



# STATE OF HAWAI'I OFFICE OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS  
DIRECTOR

Telephone: (808) 587-2846  
Fax: (808) 587-2824  
Web: <https://planning.hawaii.gov>

## Statement of **MARY ALICE EVANS, Director**

before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**

Wednesday, February 4, 2026  
9:00 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

in consideration of  
**HB 1739**  
**RELATING TO TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT.**

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the House Committee on Housing,

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **offers comments with concerns** on HB 1739. HB 1739 would amend Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 46 to (1) allow counties to adopt transit-supportive densities for county-designated transit-oriented development zones and prohibit the adoption of any land use control that would restrict the adoption of transit-oriented densities; and (2) void the effect of any adopted land use control that is inconsistent with transit-oriented density standards in HRS § 206E-246.

OPSD understands and supports the bill's intent of promoting transit-supportive densities in county-designated transit-oriented development zones that are targeted for State funding and State infrastructure development. OPSD, in its capacity as co-chair of the Hawai'i Interagency Council for Transit-Oriented Development, advocates for and works with county and State agencies to facilitate increased project density to achieve TOD potential statewide.

OPSD has concerns about the measure in its current form. We believe the bill needs further clarification to: (1) ensure consistency across statutes as to the definition of "county-designated transit-oriented development zones"; and (2) to make clear how and where State transit-supportive density standards are linked to State incentives of funding, infrastructure investment and development, or even relief in permitting processes. As written, the bill may also be interpreted as conflicting with existing county TOD definitions and designations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING**  
**KA 'OIHANA HO'OLĀLĀ A ME NĀ PALAPALA 'AE**  
**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

650 SOUTH KING STREET, 7TH FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
PHONE: (808) 768-8000 • FAX: (808) 768-6041 • WEBSITE: honolulu.gov/dpp

RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



DAWN TAKEUCHI APUNA  
DIRECTOR  
PO'O

BRYAN GALLAGHER, P.E.  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
HOPE PO'O

REGINA MALEPEAI  
2ND DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
HOPE PO'O KUALUA

**TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**  
February 4, 2026  
Conference Room 430

**TO:** The Honorable Luke A. Esvlin, Chair, the Honorable Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Housing

**RE:** COMMENTS ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1739, RELATING TO TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) **offers comments** on House Bill No. 1739, which requires transit-supportive densities be allowed, and prohibits land use controls that are inconsistent with the definition in any county-designated TOD zone and TOD infrastructure improvement program area.

Act 159 (Session Laws 2025), incentivized counties to designate “transit-supportive densities.” Conversely, HB1739 appears to mandate “transit-supportive densities” by prohibiting any “county ordinance, rule, regulation, development standard, zoning provision, or other land use control” that would restrict the development of such “transit-supportive densities.”

The City’s TOD regulatory framework was developed with significant community outreach, consultant and staff analyses, and City Council deliberations. We continue to update the regulations based on our TOD plan recommendations, which consider the different land use contexts, from suburban to urban, along the rail transit corridor.

While the City and County of Honolulu is very much interested in streamlining and deregulating within the housing and affordable housing sectors, especially in TOD zones, this Bill as drafted would require significant restructuring of the existing regulatory framework, likely causing critical delays in implementing our TOD plans, which translate into increased costs that burden project affordability.

The Honorable Luke A. Evslin, Chair  
The Honorable Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair  
and Members of the Committee on Housing  
Hawai'i House of Representatives  
House Bill No. 1739  
February 4, 2026  
Page 2

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Very truly yours,



Dawn Takeuchi Apuna  
Director



**Hawai'i YIMBY**

Honolulu, HI 96814

[hawaiiyimby.org](http://hawaiiyimby.org)

[info@hawaiiyimby.org](mailto:info@hawaiiyimby.org)

February 4, 2026

House Committee on Housing

Hawai'i State Capitol

Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: SUPPORT for HB 1739 - RELATING TO TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT**

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i YIMBY, we are writing in **support of HB 1739**, which supports smart, transit-oriented growth by reinforcing the connection between housing, community services, and high quality public transportation. When homes are located near frequent and reliable transit, residents have better access to jobs, grocery stores, schools, health care, and recreation without relying on long and costly car trips.

This bill helps ensure that areas planned around major transit investments can **fully function as complete, connected communities**. Allowing appropriate housing density near transit supports ridership, makes public investments more efficient, and gives residents more choices in how they live and move. It also helps local workers live closer to where they work and meet their daily needs, reducing traffic congestion and transportation costs.

As Hawai'i works to address its housing shortage and improve mobility, aligning housing opportunities and community services with our transit system is essential. HB 1739 advances this goal by promoting development patterns that strengthen neighborhoods, support sustainability, and make the most of our public transit investments.

Hawai'i YIMBY (*Yes In My Backyard*) is a volunteer-led grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to supporting bold and effective solutions for Hawai'i's devastating housing crisis. Our members are deeply concerned about Hawai'i's chronic and worsening housing



**Hawai'i YIMBY**

Honolulu, HI 96814

[hawaiiyimby.org](http://hawaiiyimby.org)

[info@hawaiiyimby.org](mailto:info@hawaiiyimby.org)

shortage, which has caused home prices to rise much faster than incomes and pushes thousands of kama'āina out to the mainland or into homelessness every single year.

We ask your support for this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Damien Waikoloa

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY

Edgardo Díaz Vega

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY

Huey Kwik

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY





Housing Hawai'i's Future

PO Box 3043

Honolulu, HI 96802-3043

February 4, 2026

TO: Chair Evslin and Members of the House Committee on Housing  
RE: HB 1739, Relating to Transit-Oriented Development

Dear Chair Evslin 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 urge the House Committee on Housing to advance House Bill 1739.**

By ensuring that counties cannot impose regulations that undermine transit-supportive densities in designated transit-oriented development (TOD) zones, this bill promotes more efficient land use and supports the creation of vibrant, accessible communities.

The bill focuses on TOD zones and infrastructure improvement areas, ensuring that the prohibition applies only where transit-supportive densities are most appropriate and beneficial. Allowing higher densities in TOD areas aligns with best practices observed in other regions where housing supply has been expanded near public transit, resulting in greater affordability and reduced reliance on personal vehicles.

Removing local barriers to density in these zones can help unlock much-needed housing opportunities, particularly for working families and young residents who are increasingly priced out of Hawai'i's artificially restricted residential housing markets.

**We are grateful for your careful consideration of House Bill 1739.**

Thank you,



Lee Wang  
Executive Director  
Housing Hawai'i's Future  
[lee@hawaiisfuture.org](mailto:lee@hawaiisfuture.org)



Perry Arrasmith  
Director of Policy  
Housing Hawai'i's Future  
[perry@hawaiisfuture.org](mailto:perry@hawaiisfuture.org)

Feb. 4, 2026, 9 a.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Conference Room 430 and Videoconference

**To: House Committee on Housing**

**Rep. Luke Esvlin, Chair**  
**Rep. Tyson Miyake, Vice Chair**

**From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii**

**Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns**

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1739 — RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Aloha chair, vice chair and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [HB1739](#), which would prohibit counties from restricting the construction of buildings with “transit-supportive densities” in county-designated transit-oriented development zones.

Practically, this legislation would allow larger buildings to be built near Honolulu’s Skyline rail stops — and it would thus be a step toward expanding housing opportunities in those areas.

[Act 159 \(2025\)](#) defined “transit-supportive densities” as properties with floor area ratios of at least 4, 6 or 7 — depending on how close the structure would be to the rail line. Additionally, under that law, the permits for these projects must be approved without a public vote by a planning commission or a county council.

That law tied certain state funding to the legalization of denser buildings near the Skyline rail or in any county-designated transit-oriented development zone. This bill, on the other hand, would explicitly require that all such construction be allowed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas  
Director of Strategic Campaigns  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii



Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
**Support for HB1739 – Relating to the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation**

House Committee on Housing

Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 9:00AM Conf. Rm. 430 and via Videoconference

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Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the committee;

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB 1739**, prohibiting counties from enacting an ordinance, rule, regulation, development standard, zoning provision, or other land use control that would restrict the development of transit-supportive density in county-designated transit-oriented development (TOD) areas.

HB 1739 would ensure that state-designate TOD zones actually deliver the walkable, mixed-use, and mixed-income neighborhoods envisioned in state and county plans, rather than being undermined by project-by-project discretionary upzoning requests or other discretionary barriers. By prohibiting counties from adopting ordinances, development standards, or other land use controls that conflict with or effectively negate TOD zoning in these areas, the bill aligns local regulation with the substantial public investment already made in rail and bus raid transit infrastructure. When state agencies and counties upzone for TOD and commit public funds to infrastructure, but later layer on restrictive standard or ad hoc conditions that reduce feasible density or delay approvals, the result is fewer homes, higher per-unit costs, and missed opportunities to house local workers near jobs and transit.

This aligns with the goals of Honolulu’s Department of Housing and Land Management’s (DHLM) most recent strategic plan which identified barriers like zoning and land use regulation as a regulatory barrier to building densely along the rail corridor.<sup>1</sup> It would also support the goals for Ka’ahumanu Ave, the identified TOD corridor in Maui County,<sup>2</sup> and would support similar goals in TOD identified areas in Lihue, Kauai and the Keohokalole Highway in Hawaii County. This bill affirms that counties cannot undermine adopted TOD zoning through conflicting ordinances or standards, while still allowing them to apply generally applicable health, safety, and infrastructure provisions so long as those provisions do not nullify TOD entitlements. This is essential to delivering more housing near transit for residents, reducing vehicle miles traveled, and making efficient use of the billions of dollars in public investments for infrastructure around TOD corridors.<sup>3</sup>

We respectfully urge you to pass HB1739.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-347776/2025-2028%20Strategic%20Housing%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mauimpo.org/kaahumanu-action-plan>

<sup>3</sup> [https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/lud/02PROJ/OPSDTODInfra\\_2022/3.Deliverable3\\_20230908\\_HawaiiTODInfraFin-FullFinal.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/lud/02PROJ/OPSDTODInfra_2022/3.Deliverable3_20230908_HawaiiTODInfraFin-FullFinal.pdf)

**HB-1739**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:15:30 PM  
Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

Please support this important, smart housing development policy. Low land-use density around TOD makes housing more expensive and defeats the purpose of TOD areas. This bill would prevent counties from not sufficiently zoning for TOD corridors, ensuring that TOD maximizes its intended purpose of creating dense, walkable, transit-oriented housing development.

**HB-1739**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:49:09 PM  
Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
tia pearson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

- Prevents counties from not sufficiently zoning for TOD corridors.
- Low land-use density around TOD makes housing more expensive and defeats the purpose of TOD areas.

**HB-1739**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 5:46:57 PM  
Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Waters	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

Transit-Oriented Development is so crucial for a future Hawaii that doesn't just serve the wealthy. High-density housing in TOD zones is crucial. Mahalo for your support of this bill.

**HB-1739**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:35:42 PM  
Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pua Auyong-White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In SUPPORT:

- Supports the creation of high-density housing in TOD zones, helping us to build vertical next to Rail hubs and preserve land elsewhere for other critical uses.

**HB-1739**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:55:35 AM  
Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

**Comments:**

I support this bill because it prevents counties from not sufficiently zoning for TOD corridors. Low land-use density around TOD makes housing more expensive and defeats the purpose of TOD areas.

Mahalo.

LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

**HB-1739**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:16:27 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/4/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	CARES   Community Advocacy Research Education Services	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Reference my live testimony.