

**STATE OF HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF PLANNING
& SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Statement of
MARY ALICE EVANS, Director

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Friday, February 13, 2026; 9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

in consideration of
HB 2515
RELATING TO WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the House Committee on Housing.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **supports** HB 2515, which establishes a time-limited workforce housing regulatory sandbox program administered by the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) in collaboration with participating counties. Additionally, it establishes an advisory council to provide nonbinding guidance and recommendations to support the proposed program.

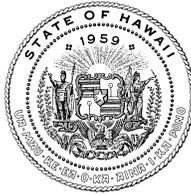
OPSD recognizes that the State faces an urgent housing crisis and understands the importance of expediting workforce housing production statewide. HB 2515 establishes an innovative, time-limited workforce housing regulatory sandbox program that will provide a pathway for developers to test innovative housing solutions. It also establishes an advisory council of which the director of OPSD will serve as the chairperson.

OPSD supports the bill and defers to HHFDC for any issues or concerns that may arise regarding its implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



DEAN MINAKAMI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM

HAWAII HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

677 QUEEN STREET, SUITE 300

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Statement of

DEAN MINAKAMI

Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

February 13, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Room 430

In consideration of

HOUSE BILL 2515

RELATING TO WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the Committee.

HHFDC **supports** House Bill 2515, which proposes the establishment of a Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program in collaboration with participating counties.

Hawaii faces an urgent housing crisis. A 2024 housing planning study projected that the State needs approximately 64,490 new housing units by the end of 2027, with a significant portion required for workforce housing, such as teachers, healthcare professionals, first responders, and service industry employees. Yet, many struggle to find housing near their workplaces, leading to longer commute times and increased traffic congestion, higher living costs that strain families, and reduced economic stability and workforce retention.

This bill introduces an innovative regulatory sandbox that allows developers to test new approaches under temporary regulatory flexibility, while maintaining environmental, cultural, and public safeguards. Specifically, the program will accelerate housing production by reducing bureaucratic delays and permitting inefficiencies; encourage innovation in design, construction, and sustainability practices; and respect county authority through voluntary participation and consent-based waivers.

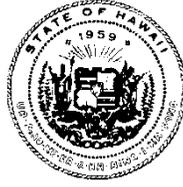
We suggest that Section 6 be amended to allow waiver or modification of State approval processes, such as those by the State Historic Preservation Division and Department of Health.

The inclusion of an Advisory Council with expertise in sustainability, Native Hawaiian practices, and housing development ensures that projects align with community values and environmental stewardship.

HHFDC is fully committed to participating in the group's work.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



HAKIM OUANSAFI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BARBARA E. ARASHIRO
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
1002 NORTH SCHOOL STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 17907
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IN REPLY PLEASE REFER TO:

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Statement of the
Hawaii Public Housing Authority

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

Friday, February 13, 2026
9:00 a.m. – Room 430, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of
HB 2515
RELATING TO WORKFORCE HOUSING

Honorable Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the House Committee on Housing:

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) supports this measure which establishes the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program within the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC). Establishes an advisory council within the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program to advise on environmental and cultural practices within specific developments.

HPHA looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature, HHFDC, and all stakeholders to address Hawaii's workforce housing challenges and views this measure as an important part of a broader coordinated solution. HPHA stands ready to participate constructively in this effort and looks at this measure as an opportunity to be part of the overall solution needed to address all housing related issues in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to meeting Hawaii's housing needs.





**HAWAII COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

STERLING HIGA
CHAIRPERSON

CRAIG K. NAKAMOTO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Statement of
CRAIG K. NAKAMOTO
Executive Director
Hawai'i Community Development Authority
before the
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

Friday, February 13, 2026
9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HB 2515
RELATING TO WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Chairperson Evslin, Vice Chairperson Miyake, and members of the Committee. The Hawai'i Community Development Authority (HCDA) **supports HB 2515**, which establishes the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program within the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC).

This measure would allow HHFDC and housing developers to test innovative, time-limited approaches to reduce unnecessary delays and costs, while preserving essential environmental, cultural, and public health protections. This flexibility is critical to accelerating the production of workforce housing for families increasingly priced out of the communities they serve.

For matters related to program design and implementation, HCDA respectfully defers to HHFDC.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**Testimony to the House Committee on Housing
Representative Luke A. Evslin, Chair
Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair**

**Friday, February 13, at 9:00AM
Conference Room 430 & Videoconference**

RE: HB2515 Relating to Workforce Housing

Aloha e Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, 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 2515 (HB2515), which establishes the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program within the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation, and establishes an Advisory Council within the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program to advise on environmental and cultural practices within specific developments.

HB2515 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. This bill aligns with one of the Chamber's top priorities of cutting unnecessary red tape and reducing regulatory complexity to foster faster housing project delivery, lower costs, and expand economic opportunity across Hawaii. By creating an environment for regulatory innovation, SB3285 presents the opportunity to investigate which regulations are sensible and which simply provide friction and delay, all within a controlled and supervised environment.

Regulatory delay and inefficiency impose real economic costs on developers and the broader economy. Hawaii experienced \$142.7 million in permitting delay costs in 2023 alone. Complex permitting processes translates into economic stagnation, heightened financing barriers, and delayed project completion — all of which raise prices for residents and limit industry from producing the housing stock necessary to meet housing demand. By codifying a controlled, innovative regulatory environment, this program presents a method of examining regulatory frameworks at a manageable scale. The Chamber believes that controlled regulatory innovation is imperative to increasing housing stock, lowering the cost of living, and identifying regulatory solutions applicable all industries pursuing development.

For these reasons we respectfully ask to pass Senate Bill 2515. 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.

February 12, 2026

TO: Chair Evslin and Members of the House Committee on Housing
RE: HB 2515, Relating to Workforce Housing

Dear Chair Evslin 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 HB 2515. The establishment of a Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program within the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation represents a forward-thinking approach to piloting regulatory flexibility.

By allowing selected projects to test alternative permitting and development processes, the program will identify more efficient pathways for delivering workforce housing without compromising essential standards. The inclusion of an advisory council focused on environmental and cultural practices further ensures that these pilot initiatives remain sensitive to Hawai'i's unique values and community needs.

To end our housing shortage, we need innovation. Regulatory sandboxes have been used in other sectors to foster innovation while maintaining oversight. Applying this model to workforce housing could help uncover practical solutions to regulatory bottlenecks that often delay or increase the cost of much-needed housing.

Let's increase workforce housing options for residents. **Please advance HB2515.**

Thank you,



Lee Wang
Executive Director
Housing Hawai'i's Future
lee@hawaiifuture.org



Perry Arrasmith
Director of Policy
Housing Hawai'i's Future
perry@hawaiifuture.org



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 430
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2026 AT 9:00 A.M.**

To The Honorable Representative Luke A. Evslin, Chair
The Honorable Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair
Members of the Housing Committee

SUPPORT HB2515 RELATING TO WORKFORCE HOUSING

The Maui Chamber of Commerce supports HB215, which establishes the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program within the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC), as it proposes a framework to pilot regulatory flexibilities and streamline permitting processes for workforce housing developments.

The creation of a regulatory sandbox aligns with our priority to expedite the delivery of affordable and workforce housing by allowing for targeted waivers and process improvements. By enabling select projects to operate under modified regulatory requirements, the bill has the potential to reduce delays and costs that often hinder housing production. The inclusion of an advisory council to oversee environmental and cultural considerations is a positive step, ensuring that streamlined processes remain balanced with responsible stewardship of Hawai'i's unique resources.

We appreciate that the bill requires annual reporting to the legislature, which will provide transparency and opportunities for ongoing evaluation. The temporary nature of the program, with a sunset date, allows the state to assess its effectiveness before considering broader application. However, it will be important to ensure that lessons learned from the sandbox are systematically captured and shared, so that successful strategies can inform future policy and regulatory reforms.

Overall, we support HB2515 as a promising tool to accelerate workforce housing delivery and respectfully urge its passage.

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 of
Joy Barua

Before:

The House Committee on Housing
The Honorable Representative Luke A. Evslin, Chair
The Honorable Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair

Friday, February 13, 2026
9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430 & via Videoconference

RE: HB2515 Relating to Workforce Housing

Aloha e Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joy Barua, and I am writing in **SUPPORT of House Bill (HB2515)**, which establishes the Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program within the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC). The program is designed to test, pilot, and refine innovative regulatory approaches that accelerate workforce housing development, paired with an advisory council focused on environmental and cultural practices, and includes an appropriation and annual reporting to the Legislature.

The Workforce Housing Regulatory Sandbox Program will enable HHFDC to partner with developers, community stakeholders, and permitting agencies to pilot new regulatory models, streamline processes, and identify systemic barriers that can inform broader policy improvements. The measure also establishes an advisory committee that will work closely with county governments and relevant state departments to ensure coordination, alignment, and practical implementation across jurisdictions. Its inclusion of environmental and cultural perspectives helps ensure that workforce housing solutions are responsible and reflective of community values. By requiring regular reporting to the Legislature, the measure promotes transparency, accountability, and data-driven refinement of regulatory practices. Targeted resources and regulatory flexibility will support Hawaii's broader goal of increasing the supply of affordable and workforce-level housing statewide.

Under the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, HB2515 aligns with the Economic Action policy pillar by advancing regulatory modernization and improving the conditions necessary for business growth and workforce stability. Housing affordability is a foundational economic issue in Hawaii, directly impacting employer competitiveness, talent retention, and overall cost of living. High housing costs and complex regulatory processes remain significant barriers to producing workforce housing for essential and middle-income workers. By creating a structured framework for regulatory flexibility and innovation, HB2515 supports a more predictable and efficient pathway to increase housing supply and strengthen Hawaii's economic resilience.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



Joy Barua
(808) 295-0190