



February 20, 2026

Senate Committee on Finance (Monday, February 23, 2026, 2:00pm)

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Testimony in opposition to HB1650_HD1 Relating To Environmental Assessments

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

UNITE HERE Local 5 represents working people throughout Hawaii's hotel, food service, and health care industries. We represent thousands of hotel workers in Waikiki.

We strongly oppose HB1650_HD1. Waikiki should not be exempted from HRS 343 environmental review.

The premise of the bill says there are county rules that require review before permitting in Waikiki, therefore, we should exempt Waikiki from Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) review. This is flawed logic.

Environmental reviews under HRS 343 offer analysis that is in-depth, detailed, and comprehensive. Importantly, the environmental review process provides multiple opportunities for the public to weigh in, ask questions, and get answers about the many, varied impacts of developments. Honolulu county rules are **not** adequate replacement for HRS 343 review – bypassing environmental review in practice undermines county processes.

- The county's rules for Special Districts (ROH 21-9) are not an adequate replacement. These rules are generally framed as design guidelines with limited scope of review compared to EA/EIS.
- County Special Management Area (SMA) permit rules (ROH 25) are also inadequate replacements for EA/EIS.
 - o The borders of the SMA area do not cover most of Waikiki. HB1650 would effectively exempt most of Waikiki from any HRS 343 review because of the limits of SMA rules.
 - o For Waikiki projects, the county's SMA major permit rules rely on using the HRS 343 environmental review process. In other words, the county's environmental review process for SMA major permits *is* the HRS 343 review process. This illustrates the value and unique insight that HRS 343 provides. The county relies on the HRS 343 process and doesn't have its own equivalent.
 - o There are bills under consideration in this legislative session that would eliminate county discretion and override county rules for other types of projects. If any of those measures are enacted this year or in future, this bill could exacerbate the potential harms of under-studied, under-regulated development.

Sea level rise and climate change are coming to Hawaii and policy makers are trying to plan for that right now. Waikiki is particularly exposed to sea level rise risk. HB1650 would undermine the disclosure mechanisms we have to analyze how Waikiki developments would intersect with climate change. We need HRS 343 to understand how Waikiki development projects intersect with holistic public policies that address sea level rise. Removing Waikiki from HRS 343 review is the wrong policy knowing what challenges we face in the next few decades.

We urge you to defer HB1650_HD1. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



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February 23, 2026

The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair

House Committee on Finance

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

RE: House Bill 1650, HD1, Relating to Environmental Assessments

HEARING: Monday, February 23, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, 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 provides **comments and supports the intent** of House Bill 1650, HD1, which removes proposed actions within the Waikiki special district from the requirement for environmental assessments under section 343-5, HRS. Effective 7/1/3000.

We support the intent of policies that streamline processes and remove barriers to the creation of housing in Hawaii. We believe removing duplicative requirements where they exist helps to avoid unnecessary delays while continuing to uphold appropriate environmental and cultural safeguards.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.





Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on
FINANCE

Monday, February 23, 2026

By
Rick Egged, President
Waikiki Beach Special Improvement District Association

HB1650 HD1- RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Chair: Todd, Vice Chair: Takenouchi and members of the committee:

The Waikiki Beach Special Improvement District Association (WBSIDA) supports HB1650 HD1. HB1650 HD1 removes proposed actions within the Waikiki special district from the requirement for environmental assessments (EA) under section 343-5, HRS. This measure will result in more efficient and streamlined permitting in some circumstances in the Waikiki special district and remove unnecessary and redundant environmental review triggered simply because the proposed activity being in the Waikiki special district.

The findings section of the bill and prior committee reports note that because the City and County of Honolulu has adopted ordinances and other requirements regarding the permitting of development projects within the Waikiki special district, it is unnecessary and redundant to require all proposals for any use within the Waikiki special district to undergo environmental review pursuant to HRS Chapter 343. Various other triggers for an EA still remain, this measure simply reduces the need for an EA basely solely on it being located in the Waikiki special district. Removing duplicative environmental review requirements helps to avoid unnecessary delays while continuing to uphold appropriate environmental and cultural safeguards.

The WBSIDA supports the intent of HB1650 HD1 and looks forward to continued discussion on the details. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Hawaii's Thousand Friends

335 Hahani Street #342132 * Kailua, HI 96734 * Phone (808) 262-0682 * E-Mail: htf3000@gmail.com

February 23, 2026

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee

HB 1650 HD1
RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Hawaii's Thousand Friends, a statewide non-profit water and land use planning organization dedicated to protecting the environment, human health, and cultural and natural resources opposes HB 1650 HD1 that eliminates Waikiki as a trigger for an Environmental Assessment under HRS 343-5.

The Waikiki Special Design District (WSDD) was passed by the City Council in 1977. It was created as a zoning ordinance in response to the rapid, intense high-rise development of the 1960s and early 1970s. The purpose for establishment of the Waikiki Special Design District, in part, is:

1. to guide the development of Waikiki with due consideration to optimum community benefits;
2. to promote health, safety, social, and economic well-being for the community as a whole;
3. to encourage developments that would improve and complement the public facilities and utilities in Waikiki and the physical and visual aspects of the urban environment in the area;
4. to bring about a desirable level of urban design compatible with the climate, life style and the resort oriented environmental character of Hawaii with the District and its surrounding area;
5. to provide greater access to public beach areas;
6. to encourage the development of mixed uses where such mixes are compatible with and enhance the unique character of the district;
7. to provide additional properly distributed open spaces and vistas

Findings in the 1975 Department of Land Utilization report titled Waikiki Special Design District that led to the adoption of the WSDD are pertinent today: congestion, overcrowding, excessive density, lack of adequate open space, height encroachment into major view planes from Punchbowl lookout, preservation of major viewing areas of

Diamond Head within Waikiki, Ala Wai Boulevard, Kuhio Avenue and enhancing Waikiki Beach with setbacks.

The purpose of conducting an environmental review under HRS 343-1 is to *integrate the review of environmental concerns with existing planning process of the State and counties and alert decision makers to significant environmental effects which may result from implementation of certain actions. The legislature further finds that the process of reviewing environmental effects is desirable because environmental consciousness is enhanced, cooperation and coordination are encouraged, and public participation during the review process benefits all parties involved and society as a whole.*

Environmental review under HRS 343 provides opportunities for public involvement and helps ensure that proposed developments comply with regulations designated to protect cultural, historical, social and physical resources, and minimize impacts on the shoreline and historic view plains.

We urge you to not pass HB 1650 HD1 because comprehensive environmental review is critical to guiding future development and balancing the need for tourist -driven growth with the preservation of its “sense of place”.



Hawai'i YIMBY
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February 23, 2026

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SUPPORT for HB 1650 HD1 - RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i YIMBY, we are writing in **support of HB 1650 HD 1**. Hawai'i is facing a serious housing shortage, and with limited developable land, we must rely on redeveloping aging buildings into new, more efficient, and more dense homes. As our population grows and housing needs change, infill and redevelopment in existing urban areas are essential tools for addressing this crisis. **However, many overlapping state and county regulations have increased the cost of building housing and extended project timelines, contributing directly to the shortage we face today.**

HB 1650 HD1 takes a targeted and reasonable step toward reducing unnecessary duplication in the development approval process. In places like the Waikīkī special districts, the City and County of Honolulu already requires extensive review through its special district permitting process. These reviews include public input, design oversight, and specific protections for historic and culturally significant structures. Requiring an additional environmental assessment under Chapter 343 for the same projects often repeats similar analyses, adding time and cost without providing meaningful new information.

Protecting truly historic sites and the unique character of Waikīkī remains important, and this bill does not remove those protections. County-level rules and special district regulations would still apply, and projects would still be subject to zoning



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controls, historic preservation review, and public oversight. HB 1650 HD1 simply recognizes that in certain heavily regulated urban areas, the county process already addresses many of the same concerns covered by a Chapter 343 environmental assessment.

It is also important to recognize the nature of the projects affected by this bill. These are not developments on pristine or undeveloped land. They are redevelopment projects in areas that are already fully urbanized, often involving older buildings, surface parking lots, or underused commercial structures. These projects improve existing neighborhoods by replacing outdated structures with housing that better meets today's needs.

By removing duplicative review requirements in these limited circumstances, HB 1650 HD1 can help reduce uncertainty, shorten timelines, and lower costs for housing development, while still maintaining strong local oversight and historic protections. Streamlining processes in already developed urban areas is a practical and necessary step toward increasing housing supply and addressing Hawai'i's housing shortage.

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





February 23, 2026

Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Support of HB 1650, HD1, RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Monday, February 23, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308, and VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawai'i (LURF) is a private research and trade organization founded in 1979, whose members include major Hawai'i landowners, developers, utility companies, and land use professionals. LURF's mission is to research, educate, and advocate for reasonable, rational, and equitable land use planning, laws, and regulations that encourage well-planned economic growth, agriculture, housing, renewable energy, commercial and industrial uses, health care, and tourism, while safeguarding Hawai'i's significant natural, historic, and cultural resources, public health, and safety.

Collectively and over the past 47 years, LURF members have included homebuilders, developers, planners, architects, engineers, and legal professionals that have worked collaboratively with state and county administrations and agencies and served on various working groups relating to the environmental review process and Chapter 343.

LURF is in **strong support of HB 1650, HD1**, which merely removes the automatic trigger of an environmental assessment, solely based on the location of proposed actions within the Waikiki Special District (WSD).

This measure would **still require WSD projects to comply with ALL applicable state and county environmental and land use approvals**, among other things:

- **ALL state environmental laws and rules under Chapter 343, HRS, including EAs and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS);**
- **ALL WSD ordinances and rules (including EA and EIS);**
- **ALL Special Management Areas (shoreline) ordinances and rules (including EA and EIS); and**
- **ALL other City ordinances and requirements (including EA and EIS).**

Based on the reasons stated above, LURF is in **strong support of HB 1650, HD1**, and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in **support** of this proposed measure.



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

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Monday, February 23, 2026, 2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of
HB 1650, HD1
RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the House Committee on Finance, the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports the intent** of HB 1650, HD 1, which amends subsection (a) of HRS Section 343-5. HB 1650, HD 1 would repeal the “use of the Waikiki special district” from the list of actions that trigger environmental review pursuant to HRS Chapter 343.

OPSD supports the intent of repealing the “use of the Waikiki Special District” trigger from Chapter 343. The findings section of the bill notes that the City and County of Honolulu has adopted ordinances and other requirements regarding the permitting of development projects within the Waikiki special district, therefore, it is unnecessary and redundant to require all proposals for any use within the Waikiki special district to undergo environmental review pursuant to HRS Chapter 343.

We would like to point out that the environmental review process authorizes agencies to exempt certain actions from the erstwhile requirement of preparing an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). Accordingly, the record shows that an average of only one private development per year proposed within the Waikiki special district undergoes environmental review (ten EAs or EISs in the last ten years); many more than this are exempted.

The city and county of Honolulu has established their own requirement for certain applicants of various approvals to undergo environmental review pursuant to their own ordinances even when the actions do not trigger HRS Chapter 343, so they could establish their own requirement for environmental review of uses within the Waikiki special district if they believe it would be beneficial.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-1650-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2026 4:37:09 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dana Keawe	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose HB1650 HD1

Dana Keawe

HB-1650-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2026 9:43:19 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the FIN Committee,

I am submitting testimony as an individual.

I currently serve as the President of the Kokua Council, Vice President of the Hawaii Alliance for Retired Americans (HARA), and was formerly a Waikiki Neighborhood Board Member from Jan. 2023 until June 2025. I am also a member of the Good Government Caucus.

HB1650 HD1 is not good government.

I am in strong opposition to HB1650 HD1, and hope that those on the committee understand that the Special District requirements and other requirements for environmental assessment were put in place after long and careful review, to protect the land and waterways and to protect the rights of the people of Hawaii.

I will also point out that those who are supporting this are the developers and others associated with them, and the campaign donations will most likely track to the legislators that are also supporting this bill. This again is not good government, but the opposite.

I ask that you please vote no on HB1650 HD1.

Respectfully,

Gregory Misakian

HB-1650-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2026 4:29:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/23/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, OPPOSE. I stand on testimonies from The Outdoor Circle, 2/2/26 and HI Thousand Friends, 2/10/26.