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To: Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Carlotta Amerino, Director

Date: February 27, 2026, 10:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Re: Testimony on S.B. No. 2397
Relating to Neighborhood Boards

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would amend the quorum requirement for neighborhood boards of the City and County of Honolulu. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) takes no position on this bill, but offers comments.

Part VII of chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes, which sets out several provisions specific to neighborhood boards and community outreach boards, is not part of the Sunshine Law, part I of chapter 92, and thus not administered by OIP. Nonetheless, a board's quorum requirement affects the applicability of several Sunshine Law requirements. The Sunshine Law requires a board to have a quorum of members present to be in a meeting, so calculating quorum to require a majority only of filled seats, rather than all seats to which a neighborhood board is entitled, will make it easier for neighborhood boards to meet and do business. It will also mean that for the Sunshine Law's permitted interactions (situations in which members can discuss board business outside a meeting), most of which are limited to less than a quorum of members, the number of neighborhood board members who can discuss board business under a particular permitted interaction may be smaller due to this amendment than under current law.

Thank you for considering OIP's testimony.

SB-2397

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 8:47:33 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As member for a neighborhood board for the last 3 years, I fully support this bill. It has been difficult to make quorum based on the number of seats there are, given many vacancies. All neighborhood boards are volunteer-based, making it difficult to fill vacancies, given people's schedules and demands of everyday life. Thus, a neighborhood board shouldn't be held back by the lack of volunteers in a community, especially when the Neighborhood Board Commission doesn't have the resources to publicly push, market, or recruit community members to be join the board. Since the position is volunteer based, it is easy to understand why there are often many vacancies on board.

This bill helps the boards continue to do the work they are tasked to do, and not held back by a lack of volunteers.

One possibly amendment I would suggest for this bill is that the number of board members be larger than the number of vacancies for this bill to take effect (essentially, there must be more board members than vacancies for the quorum number to be based on number of members on the board).

Mahalo for your consideration,
Keoni Shizuma

SB-2397

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:57:29 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

2397 SB RELATING TO NEIGHBORHOOD BOARDS.

SB-2397

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 10:07:22 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ross Isokane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. It will make it a lot easier for Neighborhood Boards to make their voices heard on issues that are important to those who care enough to show up.

Neighborhood Boards have no official power (and are only advisory), but are one of the few opportunities for ordinary citizens to communicate their views in a way that has a better chance of actually being seen/heard by elected officials. But so many boards (given these are volunteer positions with no official power) struggle to get citizens to fill their board seats and there are many vacancies or no shows at meetings.

In my own volunteer advocacy efforts on specific issues, I've toured Neighborhood Boards pitching draft resolutions that boards can adopt to throw their support in on key legislative bills. It's enough of a time commitment as these board meetings are in the evening and can be long (again, I'm just a volunteer advocate, I don't get paid for this). So it feels very deflating to spend hours at a neighborhood board meeting and, although the present board members (who care enough to actually show up) support the resolution, they aren't able to adopt it because they can't achieve quorum or the high hurdle voting requirements to adopt a resolution.