination from the state's HOA commission.

Kosor says the task force, by holding regular meetings, and inviting participation from homeowners, could have pre-empted complaints, and prevented homeowners from having no recourse but to sue their HOAs.

NRED administrator Chandra declined to say whether he has suggested that Business and Industry Director Terry Reynolds reconvene the task force.

“While the task force is currently dormant, engagement regarding HOA matters continue to be addressed,” says Williams, the division’s spokeswoman. “The director and the division retain the authority to reconstitute the task force at any time.”



**REPUBLICSH**

*Our stories may be republished online or in print under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. We ask that you edit only for style or to shorten, provide proper attribution and link to our web site. AP and Getty images may not be republished. Please see our republishing guidelines for use of any other photos and graphics.*

---



**DANA GENTRY**  

Dana Gentry is a native Las Vegas and award-winning investigative journalist. She is a graduate of Bishop Gorman High School and holds a Bachelor's degree in Communications from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**MORE FROM AUTHOR**

---

## RELATED NEWS



**Bill designed to chill homeowner criticism of HOAs,...**

BY **DANA GENTRY**

April 11, 2023



**Some states protect Section 8 renters, but...**

BY **ROBBIE SEQUEIRA**

July 28, 2023

## POLICY, POLITICS AND COMMENTARY

**DEMOCRACY TOOLKIT**





1001 Bishop Street | Suite 625 | Honolulu, HI 96813-2830  
1-866-295-7282 | Fax: 808-536-2882  
aarp.org/hi | [aarphi@aarp.org](mailto:aarphi@aarp.org) | [twitter.com/AARPHawaii](https://twitter.com/AARPHawaii)  
[facebook.com/AARPHawaii](https://facebook.com/AARPHawaii)

**The State Legislature**  
**The Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection**  
**Wednesday, March 20, 2024**  
**Conference Room 229, 9:31 AM**

TO: The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director  
RE: Strong Support for H.B.1814 HD1, Relating to Condominiums

Aloha Chair Keohokalole and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social impact organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 140,000 in Hawai'i. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families. **AARP strongly supports HB 1814, HD1 which requires the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study as recommended by the condominium property regime task force established pursuant to Act 189, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023.**

As a member of the condominium property regime task force, I heard from various stakeholders, including several residents, industry professionals and the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. The task forces also received extensive comments, testimony and materials representing diverse perspectives. It is clear the current condominium dispute resolution process and regulatory regime have not effectively address long standing concerns of residents. The study requested of the Legislative Reference Bureau will provide the task force with critical data and best practices.

AARP believes it is important to protect the informed ability of residents to participate meaningfully and affect decision-making in common interest developments (CIDs). Additionally, we believe Hawai'i should have procedures to help ensure residents' rights and protect their home equity during disputes with condominium boards or management. Providing the task force with critical best practices from other jurisdictions will increase the task force's ability to recommend meaningful changes.

Therefore, AARP stands in **strong support of HB 1814, HD1.**

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 6:32:25 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Richard Emery	Testifying for Hawaii First Realty LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT. This is an opportunity to evaluate how other states address condominium management. The issues are the same. As the federal liaison for CAI in Hawaii, there is too much fake news and exaageration in Hawaii. Time to get the facts.

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 8:49:25 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Testifying for Palehua Townhouse	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our association supports HB1814. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr. President

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 3:57:25 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Idor Harris	Testifying for Honolulu Tower AOA	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honolulu Tower is a 396 unit condominium built in 1982, located at Beretania and Maunakea Streets. At its meeting on February 5, 2024, the Honolulu Tower Association of Apartment Owners Board of Directors voted unanimously to support HB1814.

Every year there are a hodgepodge of bills which seek to make changes to Section 514B. Some contradict others. HB1814 would be a comprehensive study allowing the legislature to see how condos are managed in other states, what works and what does not.

Idor Harris

Resident Manager

The Senate  
The Thirty-Second Legislature  
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Wednesday March 20, 2024  
9:31 a.m.  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair  
Notice of Hearing  
March 20, 2024  
Conference Room 229

To: Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair

Aloha Chair Keohokalole, Vice-Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee

Requires the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on how certain other states approach the following subjects as they relate to condominiums: ombudsman programs, licensing for management, alternative dispute resolution, governmental regulation, owner education, and owner access to documents. Makes an appropriation. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. (SD1)”

**RE: Testimony in support HB 1814 HD1**

I kindly request you to proceed with the establishment of a Condominium Ombudsman as discussed in the HB 2524 HD 1 on 3/14/2024. This matter was brought before the Committee on Government Operations, under the leadership of Chair Senator Angus L. K. McKelvey.

*Requires the Real Estate Commission (Commission) to receive and investigate complaints by condominium unit owners against associations that are subject to condominium laws. Requires the Ombudsman to issue findings within an unspecified number of days after a complaint is filed with the Ombudsman against the Commission regarding the Commission's foregoing duties. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)*

During the oral discussions of HB 2524 HD1, Senator San Buenaventura inquired from the representative of the Ombudsman Office about the possibility of incorporating a Condominium Ombudsman into the State Ombudsman's office. The representative affirmed this could be done. For more details, please listen to the recorded testimony from 3/14/2024. At present, the State Ombudsman Office includes a long-term care Ombudsman specializing in health matters.

The grievances from owners regarding the administration of condominium communities have significantly increased since Gregory K. Tanaka presented a written report titled "Condominium Dispute Resolution". The situations described by Mr.

Tanaka are still occurring today, but on a much larger scale. The need for a Condominium Ombudsman is more pressing today than ever before. Numerous proposals for the establishment of an ombudsman have been put forward repeatedly in the past.

Back in January 1991, Gregory K. Tanaka presented a report named "Condominium Dispute Resolution – Philosophical Considerations and Structural Alternatives" to the Real Estate Commission. Certain sections of Tanaka's report were instrumental in shaping HRS 514B. In this report, Tanaka was specifically assigned the responsibility of proposing alternative methods for resolving disputes.

Attached, please find the revised flow chart proposed by Tanaka in 1991, which was an update to the one used in 1990. Notably, this revised version includes the addition of a DCCA Ombudsman. Considering that the current alternative dispute resolution method has been the same since 1990 and has shown to be ineffective in resolving disputes, it is crucial to consider adopting a flow chart similar to Tanaka's. This is especially important given the negative impact of non-judicial foreclosures on the dispute resolution process.

The following pages showcase the Flow Chart from 1990, which is still in use today. Furthermore, an accelerated non-judicial foreclosure process has been integrated into the HRS 514B Condominium Law and is now represented in this flow chart.

I sincerely hope that the intention behind proposing another study is not to repeat past unsuccessful efforts to address the condominium ombudsman issue, or to delay taking necessary action by initiating more studies.

Thank-you,  
Lourdes Scheibert  
Condominium Owner

---

An Issues Paper for the Hawaii Real Estate Commission  
By Gregory K. Tanaka January 1991  
Introduction.

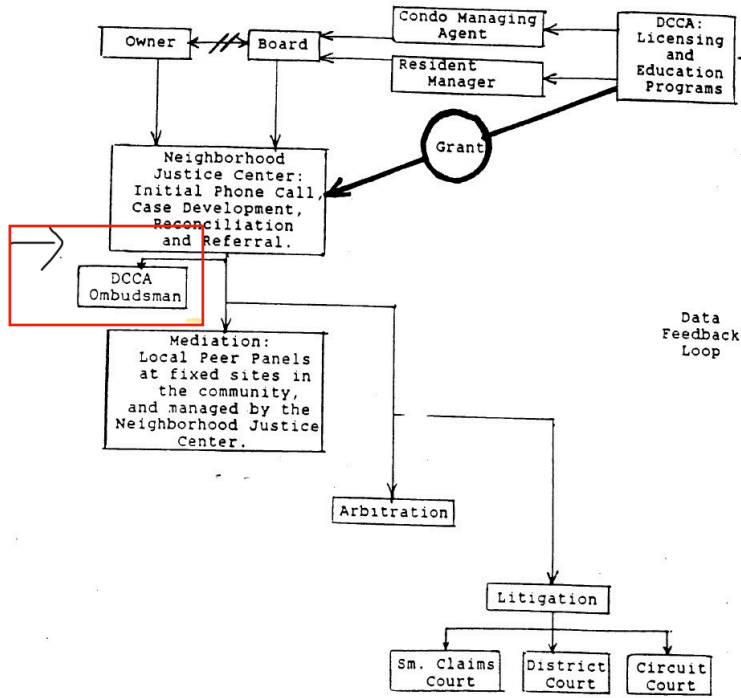
Quote: *"The aim of this paper is to identify and discuss alternative methods for condominium dispute resolution.*

*Arising primarily between the condominium owner and the association's board. These disputes have more often than not traveled a very bumpy road with litigation as the only commonly recognized means of settling disputes, there has been a growing need for speedier, less expensive and less traumatic means by which to solve these problems in the local community. The three case studies which appear in Appendix A represent what can happen when simple disputes have nowhere to go but court..."*



Appendix E

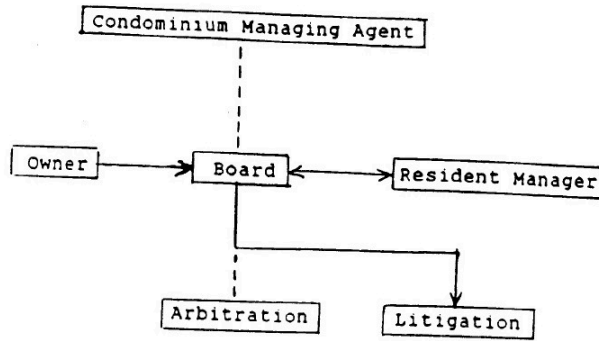
Possible Dispute Resolution Flowchart and Structure  
(by 1992)



Mr. Tanaka's flowchart offers an alternative solution that includes a DCCA Ombudsman. Had the Real Estate Commission supported this alternative and the Legislature taken this route, our communities would be better off.

Appendix D

Present Structure  
for  
Dispute Resolution  
1990



Non judicial foreclosures

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 8:21:29 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Candace Y. Yap	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

AOAO management companies should be stripped of their powers. They should be taking orders from the owners and board members because the association has be fiduciary responsibility to its owners not the tail wagging the dog. AOAO management companies should be held liable for all the sloppy paperwork they are handing off to buyer's agents, owners, etc. The AOAO management companies/board members promise documents to owners and do not deliver. AOAO management companies are creating adversarial conditions between owners and board members as well. State laws need to change where the owner's attorney's fees and costs are born by the AOAO management company/board members. Also, the board members should be held personally accountable at their personal cost and expense not by the monies paid to the management companies from monies collected from the owners for their maintenance fees. This way, board members and AOAO management companies would think twice since it will also cost them personally. Owners should never be retaliated against, which is happening already. The Real Estate Commission should stay in its lane and all complaints against the Real Estate Commission should be filed with the Ombudsman as well as the ability for condo owners to file complaints against AOAO management companies and board members. Board members should also be educated in running the AOAO and be taking continuing education like realtors do. AOAO management companies are not worth a hill of beans. Board members should know about the real estate they are taking responsibility for. Associations should be self-managed to get rid of those clueless management companies just controlling and sucking the monies from the association. Board members should never give up their fiduciary responsibilities to their members, they should just fire the AOAO management company once the tail starts to wag the dog.

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

**HB 1814 HD1**

**Wednesday, March 20, 2024 @ 9:31 AM**

My name is Jeff Sadino, I am a condo owner in Makiki, and I **SUPPORT** this Bill.

The improvement of governance is a journey, not a destination. For too long, we have been standing still or even going backwards on this journey. This incredibly important Bill will get us restarted to learn about the many, many problems that exist in condo governance in Hawai'i and possible solutions to those problems.

I will point out that the Chairperson of the Task Force (widely regarded as a representative of the Trade Industry), in multiple written and oral testimonies this year, has made it a point to highlight that there was a unanimous recommendation to study these issues. Contradicting this, during a CPN Hearing last year, the Chairperson answered a Senator's question by stating "that there exists only an irreducible number of problems in condominium governance (quoted from memory)."

I am encouraged that the trade industry now believes that there are problems in condominium governance that are worth fixing, and that they have itemized them.

I look forward to the trade industry doing something they have not done for decades: to take a leadership role in condo governance; to mobilize their vast financial, human, and national resources; and to stop being unimaginative obstructionists & pointing out all the reasons why we can't make condo living better instead of coming up with solutions to the problems that they have now unanimously agreed **DO** exist.

### **REQUEST 1**

In addition to the 6 subjects this Bill identifies for study, I would request the following subjects also be added:

- 1) Debt Collection Practices
- 2) Election Integrity

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony,

Jeff Sadino

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 6:25:09 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this. We condo owners are being bullied by our associations and their attorneys.  
Mahalo.

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 6:49:13 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Raelene Tenno	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support HB1814

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 12:16:50 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dawn Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support any measure that will demonstrate to legislators options to ease the friction between condo owners and their boards and management companies.

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 3:46:22 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am an owner occupant and board member of a high rise condominium in Honolulu. This bill offers a comprehensive study of condominium law in several states. It will show policy makers in Hawaii what works, what doesn't, and what reforms we might want to implement here. Right now it is like throwing darts at a dart board, with all sorts of bills introduced, some which contradict others, with no holistic view.

Please move this bill forward and remove the defective date.



**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 10:47:16 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Ayson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

## Testimony in Support of HB1814 HD1

**Submitted for:** Commerce and Consumer Protection Hearing, scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2024 at 9:31 AM.

Aloha Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Fukunaga, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gregory Misakian, and I currently serve as 1st Vice President of the Kokua Council, Sub-District 2 Vice Chair of the Waikiki Neighborhood Board, and a Director on my condominium association's Board.

**The Kokua Council**, one of the oldest elder advocacy organizations in Hawaii, proposed four measures last year for better consumer protections for condominium owners, which were introduced as six bills (two which I co-authored, HB178 and HB1501). This year, Lila Mower (President of Kokua Council) and I drafted and proposed numerous additional measures, which were introduced as SB3204, SB3205, and SB3206 (and companion bills HB2701, HB2680, and HB2681).

**The Waikiki Neighborhood Board**, along with Ala Moana-Kakaako, McCully-Moilili, and Makiki-Tantalus Neighborhood Boards, that have significant numbers of condominium associations in their communities, have adopted resolutions to support better consumer protection measures for condominium owners.

**The Keoni Ana AOA**, my condominium association where I am a frequent target for calling out misconduct by Board members and others, has the support of many owners who want to see better consumer protection measures.

**The Public** is concerned, engaged, and has been providing statements and testimonies to support the need for better laws and proper accountability and enforcement for bad acts by association Board members, management companies and their agents, attorneys, and others overseeing condominium associations and HOAs. I am a witness to this at many meetings I attend, and many discussions I have had one-on-one with concerned homeowners.

## **What is Needed**

There is a lot of public support to show the need for better laws, but the support that is needed to get anything accomplished begins with you. And each of you literally hold the future of over 1/3 of the population of Hawaii in your hands. You can choose to help the residents of Hawaii, or do nothing and let the insanity continue. And when I use the word “insanity,” it is not to embellish or grandstand, you simply need to read and watch the news, read and listen to the testimonies each year, and hopefully have taken the time to read and watch testimonies from the Condominium Property Regime Task Force, where I have participated and provided testimonies (some of which I am including in my testimony here).

An Ombudsman’s Office to address condominium association disputes and to enforce HRS 514B statutes is needed now, not in 2026 (when the LRB report would be issued) or beyond. The public and the Governor expected the Condominium Property Regime (CPR) Task Force would do something, and not just meet a few times, waste time, then quickly try to meet their required report deadline by throwing their responsibilities over the wall to another Government branch (with a financial cost yet to be determined).

## **What was Done**

Act 189, signed into law by the Governor last year, gave hope that once and for all our legislators were taking notice. Sadly, the two Task Forces that were established were stacked with the worst possible Committee members, with the exception of one or two. It elicits that well-worn phrase, “are you kidding me.” And having the two Task Forces Chaired by attorneys who oppose better consumer protection measures and who regularly sue condominium owners, is not only unconscionable, it is outrageous.

Nominating and appointing those who openly and regularly “oppose” better condominium related consumer protection measures is a clear disregard for the public’s best interest. It is also an insult to the intelligence of the public as a whole (as if it won’t be noticed). Some may be fearful to speak out, since this seems to be the “island way,” but I am not. You simply need to read (and watch) the abundant

opposition testimony from these Committee members (attorneys and DCCA staff) to see the “documented” evidence of their opposition. Some also openly show disdain for condominium owners in written statements and public comments that they make.

**What is Not Needed**

Our legislators need to be aware of the misinformation campaign, collusion, and conflict of interest, by many in opposition of better consumer protections for condominium owners.

Here are just some who oppose often and with disregard to the concerns and the facts, and some with conflict of interests that should disqualify testimony.

**Richard Emery** - Current Real Estate Commissioner & Vice President Hawaii Affairs, Associa.

**Richard Ekimoto** - Attorney & CAI lobbyist, who sues condominium owners.

**Philip Nerney** - Condominium Property Regime Task Force Chair, CAI Member and Spokesperson, and Attorney who sues condominium owners often.

**Mark McKellar** - Attorney who sues condominium owners often in foreclosure cases.

**Steve Glanstein** - Parliamentarian (should be “unbiased” per his Code of Professional Responsibility).

**Rachel Glanstein** - Parliamentarian (should be “unbiased” per her Code of Professional Responsibility).

**Anne Anderson** - Attorney

**Paul A. Ireland Koftinow** - Attorney representing condominium associations.

**Laurie Sokach** - Management Company Representative

**Numerous Association Board Presidents and Directors** who want to retain their power and will do anything to do so, even providing our legislators with false information and a false narrative.

Many in this group are using **boilerplate cut and paste testimony** with misinformation, very strong language, derogatory comments towards the opposing side in favor of better laws, and without any regard for “individual” opinions. This form of testimony in my opinion is outrageous and should not be allowed, should be

clear and obvious to our legislators, and at a minimum should not be considered in decision making.

What is also not needed is for the Legislature to continue to let certain people misinform openly, which I had to sit and watch on 2/22/24, as I participated in the Finance Committee hearing regarding HB1814 HD1, scheduled at 10:00 AM. The Committee chose to ask questions of Mr. Philip Nerney, who again provided “his” opinion and not facts, and “misinformed” the Committee numerous times. One glaring comment he made was that a Condominium Ombudsman would have the final say (i.e., there was no other judicial path in the courts to resolve an issue, if a party or both parties did not accept the Ombudsman’s Office findings). This is not only false, but Mr. Nerney has been informed of this numerous times, and on the record. Mr. Nerney also trivialized condominium owners’ concerns, what the issues really are, and used language that was disrespectful to condominium owners throughout Hawaii. In my opinion and the opinion of many others, he has no place on a Task Force meant to help condominium owners. Our legislators on Committees who are giving him the floor to spread more misinformation, are enabling this, and if not stopped are endorsing this. Some are also receiving campaign contributions from him, which is not only concerning, but I believe should be investigated based on what I am reporting.

**Here is a snapshot of some campaign contributions:**

Candidate	Contributor	Contributor					
Name	Type	Name	Date	Amount	Aggregate	Employer	Occupation
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	12/22/2023	\$250.00	\$250.00		
McKelvey, Angus	Individual	Nerney, Philip	08/23/2023	\$250.00	\$250.00		Attorney
Keohokalole, Jarrett	Individual	Nerney, Philip	07/25/2023	\$250.00	\$250.00		
Bissen, Richard	Individual	Nerney, Philip	08/17/2022	\$750.00	\$1,000.00	Philip S. Nerney, LLLC	Attorney

Candidate Name	Contributor Type	Contributor Name	Date	Amount	Aggregate	Employer	Occupation
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	07/08/2022	\$2,000.00	\$4,000.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Bissen, Richard	Individual	Nerney, Philip	07/07/2022	\$250.00	\$250.00	Philip S. Nerney, LLLC	Attorney
Takenouchi, Jenna	Individual	Nerney, Philip	06/03/2022	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	Law Offices of Philip S. Nerney LLC	Attorney
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	12/08/2021	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Rhoads, Karl	Individual	Nerney, Philip	07/29/2021	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney, LLC	Attorney
Takumi, Roy	Individual	Nerney, Philip	03/25/2020	\$150.00	\$650.00		
Cullen, Ty	Individual	NERNEY, PHILIP	11/05/2019	\$250.00	\$400.00		
Rhoads, Karl	Individual	Nerney, Philip	09/18/2019	\$2,000.00	\$2,350.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney, LLC	Attorney
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	05/07/2019	\$250.00	\$500.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Yamane, Ryan	Individual	Nerney, Philip	04/25/2019	\$150.00	\$150.00		
Cullen, Ty	Individual	NERNEY, PHILIP	04/24/2019	\$150.00	\$150.00		
Takumi, Roy	Individual	Nerney, Philip	04/16/2019	\$500.00	\$500.00		
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	01/11/2019	\$250.00	\$250.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney

Candidate Name	Contributor Type	Contributor Name	Date	Amount	Aggregate	Employer	Occupation
Rhoads, Karl	Individual	Nerney, Philip	01/11/2019	\$175.00	\$350.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney, LLC	Attorney
Green, Josh	Individual	Nerney, Philip	07/12/2018	\$500.00	\$500.00		
Fukunaga, Carol	Individual	Nerney, Philip	06/13/2018	\$500.00	\$700.00		
Yamane, Ryan	Individual	Nerney, Philip	04/27/2018	\$150.00	\$150.00		
Cullen, Ty	Individual	NERNEY, PHILIP	04/16/2018	\$150.00	\$150.00		
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	04/12/2018	\$250.00	\$250.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	02/13/2018	\$150.00	\$450.00		
Rhoads, Karl	Individual	Nerney, Philip	11/08/2017	\$175.00	\$175.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney, LLC	Attorney
Fukunaga, Carol	Individual	Nerney, Philip	09/15/2017	\$200.00	\$200.00		
Keith- Agaran, Gilbert	Individual	NERNEY, PHILIP	01/31/2017	\$250.00	\$250.00	LAW OFFICES OF PHILIP NERNEY	ATTORNEY
Rhoads, Karl	Individual	Nerney, Philip	09/26/2016	\$1,000.00	\$2,150.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney, LLC	Attorney
Rhoads, Karl	Individual	Nerney, Philip	07/02/2016	\$1,000.00	\$1,150.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney, LLC	Attorney
Yamane, Ryan	Individual	Nerney, Philip	04/04/2016	\$50.00	\$150.00		

Candidate Name	Contributor Type	Contributor Name	Date	Amount	Aggregate	Employer	Occupation
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	03/29/2016	\$250.00	\$500.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	02/24/2016	\$150.00	\$300.00		
Rhoads, Karl	Individual	Nerney, Philip	01/20/2016	\$150.00	\$150.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney, LLC	Attorney
Keith-Agaran, Gilbert	Individual	NERNEY, PHILIP	01/15/2016	\$150.00	\$300.00	LAW OFFICES OF PHILIP NERNEY	ATTORNEY
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	11/03/2015	\$100.00	\$250.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	03/20/2015	\$150.00	\$150.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	02/20/2015	\$150.00	\$150.00		
Keith-Agaran, Gilbert	Individual	NERNEY, PHILIP	01/08/2015	\$150.00	\$150.00	LAW OFFICES OF PHILIP NERNEY	ATTORNEY
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	06/20/2014	\$150.00	\$200.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Rhoads, Karl	Other Entity	Law Offices of Philip S Nerney LLLC	05/05/2014	\$150.00	\$150.00		
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	12/18/2013	\$500.00	\$650.00		



Candidate Name	Contributor Type	Contributor Name	Date	Amount	Aggregate	Employer	Occupation
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	03/12/2013	\$50.00	\$150.00		
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	08/22/2012	\$25.00	\$225.00		
Abercrombie, Neil	Other Entity	Law Offices of Philip S Nerney LLLC	06/26/2012	\$300.00	\$300.00		
Kidani, Michelle	Individual	Nerney, Philip	03/01/2012	\$100.00	\$200.00		
Abercrombie, Neil	Individual	Nerney, Philip	08/29/2011	\$300.00	\$300.00		
Pacarro, Franklin Jr.	Individual	Nerney, Philip	03/26/2010	\$250.00	\$250.00		
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	04/17/2009	\$250.00	\$250.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney
Luke, Sylvia	Individual	Nerney, Philip	04/18/2008	\$100.00	\$200.00	Law Offices of Philip Nerney	Attorney

## News Headlines

Here are just a few Civil Beat headlines from 2023 and 2024, to further highlight how bad things are:

*Slam The Brake On Runaway Legal Fees Charged By Condo Boards, January 26, 2024*

*Turkish Coffee Or Universal Khaki? Another Honolulu Condo Dispute Goes to Court, January 24, 2024*

*It Started With A Messy Front Porch. Now This Elderly Woman's Condo Association May Take Her Home, January 16, 2024*

*This Waianae Condo Development Has Lost Hundreds Of Thousands Of Dollars To Embezzlement, October 10, 2023*

*Prominent Honolulu Condo Directors Pay \$600,000 To Settle Retaliation Claim, July 13, 2023*

*Hawaii Property Management Giant Under Scrutiny - Records Indicate that Associa Hawaii has been operating with an inactive license. April 6, 2023*

These headlines are not outliers of the issues happening every day, but are just the ones getting reported. Sadly, there are many more that you never hear about or read about, as homeowners, including many kupuna, are often afraid to fight back and speak out. They unfortunately have nowhere to turn, as you have not provided them with the proper State Office to assist them and ensure there are resolutions without repercussions from unethical Boards, Management Companies, and their representative attorneys (i.e., retaliation, harassment, unwarranted fines and assessments, improper legal actions, and foreclosures).

## Violations of the Laws Our Legislature Enacts

My testimony and others are compelling, and at my association the misconduct and abuse of power is extreme and pervasive, and retaliation is regularly the result of my and others raising concerns. And, as I have previously testified at last year's Condominium Property Regime Task Force meetings, my condominium association is currently being led by a public official, who is a Corporation Counsel attorney for the City and County of Honolulu. Someone who should be upholding the laws of the State of Hawaii, is regularly violating them, most recently locking out my ability to unmute myself and speak at recent Keoni Ana AOA Board meetings via Zoom, a violation of Hawaii Revised Statute 514B-125, section (d).

**SB2726 & HB1814 – Re. the Condominium Property Regime Task Force (Act 189)**  
(Good intentions, but too little, too late, and other reports are available.)

While I support SB2726 and HB1814 and their intentions, the urgency, severity, and frequency of issues impacting condominium owners throughout Hawaii warrants a more urgent and substantive response from our legislators, **and actions that will take effect in 2024.**

**There is no more time to sit around waiting for reports that will only tell us what we already know (and previous reports have told us). The issues and concerns have gotten worse, more prevalent, and with impunity.**

I advise all to read "An Issues Paper for the Hawaii Real Estate Commission," authored by Gregory K. Tanaka, Dated January 1991. The title/subject is, "Condominium Dispute Resolution: Philosophical Considerations and Structural Alternatives." I have forwarded a copy to the Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee, prior to the submission of my testimony. Even back in 1991 it was clear that an Ombudsman was someone that could address the issues and concerns and be cost effective for everyone (reducing court cases and litigation). There are many other reports, and I am happy to forward more to you.

It was clear Hawaii needed an Ombudsman in 1991, and it's clear Hawaii needs one now. Hawaii also needs better laws for condominium owners and the time to act is now, the time for reports was years ago. I urge you all to please listen to the Gregorlys ... Gregory Tanaka, and Gregory Misakian.

The residents of Hawaii simply want a place to go to get "enforcement," of the very laws our legislators introduce, debate, and enact (within Hawaii Revised Statutes 514B and other statutes). The residents of Hawaii also want to be treated fairly, and not extorted for money by predatory Board members, predatory attorneys, and others.

**Excerpts From Testimony I Submitted to the Condominium Property Regime Task Force (Act 189, 2023), for the Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> and Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Task Force meetings.**

**Testimony In Support of:**

- 1) **Condominium Owner's Rights.**
- 2) **The need for a State Ombudsman's Office** to address owner complaints of misconduct and malfeasance by condominium Association Board members, Management Companies and their agents, Site Managers, Resident Managers, General Managers, Attorneys, and others. And to address complaints owners have regarding the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, the Regulated Complaints Industry Office, and others who engage in any improper acts or actions, fail to take complaints, or fail to address concerns or administer proper investigations with fair and equitable resolutions. And to require proper enforcement actions and accountability for misconduct by Board members, Management Companies and their Agents, and others.
- 3) **The need for HRS 514B reforms**, including in the areas of voting rights, Board member qualifications, education and training, Community Manager licensing and/or certification, and numerous other areas identified via the Task Force and past legislative testimony for condominium related bills (and future testimony).
- 4) **The need for a two-sided communication flow of "accurate" information to condominium owners**, and not a one-sided viewpoint tainted with conflict of

interest (i.e., with all of the messaging coming from the condominium trade industry and attorneys who represent Management Companies and Association Boards).

**As I previously stated in my October 27<sup>th</sup> testimony:**

**I am dealing with serious misconduct at my condominium association, and the number of issues and concerns and the abuse of power is literally overwhelming.**

I summarized some of the issues and concerns in my previous testimony, but there are many more, and recently the abuse of power and misconduct from our Board President has gotten much worse. Below are just some of the things that happened at the most recent Keoni Ana AOA Board meeting on November 20, 2023.

- 1) The meeting notice/agenda was never sent to owners via TownSQ/Email, so many owners who do not live in the building were not aware of the Board meeting. Our Board President posted a TownSQ notice at 5:20 PM, just 25 minutes prior to the meeting, and with the wrong start time (6:00 PM noticed, vs, 5:45 PM when the Owner's Forum began). Our Board President has chosen to not properly notice Board meetings, and is disenfranchising the owners from participating in the meetings and in the Owner's Forum.
- 2) The Board President, Daniel Jacob (an attorney and public employee who works for the City and County of Honolulu, Corporation Counsel), took control of the Zoom meeting by locking the option to "unmute." When the first item on the agenda came up, I could not unmute myself to speak and raise an objection to adopt the agenda (as I wanted to motion to add items to the agenda). I also raised my hand and was not recognized. This is a serious abuse of power and is unlawful, and is also retaliation in violation of HRS 514B-191. When I was finally able to speak to give my Treasurers report and raised concerns about what was done, and ask Mr. Jacob to stop muting me, he ignored my concerns, was argumentative, and said he can do whatever he wants. He continued to mute me numerous times when I was speaking or trying to speak during the meeting. He also did this in Executive Session. To highlight just one example and reason why a State Ombudsman is needed, this is it. This is a violation of

HRS 514B-125 (seen further below, with the section highlighted). And to address this one issue alone, do I have to file for a mediation, and then litigate this in court? And how long does the Task Force think this issue might take to resolve? And at what cost financially?

- 3) The meeting agenda was not followed (the Board President skipped agenda items without stating he was doing so, and numerous agenda items were not discussed).
- 4) The Board Packet for the meeting was missing a great deal of information needed for decision making and voting. It was missing previous meeting minutes (regular board meeting and the executive session). Also missing were bids and proposals needed for decision making. In one example no bids/proposals were included for a structural engineering firm and only one proposal was verbally mentioned for a vote. I requested that the vote not be taken, as the Board had no written proposal to review, in addition to not having multiple bids/proposals (and it was verbally stated there was a second one). Our Board President still motioned for a vote and the Board majority approved the engineering firm. I am aware of other misconduct related to this and concerns of kickbacks and other improper actions.
- 5) I motioned for a Budget Committee to be formed (something I had been trying to get the Board to act on since the late summer with no success). I received no 2<sup>nd</sup> from any other Board member. The Board was already non-compliant to our governing documents regarding the budget, and Associa Hawaii had misinformed the owners regarding the Board meeting to discuss the budget (via a USPS mailing they sent). Later in the meeting our Board President motioned to form a Budget Committee (the very thing I motioned for with no 2<sup>nd</sup>). He included names of Board members and said owners could also be part of the Committee. I, the Treasurer of the Association, was excluded from the Committee. The level of retaliation I have received, both as an owner and now as a Board member, is something that no homeowner should ever have to experience.

## §514B-125 Board meetings.

(d) All board meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. **Unless otherwise provided in the declaration or bylaws, a board may permit any meeting to be conducted by any means of communication through which all directors participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting.** A director participating in a meeting by this means is deemed to be present in person at the meeting. If permitted by the board, any unit owner may participate in a meeting conducted by a means of communication through which all participants may simultaneously hear

**Excerpts From ThinkTech Hawaii, Condo Insider, where condominium owners are not invited to express their concerns and opinions.**

There is numerous misinformation and one-sided discussions seen at the many ThinkTech Hawaii Condo Insider videos hosted by those from the condominium trade industry. Some of the most glaring and concerning statements were at the Condo Insider episode dated August 21, 2023, titled “New Act 189 Re Condos and HOAs,” which was hosted by Ms. Jane Sugimura, who is an attorney seen at the Hawaii State Bar Association website as Yuriko J. Sugimura.

**At timestamp 19:28**, Ms. Sugimura misstates Colonel Mark Brown’s case as settling before going to trial, which was not true, as this case settled during trial.

**At timestamp 21:39**, Ms. Sugimura quotes how many mediations there were in a period that was reported by the Real Estate Commission, and states 50% were mediated to some resolution (even though they are confidential, and you can never know if they were truly resolved or successful). What she reported also does not agree with data I have seen.

**At timestamp 22:20**, Ms. Sugimura makes a glaring and concerning statement, that the cases that didn’t settle at mediation didn’t go forward to litigation because the owners didn’t have good cases. As she could never know the details about the mediations or the cases, she could never make this statement. From the many discussions I have had with owners who have concerns and attempted to mediate or did mediate, many could not afford to go forward with litigation, or were concerned

with the risks, including the lengthy process, and possibly having to pay the other sides attorney costs if they don't win their cases.

**At timestamp 23:03**, Ms. Sugimura says:

*“But the good thing that came out of that is, the ones that didn't complete the mediation didn't go any further, so it ended, and I think that's what everybody wants.”*

My first thought was, “did she just say that on the record.” I think the gravity of this statement is clear.

She further elaborates, providing more of her “opinion” with no facts and the opposite of what is generally known (with evidence to support).

She also goes on to directly contradict herself regarding mediations ending without lawsuits and saying there aren't many lawsuits, then goes on to say how the judges are scolding her, and there are so many condominium lawsuits.

**Continuing from timestamp 25:20, at timestamp 25:33, Ms. Sugimura says the most glaring and concerning statements,** *“The judges, let me tell you, the judges get, don't like the cases, they, they hate both sides, don't think you're going to get a sympathetic judge. The minute the judge finds out it's a condo dispute, I mean, I don't know what happens, the horns go up. All of a sudden, they want to rush you off to mediation or arbitration, but anyway, they want you off their docket, they don't want you in their court room, because they think the disputes are stupid and petty. And they don't understand why you have to take up public time and money, to, to have some third party resolve your dispute, you know, for you.”*

If what Ms. Sugimura states is true, that “the Judges want you off their docket” and “the Judges think the disputes are stupid and petty,” then we have a Judiciary problem, if it's not true, we have an attorney problem. Either way we have a problem, and Ms. Sugimura's public statements and misinformation, which are made often, whether in ThinkTech Hawaii Condo Insider videos for the condo trade industry, or in public testimony at the legislature, are of serious concern.



## Self-Governed (A term loosely and incorrectly applied.)

Saying something over and over that is not true will not simply make it true, but this has been the case and continues to be the case with many, including our legislators (who continue to use the term self-governed to define condominium associations). When State legislators enact laws that apply to condominium associations, the “Self” just became the “State” (i.e., State-Governed). But in reality, it’s a bit of both and is more of a Hybrid-Governed society ... until it’s not and devolves into a Board/Abuse of Power-Governed society, which seems to be the case more and more across Hawaii, and at my condominium association, the Keoni Ana AOA.

## Conflict of Interest

To highlight how serious my concerns are, I attended the Hawaii Buildings, Facilities & Property Management Expo on 3/7/24, and attended a seminar presented by Mr. Richard Emery, who is currently on the Real Estate Commission (see below).

**THUR. MARCH 7, 2024**

**T1 FREE:**

**THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF HAWAII’S CONDO LAWS.**

The future of Hawaii’s Condos will cost owners more grief and money. Learn how recently enacted Bills and others proposed in the 2024 Legislature will drastically effect your Condo living and budget.

**THUR. March 7th • 8 am to 8:50 am • Hawaii Suite 1**

**SPEAKER:**

**Richard Emery**

Vice President, Hawaii Affairs

Associa

I sat and watched Mr. Emery make numerous incorrect statements, and then go on to make disparaging and untrue statements and comments regarding legislative bills I co-authored. I spoke at the end of the seminar to correct one of Mr. Emery’s false statements, and asked him to please stop spreading false information regarding Ombudsman Bills.

I am aware that our legislators speak often with Mr. Emery and I've openly stated and will state it again here, that Mr. Emery has a conflict of interest and should not be allowed to be on the Real Estate Commission while working for Associa. He has also showed up at an attorney only mediation meeting where Associa's bad acts were part of the mediation, which opens up many other concerns regarding mediation (as he is not an attorney). He claims to also be a mediator and an "expert" witness, but from my observations the information he is providing is not all factual, and much of it is his opinion and not in the best interest of consumers or condominium owners. Bias and mediations are not meant to live in harmony, and fairness will never be the outcome.

<b>Request for Amendment</b>
------------------------------

The real solution, and the only correct solution, is to have an independent **Ombudsman's Office specifically for Condominium Associations and HOA's**, and our legislators (some who sit on this committee), have chosen to once again not listen to the public. I respectfully ask again that you please amend HB1814 HD1, to ensure that any report from the LRB is completed by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, so the public and our legislators have time to prepare much needed draft legislation in 2025. We cannot wait two more years for a report that the Task Force should have prepared via Act 189.

Mahalo,

Gregory Misakian

**LATE**

**HB-1814-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/19/2024 10:45:51 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/20/2024 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marcia Kimura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

With reservations and concerns, I support this measure:

1. With over a decade of outcry to legislators from condominium owners dissatisfied with current condo "self governance," and victimized by fraud at the hands of boards and industry principals, why has the legislature waited as long, to "study" the feasibility of the ombudsman, current dispute resolution effectiveness, government regulation of condo operations, and other instruments of justice?
2. Given the sociological, economic and geographical differences between Hawai'i and other states, why would a study of condo governance in other states conclusively determine whether or not the subjects scrutinized should be implemented in our state, when owners have already demonstrated the need for reform in all the topics of study?
3. What is the LRB's response to comments that the study is just another stall tactic to try to placate condo owners righteously intolerant of increasingly unjust denial of due process and constitutional rights at the hands of boards and industry principals?