



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

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Statement of  
**MARY ALICE EVANS, Director**

before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND**  
Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 9:00 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

in consideration of  
**HB 1650, HD1**  
**RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS**

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa and Members of the House Committee on Water & Land, the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports the intent** of HB1650, 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 because 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.



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February 2, 2026

RE: Testimony of The Outdoor Circle Continued Opposition To HB1650 HD1 (2026)--  
**Relating to Environmental Review; Historic Sites and the Waikīkī Special District**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

The Outdoor Circle respectfully opposes HB1650 HD1.

**While the bill is framed as a streamlining measure, it removes long-standing Environmental Assessment (EA) triggers for historic sites and for actions within the Waikīkī Special District without providing equivalent environmental protections.**

**Chapter 343 is not simply a procedural requirement--it is Hawai'i's primary environmental disclosure statute, designed to ensure informed decision-making, transparency, and public participation before irreversible commitments are made. HB1650 HD1 still weakens that framework in precisely those areas where cumulative impacts and long-term consequences are most likely.**

As testifiers from OHA note in the immediately prior version of the bill, the issue for Waikiki still remains in the HD1 version:

*"Lastly, we note that the Waikīkī Special District trigger was adopted in response to intense development pressures and stakeholder concerns regarding cumulative impacts, and to ensure meaningful environmental disclosure for projects that might otherwise avoid review. Waikīkī is also an area with a high concentration of cultural, historic, and archaeological resources. While HRS Chapter 6E review, Special Management Area permitting, and Ka Pa'akai protections still apply to projects exempt from HRS Chapter 343, public input opportunities on these matters are lost by removing the Waikīkī Special district trigger as proposed in the current bill."*

**Waikīkī Special District: County Design Controls Are Not Environmental Review**

The Waikīkī Special District may be cited as justification for eliminating the state EA trigger. However, while Waikīkī is subject to extensive county zoning and design regulations, those controls are not equivalent to environmental review under Chapter 343.

Waikīkī Special District review is primarily focused on urban form, architectural design, density, and aesthetics. It does not consistently require comprehensive analysis of traffic, water resources, coastal processes, climate resilience, or cumulative environmental impacts. Nor does it provide the same level of consolidated public disclosure and participation required under Chapter 343. The existence of local design and zoning controls does not eliminate the need for state-level environmental disclosure in an area that has long been recognized as one of statewide concern.

**Urbanized areas still experience cumulative impacts, and once historic or scenic values are lost, they cannot be recovered. That is exactly why these triggers existed.** Chapter 343 was designed to ensure that these impacts are evaluated transparently and early, before incremental decisions foreclose meaningful alternatives.

Streamlining should focus on improving the process, not bypassing it where consequences are permanent.

### **Erosion of Statewide Environmental Oversight**

Historic sites and Waikīkī were deliberately included in Chapter 343 because incremental development decisions in these areas can result in permanent and cumulative harm.

HB1650 HD1 removes these safeguards without establishing clear thresholds, environmental equivalency standards, or alternative mechanisms to ensure comparable review. Rather than refining environmental review, the bill broadly exempts categories that have historically warranted heightened scrutiny.

The Outdoor Circle supports thoughtful efforts to improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary duplication. However, efficiency should not come at the expense of environmental transparency, public participation, or protection of resources that belong to the people of Hawai'i as a whole.

HB1650 HD1 removes critical environmental review triggers without replacing them with functionally equivalent protections. For these reasons, The Outdoor Circle respectfully continues to oppose HB1650 HD1.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.



Winston Welch, Executive Director



**Hawai'i YIMBY**  
Honolulu, HI 96814  
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February 10, 2026

House Committee on Water & Land  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

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

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i YIMBY, we are writing in **support of HB 1650**. 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 takes a targeted and reasonable step toward reducing unnecessary duplication in the development approval process. In places like the Waikiki 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 Waikiki 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 controls, historic preservation review, and public oversight. HB 1650 simply recognizes that



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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 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

Huey Kwik

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY

Edgardo Díaz Vega

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY





**Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair**  
**Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair**  
Committee on Water and Land

Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
9:00AM Conference Room 411

RE: HB1650 HD1 - Environmental Assessments - Waikiki - Oppose

Dear Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the Committees,

On behalf of the Chamber of Sustainable Commerce (CSC), we write in opposition to HB1650 HD1, relating to environmental assessments. The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents more than 580 small businesses, sole proprietors and entrepreneurs across Hawai'i committed to a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity.

HB1650 HD1 removes proposed actions within the Waikiki Special District from the requirement for environmental assessments under Chapter 343, Hawai'i Revised Statutes . The bill amends section 343-5, HRS, by deleting Waikiki as a location where environmental review is required for proposed actions involving state or county land or funds.

We have the following concerns based on the bill's provisions:

1. Environmental assessments provide a standardized process for identifying and disclosing environmental impacts before projects proceed. HB1650 HD1 eliminates that requirement for an entire geographic district rather than evaluating impacts on a project-by-project basis.
2. Waikiki is one of the most intensively developed areas in the State, with dense infrastructure, significant water and wastewater demands, historic resources, and reliance on public utilities. Removing environmental review requirements reduces transparency and early identification of cumulative impacts.
3. Small businesses depend on stable infrastructure, environmental quality, and predictable regulatory processes. Environmental assessments help surface issues related to drainage, utilities, shoreline impacts, and historic

**Hawaii Legislative  
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resources before construction begins, reducing downstream disruptions and unanticipated costs.

4. Chapter 343 review does not prohibit development; it provides disclosure and analysis. Eliminating review requirements removes a key tool for coordination among agencies, businesses, and affected communities.

For these reasons, the Chamber of Sustainable Commerce respectfully opposes HB1650 HD1 and urges the Committee to retain environmental assessment requirements for proposed actions within the Waikīkī Special District.

Thank you.



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February 10, 2026

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND Rep.  
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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 (WSD) was passed by the City Council in 1976. It was created as a zoning ordinance in response to the rapid, intense high-rise development of the 1960s and early 1970s to preserve the area's Hawaiian sense of place.

City and County planners were alarmed at the scale and bulk of the newly-build Sheraton Hotel and Hilton Rainbow Towers, which they felt created a "wall" along the beach that was not in keeping with the open-air feel of Waikiki. The only beachfront hotel built since 1976 is the Halekulani Hotel. It's step-back design has been widely admired for its open-air feel and the use of low-rise buildings along the beach.

The district was designated the Waikiki Special Design District to manage growth, enhance the area's aesthetics, and protect the unique character and appeal.

Environmental Impact Statements and Assessments HRS 343, are mandated to ensure that proposed developments comply with regulations designated to protect cultural, social and physical resources and minimize impacts on the shoreline.

We urge you to not pass HB 1650 HD1 because environmental assessments are critical in guiding Waikiki's future development and balancing the need for tourist -driven growth with the preservation of its "sense of place".



February 10, 2026

**The Honorable Mark J. Hashem, Chair**

House Committee on Water & Land

State Capitol, Conference Room 411 & Videoconference

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

**HEARING: Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.**

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, 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** on 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.





## United Chinese Society of Hawaii

美國夏威夷中華總會館

Established 1884

42 N. King Street, Honolulu, HI 96817 Office: (808) 536-4621

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February 10, 2026

Hawaii State House of Representatives  
House Committee on Water & Land  
Conference Room 411  
Hearing: February 10, 2026 9:00am

RE: HB 1650 – Relating to Environmental Assessments – Support

Chair Hashem, Vice-Chair Morikawa, and Committee Members,

The United Chinese Society of Hawaii (“UCS”) **supports** the intent of HB 1650 to exempt historical sites and the Waikiki special district from the requirement for environmental assessments under Section 343-5, of the Hawaii Revised Statutes.

The UCS’ Hall building (42 N. King Street) is located in the Chinatown Special Historic District (“District”), and UCS represents a number of Chinese societies, clubs, and non-profit organizations that also owns commercial properties in the District. As our member organizations undertake redevelopment and renovation projects, UCS recognizes that the environmental assessment requirement is redundant and onerous because our properties are also subject to special permit and project review requirements before the City & County of Honolulu Department of Planning & Permitting and the State of Hawaii Historic Preservation Division. UCS is hopeful that HB 1650 would enable property owners in the District to complete future redevelopment and renovation projects in a timelier and cost efficient manner.

UCS appreciates this effort to promote a clean, safe, and vibrant community in the Honolulu Chinatown District. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert Yu  
President, United Chinese Society

cc: Victor Lim (Chair), Robert Yu, and Kendrick S. Chang, Government Affairs  
Committee, United Chinese Society of Hawaii

About the United Chinese Society of Hawaii: The United Chinese Society of Hawaii was established in 1884 and is the premier and leading Chinese organization in the State of Hawaii representing well-over one hundred Chinese societies, clubs, and organizations. The United Chinese Society of Hawaii is a non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Hawaii and the United States of America, whose primary purpose is to provide community service for the general health and welfare of the citizens and to promote friendly relations among the Chinese in Hawaii, the United States of America, and internationally.

**HB-1650-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 12:23:43 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dana Keawe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support Only with amendments. EA/EIA required.

Dana Keawe

**HB-1650-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 2:22:41 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

As a resident of Waikiki, I am glad to see HB1650 continue to advance through the legislative process. While I am disappointed the previous committee amended the proposal to remove inclusion of historic sites, I still believe this bill will have a positive effect on the crushing regulatory burden our working- and middle-class families face.

I **STRONGLY** urge this committee to **SUPPORT** this bill!

**HB-1650-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/6/2026 2:33:04 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laura Ruby	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

**This Act (H.B. NO. 1650 should not be enacted**T. There should be no diminution of the National And State Historic Laws, ordinances, or statutes. I have written over 20 successful nominations for the State and National Historic Registers and at this time I can see no violation by any government or private entity of my nominations.

However, there are 2 egregious examples of violations on the State and National Historic Registers for the Ala Wai Canal and Promenade:

1. With no review a number of stairways leading from the Promenade into the Canal were hurriedly cemented up. There was no public review, no EIS to my knowledge that analyzed the visual impact on the destruction of the makai bluestone structural features. Further the National Park Service States “Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. There are seven aspects of integrity—setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling.” There was clearly a violation of “the design, materials, workmanship, and feeling” of the Canal and Promenade. There are engineering ways to secure the strength of the Canal wall and stairs without obscuring the historical structure. (Please see the historical bluestone revetment wall now being restored at Honouliuli Internment Monument.); and
2. The proposed bridge design across the Ala Wai Canal also fails when the analysis of the National Park criteria is applied. (Perhaps this is why it has taken an extraordinary amount of time to hope for approval of this project.) Again, the seven aspects of integrity—setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling are clearly being violated. Obscuring and concreting-over the historical Ala Wai Canal and Promenade negates the historical structure. The Ala Wai Park also historically eligible is planned to be violated, cutting the park in half from the 100s of park users. The view planes of our natural scenic beauty of Diamond Head and the Koolau Mountains will be blocked, and the already existing 0-Build Ordinance/statute will be ignored.

Laura Ruby

808 366-0847

[lruby@hawaii.edu](mailto:lruby@hawaii.edu)



**HB-1650-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:45:34 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Louis Erteschik	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Although I am the Vice Chair of the Waikiki Neighborhood Board we have not yet met to take a position so I write as a private citizen in opposition. I certainly hope the Legislature will not erode what protections we currently have.

**HB-1650-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:11:03 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/10/2026 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the WAL 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 in strong opposition to HB1650 HD1 as written, 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 ask that you please vote no on HB1650 HD1.

Respectfully,

Gregory Misakian