

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

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEES ON
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
& ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Monday, March 23, 2026, 3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

in consideration of
HB 1964, HD 2
RELATING TO THE STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL.

Chairs Fukunaga and Wakai, Vice Chairs Lee and Chang, and Members of the Committees.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports and offers comments on HB 1964, HD 2**, which implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force. Requires the State Building Code Council to provide annual training to state and county permitting agency employees. Appropriates funds for the training, subject to a matching requirement from the counties.

OPSD recognizes that professional development and specialized training for permitting staff are essential tools for accelerating the permitting process statewide. By ensuring that plan reviewers, inspectors, and other permitting staff are aligned on the latest building codes, digital tools, and best practices, we can significantly reduce interpretation errors and administrative bottlenecks that currently delay vital projects.

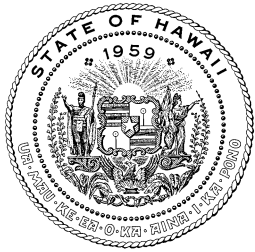
Accelerating the permitting process is a foundational component of Governor Green's housing initiatives, including the Ke Ala Hou strategy. Housing production cannot meet the urgent needs of our community if the regulatory path remains opaque or inconsistent. This measure directly supports the State's goal of streamlining development to lower costs and increase the supply of affordable units. OPSD believes the State Building Code Council is best equipped to provide this training, as they serve as the central body responsible for adopting and amending the uniform standards that govern all construction in Hawai'i. Their technical expertise ensures that training is accurate, up-to-date, and consistent across all jurisdictions.

However, **OPSD offers the comment** that in order to effectively implement the training mandates proposed in HB 1964, HD 2, the State Building Code Council must be fully active and

operational. We note that the SBCC has faced significant challenges in recent years, including periods where it has not met regularly or promulgated code updates due to a lack of dedicated staff and the impact of various emergency proclamations. Official records indicate that the SBCC's regular cycle of meeting and administrative rulemaking was largely suspended or deferred as recently as 2024 and 2025.

To address these operational hurdles, **OPSD would like to highlight** a critical budget item in HB 1800, HD1. Item number 39A, Program ID AGS-892, appropriates \$326,882 in general funds to support two full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and other current expenses for the State Building Code Council. Restoring the SBCC's functional capacity is a prerequisite for the success of HB 1964, HD 2. Without the staff and resources to facilitate regular rulemaking and oversight, any mandated training program will lack the necessary foundation to be effective.

OPSD respectfully asks the committee to pass HB 1964, HD 2 to improve the efficiency of Hawai'i's permitting systems. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



SMALL BUSINESS REGULATORY REVIEW BOARD

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TESTIMONY

TO: Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee and Members of the Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs and Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang and Members of the Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

FROM: Jonathan Shick, Chairperson *Jonathan Shick*
Small Business Regulatory Review Board (SBRRB)

DATE: Monday, March 23, 2026 – 3:00 pm - Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

SUBJECT: House Bill 1964 HD2 Relating to the State Building Code Council - Support

On behalf of the SBRRB, I am providing testimony in support of House Bill 1964 HD2 and respectfully defer commentary to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

An SBRRB member sat on the Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development Task Force beginning in 2025, which was established pursuant to Act 133. It was found that accelerating the permitting taskforce is a fundamental component of Governor Green's initiative.

Thank you for allowing the SBRRB to provide testimony in support of this measure.



March 23, 2026

TO: Honorable Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Honorable Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Honorable Glenn Wakai, Chair
Honorable Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

Hawaii State Council
A Chapter of the
American Institute of Architects

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

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

On behalf of the American Institute of Architects Hawai'i State Council (AIA Hawai'i), we offer our **support for HB1964 HD2**, which seeks to improve consistency, transparency, and efficiency in the permitting process through the establishment of standardized training requirements.

AIA Hawai'i represents architects across the state who work daily within county permitting systems. Our members experience firsthand the challenges that arise from inconsistent interpretation of codes and varying levels of reviewer training. We appreciate the Legislature's attention to strengthening the capacity and consistency of plan review staff, which is essential to improving project delivery timelines and ensuring safe, resilient buildings for our communities.

We would like to reiterate a key point from our prior testimony: **successful implementation of this measure will depend on the State Building Code Council (SBCC) having sufficient staffing capacity**. While current statute anticipates staff support for the Council, these positions have historically not been funded or filled. Without dedicated, experienced staff, it remains unclear how the Council will effectively develop, coordinate, and deliver the annual training required by this bill.

We recognize that other legislation this session seeks to address SBCC staffing, and we view those efforts as complementary and necessary to achieving the intent of this measure.

Additionally, while we understand the inclusion of training related to artificial intelligence (AI) tools in permitting, AIA Hawai'i has some concerns. We caution against overreliance on AI in the plan review process. While AI may serve as a helpful supplementary tool, it does not fully account for the many nuanced, site-specific, and interdisciplinary considerations inherent in a complete permit review. We encourage that any training in this area emphasize the **limitations of AI** and reinforce that it cannot replace the critical judgment and expertise of qualified human reviewers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure. AIA Hawai'i stands ready to support efforts that strengthen our permitting systems, improve consistency across jurisdictions, and uphold the health, safety, and welfare of the people of Hawai'i.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Islam, AIA
President
AIA Hawai'i



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS AND
THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 016
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026 AT 3:00 P.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
The Honorable Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs

To The Honorable Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
The Honorable Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Energy & Intergovernmental Affairs

SUPPORT HB1964 HD2 RELATING TO THE STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL

The Maui Chamber of Commerce supports HB1964 HD2 because it advances efforts to address longstanding barriers in Hawai'i's housing development process, particularly those related to permitting delays. As attainable housing and rentals have been one of our top priorities for years, we recognize that efficient and consistent permitting is essential to accelerating housing delivery and addressing the state's critical housing shortage.

Requiring the State Building Code Council to provide annual training for permitting agency employees is a positive step toward ensuring that staff are well-versed in current building codes and best practices. Improved training can help minimize errors, reduce inconsistencies, and foster a more predictable permitting environment for developers and homebuilders. These improvements align with our goal of streamlining permitting processes, which is crucial for controlling costs and expediting the construction of affordable and workforce housing.

The bill's provision for state funding, matched by county contributions, demonstrates a collaborative approach to capacity building. By investing in the professional development of permitting staff across jurisdictions, the state and counties can collectively address bottlenecks that have historically slowed housing projects. This approach supports the broader objective of making housing more accessible and affordable for local families, while also supporting economic recovery and resilience.

We appreciate the work of the SPEED Task Force and the Legislature's attention to these critical process improvements and urge continued focus on measures that facilitate timely housing delivery. Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support of HB1964 HD2.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs
Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Monday, March 23, 2026, at 3:00PM
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

RE: HB1964 HD2 Relating to the State Building Code Council

Aloha Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee, Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang, 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 1964 House Draft 2 (HB1964 HD2), which implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force by requiring the State Building Code Council to provide annual training to state and county permitting agency employees.

HB1964 HD2 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This policy promotes training for digital tools and emerging technologies to improve permit issuance times, increase efficiency, and reduce interpretation errors.

Inconsistent interpretation of building codes and repetitive processes are major barriers that slow development, increase costs, and deter investment. HB1964 HD2 addresses these challenges by addressing them as opportunities for automation and increased efficiency. By incorporating digital tools and emerging technologies into permitting training and workflow systems the bill helps reduce human error, mitigate costs related to permitting delays, and accelerate review times, creating a more predictable permitting environment for developers, investors, and employers. These efforts to modernize the State Building Code Council through training and digital tool adoption are meaningful and worthwhile investments that improve the working environment of those reviewing permits and drastically expedite the review process for those private sector stakeholders who are waiting to break ground.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask to pass House Bill 1964 House Draft 2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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.



LATE

March 23, 2026

Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs

Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

Support for HB 1964, HD2, RELATING TO THE STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL (Implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force. Requires the State Building Code Council to provide annual training to state and county permitting agency employees. Appropriates funds for the training, subject to a matching requirement from the counties. Effective 7/1/3000. [HD2]).

**Monday, February 23, 2026, at 3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 016, & 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.

LURF members have collectively helped to build the most market and affordable housing in Hawai'i utilizing building codes and working collaboratively with state and county administrations and agencies. LURF and its members have served on many working groups relating to the State Building Code and State Building Code Council.

LURF is in **strong support of HB 1964, HD2**, which implements certain recommendations of the State's task force for Simplifying Permitting For Enhanced Economic Development (SPEED); requires the State Building Code Council to provide annual training to state and county permitting agency employees; and appropriates funds for the training, subject to a matching requirement from the counties.

According to SPEED, building permit errors and delays in issuance of building permits were persistent challenges that prevented the timely construction of housing, infrastructure, and other projects important to Hawaii's economy. In its 2025 Final Report, SPEED recommended additional training and professional development for state and county permitting agency employees to improve the permitting process. LURF believes that this bill will provide opportunities for such training, which will reduce permitting errors and assist with improvement of the overall permit issuance backlog.

Based on the reasons stated above, LURF is in **strong support of HB 1964, HD2**, and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this bill.

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

LATE

Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

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**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Public Safety & Military Affairs
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Chair • Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair**

**Testimony to the Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs
Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair • Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair**

Monday, March 23, 2026 at 3:00 PM

RE: HB 1964 HD2 – Relating to the State Building Code Council - SUPPORT

Aloha e Chairs Fukunaga and Wakai, Vice Chairs Lee and Chang, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 350 businesses and individual members primarily on the east side of Hawai'i Island, submits this testimony in strong support of HB1964 HD2. This bill advances meaningful efforts to dismantle longstanding barriers in Hawai'i's housing development process, particularly those rooted in permitting delays that have hindered housing delivery for far too long.

Attainable housing and rental availability is among our Chamber's areas of specific interest. Our members see firsthand how the shortage of workforce and affordable housing affects the ability of local families to remain in our community and constrains economic growth across the island. We have recognized that efficient, consistent, and predictable permitting is essential to accelerating housing delivery, and HB1964 HD2 addresses this need.

The bill's requirement that the State Building Code Council provide annual training for permitting agency employees is a significant and practical step forward. Well-trained permitting staff are better positioned to apply current building codes accurately and consistently, reducing costly errors and the unpredictability that too often plagues the approval process. A more knowledgeable permitting workforce benefits everyone, developers, homebuilders, and ultimately, the families waiting for new housing units to come online. These improvements directly support our goal of streamlining the permitting process, which is crucial for controlling construction costs and accelerating the delivery of affordable and workforce housing.

We also commend the bill's collaborative funding approach, in which state funds are matched by county contributions. This structure reflects a shared commitment to capacity building across jurisdictions and ensures that the investment reaches permitting staff at every level of government. By working together to address the bottlenecks that have historically slowed housing projects, the state and counties can make meaningful, lasting progress toward making housing more accessible and affordable for local families while supporting the broader economic recovery and resilience of our communities.

The Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce appreciates the work of the SPEED Task Force and the Legislature's continued focus on these critical process improvements. We urge the Committee to pass HB1964 HD2 and to maintain momentum on measures that facilitate timely and cost-effective housing delivery for the people of Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

Carla Kuo
Executive Officer
Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce