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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WORKFORCE HOUSING.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the current  
2 executive administration in Hawaii has made significant efforts  
3 to increase the State's housing supply, including prioritizing  
4 affordable housing development and addressing zoning and  
5 permitting inefficiencies. These efforts have included  
6 advocating for faster processing of housing permits and  
7 increasing land availability for residential development.  
8 Despite these initiatives, housing production continues to lag  
9 due to bureaucratic challenges, lengthy regulatory processes,  
10 and limited coordination among state and county agencies.

11           The legislature further finds that workforce housing is  
12 critical to the State's economic stability and long-term growth.  
13 Housing located in reasonable proximity to employment centers  
14 and emerging industries provides affordable living options for  
15 essential workers who are vital to the State's economy.  
16 Expanding the supply of workforce housing can help stabilize



1 communities, reduce commute times, and improve quality of life  
2 for residents.

3       Additionally, the legislature further finds that innovative  
4 regulatory approaches are necessary to address the State's  
5 housing crisis. Regulatory sandbox programs have been used in  
6 other policy areas to test time-limited, data-driven regulatory  
7 flexibility without permanently altering existing regulatory  
8 frameworks. A workforce housing regulatory sandbox can provide  
9 a pathway for developers to test innovative housing solutions  
10 while maintaining appropriate environmental, cultural, and  
11 public safeguards. Through structured collaboration among state  
12 agencies and participating counties, such a program can  
13 accelerate the development of workforce housing while respecting  
14 county land use authority.

15       The legislature further finds, however, that a 2024 Hawaii  
16 housing planning study projected that the State would need  
17 approximately 64,490 new housing units by 2027 to meet existing  
18 demand, a significant portion of that demand consisting of  
19 workforce housing. Targeted efforts to improve the supply of  
20 workforce housing through innovative regulatory approaches,  
21 including a regulatory sandbox, could meaningfully contribute



1 toward meeting this demand and help alleviate the housing  
2 shortage over the coming decade.

3       Furthermore, the legislature finds that the Hawaii housing  
4 finance and development corporation is well positioned to  
5 administer a workforce housing regulatory sandbox program due to  
6 its experience financing, facilitating, and coordinating housing  
7 development statewide. The legislature also finds that the  
8 inclusion of environmental, cultural, infrastructure, and  
9 sustainability expertise through an advisory council can help  
10 ensure that innovative housing solutions respect the State's  
11 natural resources, cultural heritage, and community needs.

12       The legislature further finds that similar measures  
13 proposing a workforce housing regulatory sandbox program were  
14 introduced during the regular session of 2025, including Senate  
15 Bill No. 1200 and its companion House Bill No. 1317, on which  
16 the department of the attorney general provided comments and  
17 recommendations. The attorney general's comments and  
18 recommendations have been considered and incorporated into the  
19 design of this Act to further the intent and purpose of those  
20 measures.

21       Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:



- 1 (1) Establish a voluntary, time-limited workforce housing  
2 regulatory sandbox program administered by the Hawaii  
3 housing finance and development corporation in  
4 coordination with participating counties; and
- 5 (2) Establish an advisory council to provide nonbinding  
6 guidance and recommendations to support the workforce  
7 housing regulatory sandbox program.

8 SECTION 2. As used in this Act:

9 "Corporation" means the Hawaii housing finance and  
10 development corporation.

11 "Participating county" means a county that has formally  
12 agreed, through resolution, memorandum, or agreement, or other  
13 official action, to participate in the program.

14 "Program" means the workforce housing regulatory sandbox  
15 program established under this Act.

16 "Regulatory sandbox" means a time-limited, project-specific  
17 framework that allows for temporary regulatory flexibility for  
18 approved workforce housing projects, subject to defined  
19 conditions and expiration.

20 "Workforce housing" means housing primarily targeted for  
21 households earning between sixty per cent and one hundred forty



1 per cent of the area median income, adjusted for family size and  
2 high-cost areas, as defined by the United States Department of  
3 Housing and Urban Development.

4 SECTION 3. (a) There is established the workforce housing  
5 regulatory sandbox program, to be administered by the  
6 corporation in coordination with participating counties.

7 (b) Notwithstanding any other law, rule, ordinance, or  
8 code to the contrary, the program shall be vested with the  
9 authority to waive or temporarily modify permitting processes  
10 and other regulatory requirements for eligible workforce housing  
11 projects, subject to the conditions and limitations established  
12 by this Act and with the consent of the participating county.

13 (c) Participation by a county in the program shall be  
14 voluntary and shall not be construed to limit or supersede any  
15 authority granted to counties under chapter 46, Hawaii Revised  
16 Statutes.

17 SECTION 4. (a) There is established a workforce housing  
18 regulatory sandbox advisory council to provide nonbinding  
19 guidance and recommendations to the corporation.

20 (b) The advisory council shall consist of the following  
21 members or their designees:



- 1 (1) The director of the office of planning and sustainable  
2 development, who shall serve as chairperson;
- 3 (2) The executive director of the Hawaii housing finance  
4 and development corporation;
- 5 (3) The chairperson of the board of land and natural  
6 resources;
- 7 (4) Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of  
8 Hawaiian Affairs;
- 9 (5) The administrator of the state historic preservation  
10 division of the department of land and natural  
11 resources;
- 12 (6) The executive director of the Hawaii public housing  
13 authority;
- 14 (7) The executive director of the Hawaii community  
15 development authority;
- 16 (8) The director of the department of planning or  
17 department of planning and permitting, as applicable,  
18 of each county;
- 19 (9) The director of the department of public works or  
20 department of facility maintenance, as applicable, of  
21 each county; and



- 1 (10) Four members to be invited by the chair, comprising:
- 2 (A) One member with demonstrated knowledge of
- 3 sustainable development practices;
- 4 (B) One member with expertise in Native Hawaiian
- 5 traditional and customary practices;
- 6 (C) One member representing the private housing
- 7 development sector; and
- 8 (D) One member representing a nonprofit housing
- 9 organization.
- 10 (c) The advisory council shall:
- 11 (1) Provide advisory recommendations regarding
- 12 environmental, cultural, infrastructure, and
- 13 sustainability considerations; and
- 14 (2) Assist in identifying best practices and lessons
- 15 learned from sandbox projects.
- 16 (d) The advisory council shall not have approval, veto, or
- 17 decision-making authority over regulatory waivers or project
- 18 approvals.
- 19 (e) The advisory council shall be subject to chapter 92,
- 20 Hawaii Revised Statutes.



1 (f) A majority of the appointed members shall constitute a  
2 quorum for the transaction of business.

3 SECTION 5. (a) Developers seeking participation in the  
4 program shall submit an application to the corporation that  
5 includes:

6 (1) A description of the proposed workforce housing  
7 project and innovative elements;

8 (2) An explanation of how the project addresses  
9 affordability, sustainability, and construction  
10 timelines;

11 (3) Identification of the county or counties in which the  
12 project is located; and

13 (4) Documentation demonstrating the county's participation  
14 or consent, if applicable.

15 (b) The corporation may consult with the advisory council  
16 before approving an application.

17 SECTION 6. (a) With the written consent of the applicable  
18 state agency or participating county, the corporation may  
19 approve temporary waivers or modifications of state- or county-  
20 administered permitting, zoning, or infrastructure requirements



1 or other state approval processes for an approved project under  
2 the program.

3 (b) Any waiver or modification granted pursuant to this  
4 section shall:

5 (1) Be project-specific;

6 (2) Be limited in duration and expire on the earliest of:

7 (A) Issuance of a certificate of occupancy;

8 (B) Ten years from the date of the project approval;

9 or

10 (C) Termination of the project's participation in the  
11 program; and

12 (3) Not be construed as establishing precedent or  
13 permanently altering any county or state regulatory  
14 requirement.

15 (c) Upon expiration, all applicable laws, ordinances,  
16 rules, and codes shall apply as if no waiver or modification had  
17 been granted.

18 SECTION 7. (a) Developers participating in the program  
19 shall ensure that:

20 (1) Sale prices or rents remain affordable to workforce  
21 households earning between sixty per cent and one



1           hundred forty per cent of the area median income under  
2           rules adopted by the corporation;

3           (2) Units are not used as short-term rentals during the  
4           affordability period; and

5           (3) Units are occupied on a full-time basis by the  
6           resident household.

7           (b) The requirements of this section shall be enforced  
8           through deed restrictions or equivalent legal mechanisms.

9           SECTION 8. (a) The corporation shall administer and  
10          oversee the program.

11          (b) The corporation shall establish one full-time  
12          equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to administer and support the  
13          program, including coordination with participating counties,  
14          developers, and the advisory council.

15          (c) The corporation shall submit a report of its findings  
16          and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the  
17          legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
18          the regular session of 2028, and each regular session  
19          thereafter. The report shall include:

20          (1) The number and type of projects approved;



1 (2) The nature and duration of any regulatory waivers  
2 granted;

3 (3) Measurable outcomes related to affordability and  
4 project timelines; and

5 (4) Recommendations regarding continuation, modification,  
6 or termination of the program.

7 SECTION 9. There is appropriated out of the general  
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for  
10 the establishment and operation, including administrative costs  
11 and support for approved projects, of the program established by  
12 this Act, and for the establishment of one full-time equivalent  
13 (1.0 FTE) position.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii  
15 housing finance and development corporation for the purposes of  
16 this Act.

17 SECTION 10. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000,  
18 and shall be repealed on June 30, 2031.



**Report Title:**

HHFDC; Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program; Advisory Council; Workforce Housing; Permitting; Affordable Housing; Reports; Position; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program to be administered by the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation. Establishes an advisory council within the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program to advise on environmental and cultural practices within specific developments. Requires reports to the Legislature. Establishes a position. Appropriates funds. Repeals 6/30/2031. Effective 7/1/3000. (SD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

