

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 2:00PM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference**

RE: HB1712 HD1 Relating to the State Building Code Council

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

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 1712 House Draft 1 (HB1712 HD1), which makes both the representative of the Building Industry Association of Hawai'i and the representative of the General Contractors Association of Hawai'i permanent standing members of the State Building Code Council, instead of members who alternate terms every four years. Adds one representative of the Plumbers and Fitters United Association, Local 675, and one representative of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1186, as members of the State Building Code Council.

HB1712 HD1 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. Predictable and efficient building code processes are vital to supporting construction activity, reducing project delays, and lowering costs for businesses and consumers. The existing practice of alternating membership between two key industry representatives every four years inadvertently creates discontinuity in technical expertise and industry-government collaboration, which can hinder the frequency and efficacy of code updates and contribute to inefficiencies that are ultimately passed on to consumers and developers. This continuity better aligns with the council's responsibility to update and administer the State Building Code. This is a process that is highly technical, iterative, and benefits from sustained expertise rather than periodic turnover. Permanent membership for these positions enhances efficiency, strengthens public-private collaboration, and contributes to a more predictable development environment in Hawaii.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.

We respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1712 House Draft 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



The Plumbers and Fitters UA Local 675

1109 Bethel Street, Lower Level, Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

'A'ohe hana nui ke alu 'ia

March 3, 2026

State House of Representatives- Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Representative David Tarnas, Chair Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Reference: **HB1712, H.D. 1, Relating to the State Building Code Council**

Hearing: Wednesday, March 4, 2026, Room 325 at 2:00 pm

The Plumbers and Fitters UA Local 675 ("Local 675") are one of three licensed crafts in Hawai'i's construction industry. Its member apprentices and journeymen are guided by and licensed in accordance with the Uniform Plumbing Code ("UPC"), published by the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials ("IAPMO") who's primary

Local 675 SUPPORTS House Bill 1712, H.D. 1 which adds one representative of the Plumbers and Fitters UA Local 675, and one representative of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1186 as members of the State Building Code Council.

We appreciate the inclusion and equal representation from the trades who are licensed and perform work in accordance with the Uniform Plumbing Code and the National Electrical Code respectively, both of which are reviewed, adopted, and/or amended by the State Building Code Council.

Having such practical expertise and input throughout the process ensures that building codes and standards continue to meet their primary intent and purpose to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public, while considering alternative means and methods that provide efficiency and economic benefit to the industry.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



March 3, 2026

TO: Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Legislative Advocacy Committee
American Institute of Architects, Hawai'i State Council

Hawaii State Council
A Chapter of the
American Institute of Architects

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

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1.1.19 ver.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is a long-standing advocate for strengthening SBCC's (State Building Code Council) authority to advance building codes for the State of Hawai'i that improve the affordability of construction without compromising life safety, health, wellness or resiliency. The current composition of SBCC provides a balanced representation of county members, industry representatives, and technical expertise. HB1712 HD1, as written, will weaken this balance and increase special interest control over SBCC. The American Institute of Architects, Hawai'i State Council stands in **STRONG OPPOSITION to HB1712 HD1.**

The Building Industry Association of Hawai'i (BIA) and General Contractors Association of Hawai'i's (GCA) currently share one SBCC seat, alternating representation every four years. Granting each organization its own voting seat, in addition to the existing subcontractor seat, will significantly increase contractor representation and create the perception that the council is dominated by contractors. This erodes public confidence in the code adoption process. Expanding voting seats for narrow trade groups without increasing parallel representation for public interest and technical stakeholders, such as code officials and licensed designed professions, sends the wrong signal about whose interests the State prioritizes in building codes. Industry advocates testify that additional industry votes promote "affordability." However, experience in other jurisdictions shows that short term cost cutting at the code level can increase long term costs for homeowners and taxpayers. Weaker codes lead to higher repair and reconstruction costs after disasters, higher insurance premiums, and premature obsolescence of buildings that are not energy ready or climate resilient. True housing and infrastructure affordability in Hawai'i depends on durable, resilient, and efficient buildings. This in turn requires a code council that is structurally insulated from excessive industry influence.

Expanding voting membership in the manner proposed may also prove counterproductive. A significantly enlarged board could face quorum challenges and procedural delays. Additionally, members representing narrow trade interests may be resistant to modernized building systems or code amendments that reduce labor demands but improve overall efficiency and performance. Rather than expand voting seats for two specific trade associations, the Legislature could modernize the SBCC by adding independent code experts, resilience and climate specialists, and consumer representatives. These alternatives would address concerns about efficiency and responsiveness without compromising the council's duty to protect health, safety, and welfare. For these reasons, HB1712 HD1 should not advance in its current form, and the Legislature should instead pursue reforms that strengthen, rather than weaken, the balance and independence of the State Building Code Council. AIA Hawaii welcomes the opportunity to work with the Legislature to refine SBCC's role so that it reflects intention and effectiveness of the Council.

Mahalo for your consideration of our **STRONG OPPOSITION to HB1712 HD1.** We look forward to continuing the conversation about how best to improve the State Building Code Council to benefit the health, safety, welfare, and quality of life of Hawai'i's communities.

Respectfully submitted,
Reid Mizue, AIA, Legislative Advocacy Committee – AIA Hawai'i



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March 3, 2026

Subject: House Bill HB 1712, HD1

Committee: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
House Committee on Water and Land

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Structural Engineers Association of Hawaii (SEAOH) Building Code Committee for which I am serving as the current Chair, I am writing this letter in response to House Bill 1712, HD1 (HB 1712).

In review of HB 1712, on behalf of the SEAOH Building Code Committee we **OPPOSE HB 1712**.

SEAOH Opposes the proposed language to include the Plumbers and Fitters United Association, Local 675 and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1186 on the State Building Code Committee (SBCC) as voting members.

The current SBCC already includes the Building Industry Association of Hawaii (BIA) and General Contractors Association on an alternating basis in addition to the Subcontractors Association of Hawaii. This representation of the Construction Industry is sufficient to provide input to the SBCC regarding financial impact which relates to the residential, commercial, and industrial builders. As voting members, these three organizations provide a good range of experience and knowledge and can also be utilized to represent the Plumber and Electrical contractors and their constituents.

SEAOH opposes the addition of two additional construction representatives (Plumber's and Electrical Unions) as voting members in the SBCC. Plumbing and Electrical contractors are narrow trade groups who can be represented under the Subcontractors Association of Hawaii. Adding THREE additional contractor representatives on the SBCC will create a significant imbalance of the voting members with FIVE construction industry representatives' total. This will outweigh the design professionals and other entities who represent the life safety seats on the board leading to decisions which are purely financially based, without consideration to the impact to life safety and public health. We do, however, believe their attendance as non-voting members could offer helpful guidance as needed to meet the goals of the SBCC.

Although SEAOH opposes the addition of the Plumbers and Electrical representatives as voting members, we do not take exception for both BIA and GCA to have voting seats on the SBCC as they each represent different portions of the construction industry (i.e. residential vs. commercial). Therefore, SEAOH supports a maximum of THREE seats on the SBCC representing the construction industry with BIA, GCA and the Subcontractor's Association of Hawaii only.

If there are any questions please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Kulia Pacheco Boerstler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

K. Kulia Pacheco Boerstler, P.E., S.E.
2026 SEAOH Building Code Committee Chair



**HAWAII STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Conference Room 325
State Capitol
2:00 PM**

March 4, 2026

Subject: HB 1712 - RELATING TO THE STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee:

My name is Roseann Freitas, CEO of the Building Industry Association of Hawaii (BIA-Hawaii). Chartered in 1955, the Building Industry Association of Hawaii is a professional trade organization affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders, representing the building industry and its associates. BIA-Hawaii takes a leadership role in unifying and promoting the interests of the industry to enhance the quality of life for the people of Hawaii. Our members build the communities we all call home.

BIA-Hawaii offers the following testimony in support with amendments, of HB 1712, Relating to the State Building Code Council. This bill makes both the representative of the Building Industry Association of Hawai'i and the representative of the General Contractors Association of Hawai'i permanent standing members of the State Building Code Council (SBCC), instead of members who alternate terms every 4 years, and adds one representative of the Plumbers and Fitters United Association, Local 675, and one representative of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1186, as members of the State Building Code Council.

Because BIA-Hawaii specializes in the residential code, and the General Contractors' Association specializes in the commercial code, it makes practical sense that they hold separate seats instead of alternating. Further, the SBCC is currently made up of nine members representing some aspect of the government, and only four members representing the building industry.

Our members are directly responsible for implementing the building codes adopted by the Hawaii State Building Code Council, and we see firsthand how these codes affect housing costs, construction timelines, and project feasibility. HB 1712 promotes fairness and balance by ensuring that the professionals who must actually apply and comply with building codes have an appropriate voice in the process. Building codes are technical standards that must work in the real world, on real job sites, under Hawaii's unique environmental, logistical, and economic conditions.

With respect to the amendment put forth in the HD1 which adds one representative of the Plumbers and Fitters United Association, Local 675, and one representative of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1186, as members of the State Building Code Council, we would propose that those members be required to be licensed plumbing and electrical contractors, respectively, and be appointed to represent their respective trade associations. This would maintain consistency with other Council members who are required to possess specific professional knowledge and expertise. Additionally, we would further suggest that keeping in consistency, that (9) be deleted as the Subcontractors' seat would be redundant given the addition of (10) and (11). We have attached suggested language.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments on this matter.

- (1) One county building official from each of the four counties appointed by the mayor;
- (2) One member representing the state fire council;
- (3) One member representing the department of labor and industrial relations, who has significant experience in elevator safety;
- (4) One member representing the Hawaii state energy office of the department of business, economic development, and tourism;
- (5) One member representing the Hawaii emergency management agency, appointed by the director of Hawaii emergency management;
- (6) One member representing the Structural Engineers Association of Hawaii;
- (7) One member representing the American Institute of Architects, Hawaii State Council;
- (8) One member representing the Building Industry Association of Hawaii ~~[or the General Contractors Association of Hawaii,]~~ **who is a licensed contractor** and has significant experience with building codes~~[-, with alternating four-year terms between the two organizations and the first four year term to be served by the Building Industry Association of Hawaii; and];~~
- ~~(9) One member representing the Subcontractors' Association of Hawaii[,]~~ **who has significant experience with building codes[-];**
- ~~(9) One member representing the General Contractors Association of Hawaii~~ **who is a licensed contractor** and has significant experience with building codes;
- ~~(10) One member representing the Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors Association of Hawaii, who is a C-37 licensed plumbing contractor, and has significant experience with the plumbing code; and~~
- ~~(11) One member representing the Electrical Contractors Association of Hawaii, who is a C-13 licensed electrical contractor and has significant experience with the electrical code.~~



Housing Hawai'i's Future
PO Box 3043
Honolulu, HI 96802-3043

March 4, 2026

TO: Chair Tarnas and Members of the House Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Committee
RE: HB 1712 HD1, Relating to the State Building Code Council

Dear Chair Tarnas and Committee Members,

Housing Hawai'i's Future is a nonprofit dedicated to creating opportunities for Hawai'i's next generation by ending the workforce housing shortage.

We support House Bill 1712 HD1. This bill would make both the Building Industry Association of Hawai'i (BIA) and the General Contractors Association of Hawai'i (GCA) permanent standing members of the State Building Code Council.

We need an SBCC that reflects Hawai'i's building ecosystem. Representation from the building industry on the State Building Code Council is presently structured so that the BIA and GCA alternate service as a standing member. As a result, only one of these organizations is formally represented on the State Building Code Council at any given time, despite both groups playing distinct and complementary roles in the design, construction, and delivery of housing and other structures.

By making both organizations permanent standing members, this bill ensures that key industry perspectives are consistently represented in code development and updates.

Stable, consistent representation will help facilitate more informed, practical decision-making that takes into account the realities of construction and housing delivery. This change may also reduce administrative complexity and avoid potential gaps in industry expertise that could arise from alternating terms.

Let's advance HB1712 HD1.

Thank you,

A stylized, circular signature in black ink, appearing to be the name "Lee Wang".

Lee Wang
Executive Director
Housing Hawai'i's Future

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Perry Arrasmith".

Perry Arrasmith
Director of Policy
Housing Hawai'i's Future



lee@hawaiifuture.org

Housing Hawai'i's Future
PO Box 3043
Honolulu, HI 96802-3043
perry@hawaiifuture.org



February 12, 2026

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Strong Support of HB 1712, HD1, RELATING TO THE STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL (Makes both the representative of the Building Industry Association of Hawai'i and the representative of the General Contractors Association of Hawai'i permanent standing members of the State Building Code Council, instead of members who alternate terms every four years. Adds one representative of the Plumbers and Fitters United Association, Local 675, and one representative of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1186, as members of the State Building Code Council. Effective 7/1/3000. [HD1])

**Wednesday, Farch 4, 2026, at 2:00 P.M.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325, and VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii (LURF) is a private research and trade organization originally founded in 1979, whose members include major Hawaii landowners, developers, real estate investment trusts, 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 Hawaii's significant natural, historic, and cultural resources, public health, and safety.

Collectively and over the past 46 years, LURF members have included homebuilders, developers, planning, architecture, engineering, and legal professionals that have helped to build the most affordable housing units in the State of Hawai'i by using the building codes and working collaboratively with all state and county housing agencies to build more homes for Hawai'i.

LURF is in **strong support of HB 1712, HD1.**

LURF' POSITION. LURF appreciates the importance of building codes to protect life, health and safety and the challenges of keeping up with the ever-changing building codes. However, in recent years, some of the amendments to the state and county building codes were initiated by individuals who lacked professional expertise and knowledge of building codes applicable to single-family and multi-family homes. This lack of knowledge and experience resulted in building code amendments that exceeded reasonable national standards and substantially increased the cost of housing.

LURF believes that increasing the number of members of the State Building Code Council who have knowledge and practical experience with the State Building Code and homebuilding, and making those positions permanent, will help to facilitate the updating of the codes, will address the challenges and support the timely delivery of housing and other construction projects.

Based on the reasons stated above, LURF is in **strong support of HB 1712, HD1**, and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in **support** of this proposed measure.

HB-1712-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:04:36 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reid Mizue	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha and mahalo Chair Tarnas and Chair Poepoe and members of the Committee,

As a practicing architect, one of the foundations as well as pillars of our profession is to keep life safety and resiliency in tact for the people of Hawai‘i we serve consistently through the plans and specifications we develop with licensed engineers. The importance of a State governing body like the State Building Code Council (SBCC) is of such great importance to our profession as well as all those throughout the State involved in design and construction. I kindly submit the following testimony in STRONG OPPOSITION:

The SBCC currently consists of 13 members, of which 12 are voting members. Adding any additional members 100% weakens the balance of the Council and further swings any Council actions towards special interests related to costs and profits rather than life safety, health of building occupants, and welfare of all of us who utilize buildings (places of business and our homes) on the daily.

There are enough members on the SBCC as is, each with their balanced say in how State building codes are amended for the betterment of our people: See below from the DAGS website <https://ags.hawaii.gov/bcc/council-members/>:

1. One county building official from each of the **four** counties appointed by the mayor.
2. One member representing the State Fire Council.
3. One member representing the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations who has significant experience in elevator or fire safety.
4. One member representing the State Energy Office of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.
5. One member representing the Structural Engineers Association of Hawai‘i.
6. One member representing the American Institute of Architects, Honolulu Chapter.
7. One member representing the Building Industry Association of Hawaii or the General Contractors Association of Hawai‘i, who has significant experience with building codes, with alternating four-year terms between the two organizations and the first four-year term to be served by the Building Industry Association of Hawai‘i.
8. One member representing the Subcontractors’ Association of Hawai‘i who has significant experience with building codes.
9. One member representing the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency.
10. One Non-voting member from the State Comptroller’s Office.

I kindly ask that the Committee take into consideration that in the past (when not funded), the SBCC (an all volunteer council) has had major difficulty meeting, thus quorum was not met, resulting in State code amendments NOT being mandated on State mandated schedule. The absurd increase from twelve (12) voting members to fifteen (15) voting members is well beyond a body of councilmembers that can possibly meet on schedule and make fully-vetted/timely decisions.

As a better solution, I urge the Committee to **DEFER HB 1712** and rather **focus on this Sessions bills that fund the SBCC and extend the SBCC's mandated Code cycle from 3 years to 6 years. HB 1964 and HB 1725** respectively assist the design and construction industry both in regards to the support of a better functioning SBCC and more manageable methods that support each County, which issues building permits and conducts building inspections once buildings are complete.

As a member of many committees and boards currently and in the past, adding voting members beyond 12 to any governmental council hampers efficiency, due diligence, and bloats the bureaucratic backlog. Conducting building code amendments is complex as is, why make it even more complicated? Please consider Deferring this extreme special interest request and focus on better bills for the betterment of SBCC and assist our Counties who review for building code/issue building permits: **HB 1964** and **HB 1725**.

Mahalo nui for your consideration,

Respectfully,

Reid Mizue

HB-1712-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 9:10:55 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/4/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly H	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Ok

Testimony in Opposition to HB 1712, HD1

Relating to the State Building Code Council

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i State Legislature

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

My name is Lorena Yamamoto. I am a licensed architect in the State of Hawai'i and California. I submit this testimony in my personal capacity in **opposition to HB 1712, HD1.**

The State Building Code Council was established to adopt and update the statewide building code to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Its effectiveness depends on technical expertise, balanced representation, and independence from undue influence by any one sector of the construction industry.

HB 1712, HD1 increases voting representation from regulated construction trades by converting the existing alternating BIA and GCA seat into two permanent seats and adding additional trade representatives.

Industry expertise is valuable and necessary. However, this measure concentrates additional voting power within sectors that are directly regulated by the building code, without adding corresponding public interest, consumer, or independent technical representation. The State Building Code Council's charge is not to advance the interests of any single segment of the construction industry, but to adopt model codes and amendments that serve the broader public interest.

Building codes govern structural integrity, fire protection, accessibility, energy performance, and resilience in a state that faces hurricanes, flooding, seismic activity, and wildfire risk.

If the council faces challenges related to staffing, workload, or administrative capacity, those issues should be addressed through funding and structural support rather than through changes to voting composition.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to defer HB 1712 HD 1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Lorena S. Yamamoto, AIA, LEED AP BD+C

March 4, 2026

Honorable David Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Re: HB 1712 HD1 Relating to State Building Code Council

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe and Members of the Committee,

My name is Daniel Chun, licensed architect with 50 years professional experience in Hawaii design and construction. I was American Institute of Architects (AIA) legislative liaison to Hawaii State Legislative beginning mid-1990s until few sessions ago. **STRONGLY OPPOSE** HB1712 HD1.

Don't be like unwary sailors and succumb to Siren's call of "affordable housing"

HB 1712 HD1 makes big changes to SBCC voting members by adding entities whose primary purpose is monetary gain from managing or laboring at construction. Supporters have short-term intent for lowest first-cost of construction to maximize their profit. Truly affordable housing looks at total life-cycle cost that includes maintaining a house over long-term.

Based on my almost three decades of legislative work, HB 1712 HD1 and Senate companion have **very deficient public process** with NO referral to either Consumer Protection committees. Building is expensive undertaking and house is typically biggest investment made by consumers.

This bill is latest attempt to hamper work of SBCC

My 2007 advocacy to enact original HRS [107-22](#) has me concerned that HB 1712 HD1 is latest attempt to hamper work of SBCC. Attempts include:

- Using political influence to ensure no funding for SBCC; leaving it with no dedicated staff. Excepting Governor Linda Lingle's administration; this is willful omission on part of DAGS violating public policy §107-23 (b). Public members are paid from civil service, while SBCC survives on volunteer work by AIA architects, SEA/OH structural engineers and PAMCA plumbers.
- Testifying without evidence that numerous building code amendments are proposed by special interests. My experience is that overwhelming majority of code amendments have been proposed in your own state legislative bills. And this is your right and duty.
- Testifying that building codes are responsible for high cost of Hawaii housing. States with generally lower cost of living / doing business have lower costs of construction. My search shows that Washington state has national average construction cost. Nebraska

has 0.9 factor. Hawaii has 1.3 factor! All 50 states rely on national model codes, but local housing costs vary dramatically – on factors other than building code.

- Having introduced by this legislature recurring bills requiring SBCC to cost factor every building code amendment. ICC Codes are national “consensus codes” that have input from national organizations – including national “parents” of local proponents for HB 1712. First-cost and life-cycle cost are code considerations and done on national level. Hawaii is among most natural hazard-prone states. Construction dollars spent on “avoidance costs” are prudent costs. FEMA publications say \$1 spent on “avoidance costs” saves \$11 of private / public funds. These pesky bills were deterred after property insurers testified to House CPC that code provisions related to life safety cannot be costed because it is hard to put value on human life. With Hawaii having by far highest electricity cost in USA; consumer cost-saving from energy code amendments is locally magnified. Note AIA OPPOSING testimony says HB 1712 HD1 adds several construction management / labor entities as voters. But not a single consumer / public interest or climate resiliency voter. If House JHA moves this bill, the public will know where your interests lie.
- Including in anti-SBCC testimony the costs of scarce Hawaii land, lengthy zoning reviews and developer normal overhead / profit that are factors separate from building codes.
- Past session testimony that building codes are to blame for very long building permit reviews. Architects contend that local “discretionary” approvals and lack of county staffing are the cause. Bill died without hearing after thoughtful scrutiny at Senate JUD.

Recently adding voting member to SBCC has not proven helpful

In 2007 I worked with Senator Lorraine R. Inouye and Puna Representative Robert Herkes to pass original SBCC statute. Soon after, AIA supported adding single board seat to be alternately shared between GCA Hawaii and BIA Hawaii. In 2022 AIA sent concerned comments that adding HI-EMA as voting board member will be resented by private sector because increasing number of public agencies throws board out of “good balance” between public and private sectors. HI-EMA has not even returned phone calls seeking to discuss SBCC issues. Nor has HI-EMA proven helpful in removing Governor Green’s unprofessionally extending emergency hold on SBCC.

Moving HB 1712 HD1 means more disfunction at SBCC

Moving this bill can have opposite effect legislature is imagining. Enthusiasm evidenced by numerous supporting testimonies imply that lowest first-cost and maximum profit in housing-scarce Hawaii is bill’s attraction. Some say cost savings from downgraded codes are not reflected in actual house sales price. Conversely, “featherbedding” by resisting labor-saving code amendments increases income of labor organizations. Legislature may not be aware of intense labor opposition at SBCC public meetings to codifying manufactured housing for Hawaii.

The National Association of Home Builders (parent of BIA Hawaii) has national campaign to resist any state code amendments for improved energy performance for houses. Generally architects find commercial building owners / developers are “reluctant supporters” of improved

energy codes because they generally operate their buildings over long-term. House builders / developers generally sell completed houses to consumers who then pay long-term operating costs. As automobiles must meet federal standards like mpg to protect consuming public; production houses also require most current energy and other operating requirements for consumer protection. We don't want Hawaii to end up like Minnesota where energy code adoption is 10 years behind rest of building codes due to homebuilder opposition.

Further concern is adding more voters and more likely failing to meet quorum. Without quorum - no code updating can be undertaken. Governing board with large number of voters defeats original intent of original statute for small board of independent "technocrats." This is why Senate PSM had GCA and BIA, two important construction organizations with usually same opinion, alternate in casting one vote.

Board might become even larger if HB 1712 HD 1 crosses-over because I hear design professions will request voting seats to return "balance" to SBCC. Testimony for adding another architect with housing experience to balance other architect with commercial experience. (Reflecting GCA and BIA request). Maybe second structural engineer vote for low-rise versus high-rise experience. Definitely two more votes for licensed mechanical and electrical engineering to "balance" labor votes. Adding 10 new voters to current 12 voters = nearly doubling votes in SBCC. Most alarming is forcing four county building department voters into distinct minority (18%) while they have most important role for building safety in their local jurisdictions.

JHA should defer this bill. Thank you for opportunity to **STRONGLY OPPOSE** HB 1712 HD1.



PALMS HAWAII
ARCHITECTURE
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March 3, 2026

TO: Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair House
Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Palmer Hafdahl, AIA

SUBJECT: Opposing HB1712 HD1

As one of the few certified plans examiners with codes enforcement experience, I continue to advocate for strengthening SBCC's (State Building Code Council) authority to advance building codes for the State of Hawai'i that improve collaboration in developing responsible life safety, health, wellness, or resiliency without compromising affordability of construction.

I believe the current composition of SBCC provides a balanced representation of county members, industry representatives, and technical expertise. HB1712 HD1, as written, will weaken this balance and increase special interest control over SBCC.

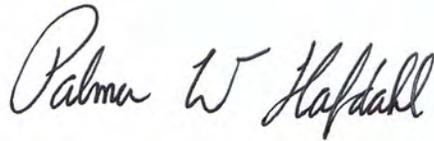
I oppose HB1712 HD1. The Building Industry Association of Hawai'i (BIA) and General Contractors Association of Hawai'i's (GCA) currently share one SBCC seat, alternating representation every four years. Granting each organization its own voting seat, in addition to the existing subcontractor seat, may significantly increase contractor representation and create the perception that contractors dominate the council. This may erode public and professional confidence in the adoption process. Expanding voting seats for narrow trade groups without increasing parallel representation for public interest and technical stakeholders, such as code officials and licensed designed professions, sends the wrong signal about whose interests the State prioritizes in building codes. Industry advocates testify that additional industry votes promote "affordability." However, experience in similar areas shows that short term cost cutting at the code level can increase long term costs for homeowners and taxpayers. Weaker codes lead to higher repair and reconstruction costs after disasters, higher insurance premiums, and premature obsolescence of buildings that are not energy ready or climate resilient. True housing and infrastructure affordability in Hawai'i depends on durable, resilient, and efficient buildings. This in turn requires a code council that is structurally insulated from excessive industry influence. It is my understanding that the BIA and/or GCA may well represent the subcontractor members' consideration.

Expanding voting membership in the manner proposed may also prove counterproductive. A significantly enlarged board could face quorum challenges and procedural delays.

Additionally, members representing narrow trade interests may be resistant to modernized building systems or code amendments that reduce labor demands but improve overall efficiency and performance. Rather than expand voting seats for two specific trade associations, the Legislature could modernize the SBCC by adding independent code experts, resilience and climate specialists, and consumer representatives. These alternatives would address concerns about efficiency and responsiveness without compromising the council's duty to protect health, safety, and welfare. For these reasons, HB1712 HD1 should not advance in its current form, and the Legislature should instead pursue reforms that strengthen, rather than weaken, the balance and independence of the State Building Code Council.

I welcome efforts to refine SBCC's role so that it reflects intention and effectiveness of the Council. Mahalo for your consideration of my OPPOSITION to HB1712 HD1. I look forward to continuing the conversation about how best to improve the State Building Code Council to benefit the health, safety, welfare, and quality of life of Hawai'i's communities in responsible commitment to both local and global built environment evolution.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Palmer W Hafdahl". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Palmer W. Hafdahl, AIA