



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Friday, February 27, 2026
10:30 a.m.
Via Videoconference
Conference Room 016**

Written Testimony Only

**On the following measure:
S.B. 2347, S.D. 1, RELATING TO THE RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD-TENANT CODE**

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee:

My name is Emma Olsen, and I am an Enforcement Attorney for the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Office of Consumer Protection (OCP). The Department appreciates the intent of this bill and offers comments.

The purpose of this bill is to require OCP to periodically publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights.

OCP currently publishes the Landlord-Tenant Handbook (LT Handbook), and we re-publish in response to changes to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code. Changes happen nearly every legislative session. Last session, for example, Act 278 created a two-year mandatory eviction mediation program for evictions for non-payment of rent. These changes are highlighted on OCP's website. A digital copy of the LT Handbook is

available for free on our website, and written copies may be purchased or mailed. At present, the LT Handbook is only available in English.

In 2023, we contacted the Office of Language Access for guidance about commonly spoken languages and translating the LT Handbook into one or more additional languages. Following our consultation, we sought quotes from various providers and ultimately obtained a single quote for \$8,781 to translate the LT Handbook into four languages: Chinese (traditional only), Marshallese, Korean, and Chuukese. This quote may be under-inclusive, however, since there are other languages for which interpretation services are demanded in court proceedings. In 2023, the Judiciary compiled a list of the most commonly interpreted languages in courts throughout the State. The top six most interpreted languages were Chuukese, Ilocano, Marshallese, Spanish, Korean, and Tagalog.

While translation would expand the audience for the LT Handbook and the Notice of Tenant Rights, we recently began exploring other ways to make the LT Handbook more accessible, focusing on re-writing topics that generate the most public inquiries—evictions, security deposits, repairs, and breaking the lease. We are assessing ways to make these sections, and ultimately the entire handbook, more accessible to the public. The concept proposed in this bill complements our ongoing initiative.

Requiring a second resource in addition to the existing LT Handbook would involve a similar drafting, review, approval, and publication process. The review, editing, and publication process for our LT Handbook involves our investigative, legal, and administrative staff, with final approval by OCP's Executive Director and assistance from the Department's communications team. Establishing a separate publication would require comparable internal coordination and review and may necessitate additional time and staff resources.

We currently review the LT Handbook annually to ensure that the information provided to the public remains current. Our current annual review process is consistent with the annual review timeline in the bill.

Regarding accessibility for individuals with disabilities, as part of a department-wide initiative, we are reviewing all materials available to the public through our website, including electronic documents, to ensure they meet accessibility requirements by the April 24, 2026 deadline established by the Department of Justice's final rule updating its regulations for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Department's goal is to complete this accessibility review by the end of the first quarter of 2026.

We appreciate the intent of this bill to enhance public awareness of tenant rights

Should the Committee wish to pass this bill, we respectfully request two amendments:

- (1) a delayed effective date of January 1, 2027, to allow time to procure a responsible vendor to translate both the Landlord-Tenant Handbook and the Notice of Tenant Rights; and
- (2) a \$30,000 general fund appropriation for costs associated with the publication of the Landlord-Tenant Handbook and the Notice of Tenant Rights, including vendor translation services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



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 1259 A'ala Street, Suite 300
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February 27, 2026

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senate Committee on Judiciary

State Capitol, Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

RE: Senate Bill 2347, SD1, Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code

HEARING: Friday, February 27, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lyndsey Garcia, Director of Advocacy, testifying on behalf of the Hawai'i Association of REALTORS® ("HAR"), the voice of real estate in Hawaii and its over 10,000 members. HAR **supports the intent** of Senate Bill 2347, SD1, which requires the Office of Consumer Protection to periodically publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights. Effective 7/1/2050.

With approximately 38% of Hawaii residents living in rental housing, the rental market plays a critical role in meeting the state's housing needs. HAR believes that education for both tenants and housing providers is essential to ensuring a clear understanding of their respective rights and responsibilities.

In 2025, the Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 123, HD1, establishing a three-year Landlord-Tenant Working Group, of which Hawai'i REALTORS® and other key stakeholders are members. The Working Group is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code, and education for housing providers and tenants would be an important topic for the Working Group to discuss.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.





DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

Ka 'Oihana Ho'oka'a'ike no ka Po'e Kīnānā

1010 Richards Street, Rm. 118 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • (808) 204-2466 (VP)

February 27, 2026

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senate Bill 2347 Senate Draft 1 – Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports the intent of Senate Bill 2347 Senate Draft 1 – Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code. This bill requires the Office of Consumer Protection to periodically publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights.

DCAB frequently receives questions from landlords or tenants with disabilities who are unsure about their rights and responsibilities regarding effective communication, reasonable accommodations, reasonable modifications, and assistance animals. When this information is not clearly understood at the beginning of a tenancy, misunderstandings and misapplications of the law can occur. These situations may irreparably damage the landlord-tenant relationship. Providing clear guidance at the start of a rental agreement helps ensure that both parties understand their rights and obligations.

In order to ensure that the information is effectively communicated to a tenant at the beginning of a tenancy, we recommend that the language from Section 3 in the original version of Senate Bill 2347 be reinserted.

"§521-B Notice of tenant rights; disclosure. (a) A landlord shall provide a tenant with a copy of the notice of tenant rights, either physically or digitally, published by the office of consumer protection pursuant to section 521-A at or before the time the tenant signs a written rental agreement.

(b) A landlord who fails to comply with this section shall be subject to a fine of no more than \$ _____."

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

KRISTINE PAGANO
Acting Executive Director

LATE



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT SENATE BILL SB2347 SD1
RELATING TO THE RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD
TENANT CODE

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘okolokolo
(Senate Committee on Judiciary)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Pepeluali 27th, 2026

10:30 AM

Lumi 016

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) SUPPORTS **SB2347 SD1**.

OHA’s constitutional and statutory responsibilities include advocating for the betterment of Native Hawaiians and supporting public policies that promote housing stability, access to justice, and community well-being. This measure advances those responsibilities by improving tenant access to clear, accurate, and culturally and linguistically appropriate information about existing tenant protections under Hawai‘i law.

Hawai‘i’s housing crisis continues to disproportionately impact Native Hawaiians. Native Hawaiians are overrepresented among renter households, cost-burdened households, and households experiencing housing instability and displacement. Many renters face language barriers, limited access to legal assistance, and fear of retaliation, all of which make it difficult to understand and assert rights under the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code.

OHA supports this bill because it addresses a critical and practical gap in tenant protections. Providing clear, understandable information at the time a lease is signed helps prevent disputes and housing instability later in the tenancy. While tenant rights exist in statute, those protections function as self-help laws that often require tenants to navigate complex legal systems on their own. Without accessible guidance, renters may unknowingly waive rights, fail to seek assistance early, or face avoidable eviction and

homelessness. This measure strengthens housing stability by requiring the Office of Consumer Protection to develop, maintain, and regularly update a clear, standalone notice of tenant rights, ensuring the notice is multilingual, accessible to persons with disabilities, and available in both print and electronic formats; and requiring landlords to provide tenants with the notice in the tenant's preferred language when available at or before lease signing, helping renters make informed decisions. Early access to accurate tenant information can help prevent avoidable displacement, reduce housing instability, and promote fairer landlord-tenant relationships statewide.

For Native Hawaiian families, stable housing is closely tied to the preservation of 'ohana networks, access to cultural and community support systems, and long-term economic and health outcomes. Native Hawaiians experience disproportionate impacts across Hawai'i's rental housing system. Native Hawaiians are more likely to be renters, more likely to be rent-burdened, and more likely to experience housing instability and displacement than the general population. Native Hawaiians are also overrepresented among households facing eviction filings and among individuals experiencing homelessness. These disparities are compounded by barriers to justice, including limited access to legal representation, language access challenges for multi-generational households, and fear of retaliation when asserting tenant rights. Because the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code operates primarily as a self-help framework, unequal access to clear and understandable legal information can result in unequal outcomes. Ensuring that tenants receive accessible, multilingual notice of their rights at lease signing is a preventative approach that promotes due process, reduces avoidable disputes, and advances fairness in Hawai'i's civil justice system.

OHA respectfully urges the Legislature to pass **SB2347 SD1** as amended, which represents a modest but meaningful step toward improving housing stability, advancing language access, and ensuring that tenant protections enacted by law are actually reachable by the people they are intended to serve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary
Re: **SB2347 SD1 – Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 27, 2026; 10:30 AM

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB2347 SD1**. This bill requires the Office of Consumer Protection to periodically publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights.

During the pandemic, non-profit organizations like ours worked hard to help limited English proficiency (LEP) families in Hawai'i access the pandemic relief benefits that they qualified for. While working on this outreach, we learned that there was a lack of meaningful language access for LEP families, and that the federal government does not provide translations¹ in many of the languages that are the most spoken by LEP families in Hawai'i² – such as Ilocano, Marshallese, Tongan, and Chuukese.

In the aftermath of the Lahaina wildfires, our state again learned about the lack of resources to address the language needs of Hawai'i's residents, causing them to miss out on essential assistance. According to the language services coordinator for FEMA, who coordinated language access response after both the Lahaina and Paradise, California, fires, "the diverse cultures of Maui and the fact that many people did not feel comfortable dealing with government agencies, made the response in Lahaina unique."³

As one of the states with the highest portion of foreign-born residents,⁴ we believe Hawai'i needs to better ensure language access to our government services than most other states do. This bill would be a great step in that direction.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/translated-applications>

² Hawai'i Data Exchange Partnership, https://hawaiiexp.org/quick_data/datastory/el

³ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/03/people-who-dont-speak-english-lost-money-and-help-in-lahaina-response/>

⁴ Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/312701/percentage-of-population-foreign-born-in-the-us-by-state/>



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for SB2347 SD1– Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code
Senate Committee on Consumer Protections
Friday, February 27, 2026 at 10:30AM Conf. Rm. 016 and via Videoconference

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of SB2347 SD1**, which would require the Office of Consumer Protection to publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenants rights and require a landlord to provide a tenant with a copy of the tenant rights. Clear communication of rights is a foundational step in promoting housing security and preventing exploitation or misunderstanding in landlord-tenant relationships.

Hawaii’s landlord-tenant code is a self-help system: it assumes tenants and landlords know the rights and responsibilities spelled out in HRS Chapter 521 and can act on them in civil court. Yet statutory duties—such as complying with rules ‘brought to the attention of the tenant’¹ at the start of the tenancy and providing proper notice of defects—resupposes that tenants can actually read and understand those rules.

National fair housing organizations have found that lack of meaningful language access prevents limited-English-proficient tenants from understanding leases, house rules, and hearing procedures, increasing the risk of losing housing because they never fully understood their rights or obligations.² By mandating *accessible* multilingual notices, SB2347 SD1 helps ensure that all tenants—regardless of language proficiency—are better equipped to understand and assert their rights under Hawai‘i’s landlord-tenant code.

Requiring landlords to provide this notice at the outset of tenancy promotes transparency and accountability. It helps foster a more balanced relationship between landlords and tenants, reducing the risk of disputes and misunderstandings. Best practices in tenant protection consistently highlight the value of proactive education and notification in reducing legal conflicts and improving housing outcomes for vulnerable populations.³

We respectfully recommend collaboration with community organizations in developing and disseminating these notices which could further enhance the reach and impact. We appreciate the Legislature’s attention to tenant rights and urge passage of this bill as a meaningful step toward a fairer, more just housing system in Hawai‘i.

¹ https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol12_Ch0501-0588/HRS0521/HRS_0521-0052.htm

² <https://www.nhlp.org/initiatives/fair-housing-housing-for-people-with-disabilities/language-access/>

³

<https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Eviction-Diversion-and-Prevention-Programs.pdf>



Hawai'i YIMBY
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February 27, 2026

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: SUPPORT for SB 2347 SD1 - RELATING TO THE RESIDENTIAL
LANDLORD-TENANT CODE**

Aloha Chair Rhodes, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i YIMBY, we are writing in **support of SB 2347 SD1**, which takes a simple but important step to strengthen housing stability by requiring the Office of Consumer Protection to publish a clear, accessible, and multilingual notice of tenant rights and requiring landlords to provide that notice to tenants at the time a lease is signed.

Renters make up a significant and essential part of Hawai'i's housing market, yet they often enter lease agreements with insufficient information. In an already imbalanced relationship, **renters deserve transparency and a more equal footing** so they can clearly understand their rights, responsibilities, and options under the law.

This bill sets a reasonable baseline for landlord accountability. Providing accurate and accessible information about tenant rights is **the bare minimum** a landlord can do to support clear communication, shared expectations, and a healthier landlord-tenant relationship built on mutual understanding. When tenants know their rights upfront, disputes can be reduced and housing stability can improve. This allows for both parties to be held accountable by agreeing to clear terms before entering into an agreement.

Hawai'i is facing a severe housing shortage, and addressing it requires a coordinated approach. As the state works to increase the supply of housing, it is equally important to protect stability for the renters who already live here. This measure helps ensure that



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growth does not come at the expense of clarity, fairness, or housing security for tenants across the state

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 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



SB-2347-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:41:29 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

2347 SB RELATING TO THE RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD-TENANT CODE.

TENANT RIGHTS POSTED ON PROPERTY BULLENTIN BOARD. COPY OF TENANT RIGHTS DISTRIBUTED SAME TIME AS SIGNED TENANT CONTRACT INTO THE UNIT.