



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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ALICE EVANS
DIRECTOR

235 South Beretania Street, 6th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804

Telephone: (808) 587-2846
Fax: (808) 587-2824
Web: <https://planning.hawaii.gov/>

Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
WATER & LAND**

Thursday, February 5, 2026, 9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

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

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, and Members of the House Committee on Water & Land,

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports and offers comments on HB 1964**, which implements certain recommendations of the SPEED Task Force. Requires the State Building Code Council (SBCC) to provide annual training to state and county permitting agency employees. Appropriates funds for training, subject to a matching funds 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, the State Building Code Council must be fully active and operational. We note that the SBCC has faced significant challenges in recent years, including

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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. Restoring the Council's functional capacity is a prerequisite for the success of HB 1964.

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



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1964

Relating to the State Building Code Council

Before the House Committee on Water & Land

Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

February 5, 2026

Submitted by:

Legislative Advocacy Group

American Institute of Architects, Hawai'i State Council

Position: Support

The American Institute of Architects

AIA Hawaii State Council
828 Fort Street Mall, Suite 100
Honolulu, HI 96813

T (808) 628-7243
contact@aiahonolulu.org
aiahonolulu.org/AIAHawaiiStateCouncil

The American Institute of Architects, Hawai'i State Council (AIA Hawai'i) supports this measure, which implements recommendations of the SPEED Task Force by requiring the State Building Code Council (SBCC) to provide annual training for state and county permitting agency employees.

AIA Hawai'i agrees that consistent training on building code updates, practical application, and best practices for permit review is essential to improving permitting timelines and reducing inconsistent interpretations across counties. Training that includes real-world examples and coordinated guidance will benefit permitting agencies, applicants, and the public.

We appreciate that this bill includes an appropriation of \$25,000 for fiscal year 2026 to 2027 to support the required training. Adequate funding is necessary to ensure the training can be delivered statewide.

We respectfully note that successful implementation will depend on the 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 staff, it is unclear how the Council will develop, coordinate, and deliver the annual training required by this bill. We are aware that other legislation this session seeks to address SBCC staffing, and we view these efforts as complementary.

AIA Hawai'i supports this measure and urges the Legislature to ensure the SBCC is both funded and staffed so the training program can be effectively implemented.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Water & Land
Representative Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Representative Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair**

**Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 9:00AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference**

RE: HB1964 Relating to the State Building Code Council

Aloha e Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Morikawa, 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 (HB1964), 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 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This policy promotes training around 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. HB 1964 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. 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.