

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

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Statement of  
**MARY ALICE EVANS, Director**

before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
Thursday, April 2, 2026, 2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of  
**SB 2671, SD 1, HD 2**  
**RELATING TO ESSENTIAL PERMITTING POSITIONS.**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance.

The Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) **offers the following comments with concerns on SB 2671, SD 1, HD 2**, which authorizes the mayor of each county with a population of less than five hundred thousand to implement a pilot program to improve the speed, accountability, and quality of permit processing within that county through targeted staffing, performance incentives, and interdepartmental competition. Authorizes increased pay for certain permitting positions and requires county personnel departments to prioritize the hiring of permitting positions as part of the pilot program. Requires participating county mayors and county agencies to establish goals for the pilot program. Requires participating county agencies to submit quarterly reports to the respective county councils on the pilot program. Sunsets the pilot project on 6/30/2030.

**OPSD supports the intent of the measure**, which seeks to improve the speed and quality of permit processing through a pilot program for essential permitting positions. OPSD recognizes that a major barrier to housing development in Hawai'i is the extensive time required to navigate through the permitting process. We further acknowledge that staffing shortages and a lack of experienced personnel within permitting agencies significantly slow these critical reviews, creating a bottleneck that delays the delivery of new housing units.

While OPSD supports the goal of enhancing recruitment and retention for permitting staff, we prefer a more stable and permanent increase in compensation over the temporary incentive structures proposed in this measure. To effectively address the staffing crisis, the State must provide financial certainty for both existing personnel and the next generation of professionals we hope to attract to the permitting field. Short-term incentives, while well-intentioned, often lack the long-term reliability to influence a professional's career decisions or to compete with the stability offered by the private sector.

SB 2671, SD 1, HD 2 - RELATING TO ESSENTIAL PERMITTING POSITIONS -  
COMMENT  
State Office of Planning and Sustainable Development  
April 2, 2026

Establishing a permanent, competitive salary floor and range for permitting personnel would signal a long-term investment in the State's infrastructure and housing capacity. This approach not only rewards the expertise of our current staff who have carried the burden of high vacancies but also creates a predictable and attractive career ladder for new recruits. By improving fundamental pay and ensuring its permanence, we can build a resilient, professional workforce capable of sustaining the accelerated permitting timelines necessary to solve our housing crisis.

OPSD initially expressed a preference for this measure's companion bill, HB 2140, HD 2, because of its amendments that addressed several administrative and operational issues through amendments taken by this House committee. Specifically, HB 2140, HD 2 was amended to require personnel hired into essential permitting positions to meet the minimum qualifications for that position, clarify that the hiring department is responsible for prioritizing the hiring of individuals under the pilot program, and changing the sunset to match the end date of the funding source for the pilot program. **However, OPSD now prefers SB 2671, SD 1, HD 2**, due to its amendment that limits the authorization to participate in the pilot program to counties with a population less than five hundred thousand. This amendment addressed the significant concern raised by City & County of Honolulu over the potential diversion of funds that could negatively impact the funding stability for the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART).

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on this measure.

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

**Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 2:00PM  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

**RE: SB2671 SD1 HD2 Relating to Essential Permitting Positions**

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 Senate Bill 2671 Senate Draft 1 House Draft 2 (SB2671 SD1 HD2), which establishes a pilot program to improve the speed, accountability, and quality of permit processing through targeted staffing, performance incentives, and interdepartmental competition within participating counties.

SB2671 SD1 HD2 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. The incentives provided by this bill invigorate a permitting process that has been marked by understaffing and strain. Creating financial incentives for those engaged in permitting work will help to fill job vacancies, improve retention, and boost productivity. The private sector suffered \$124.6M in permitting delay costs in 2024 alone. Creating a pilot program to test these performance incentives is a hopeful indicator to the business community signaling that permitting innovation is in development and that permitting delay cost burdens might be improved soon.

Aside from the costs associated with permitting delays, inefficiency within the permitting system stifles business' infrastructure development and limits their ability to scale production. Further, permitting delays slows the infusion of key affordable and workforce housing supply into the market. Both effects exert economic pressure that raises the cost of living for the state's labor pool and raises the cost of doing business. The Chamber values the intent of this bill and the economic potential of a pilot program that can sensibly incentivize permitting performance against designated milestones and performance metrics.

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 Senate Bill 2671 Senate Draft 1 House Draft 2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



April 2, 2026

TO: HONORABLE CHRIS TODD, CHAIR, HONORABLE JENNA TAKENOUCI, VICE CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON FINANCE.

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF S.B. 2671 SD1 HD2, RELATING TO ESSENTIAL PERMITTING POSITIONS.** Authorizes the mayor of each county with a population of less than five hundred thousand to implement a pilot program to improve the speed, accountability, and quality of permit processing within that county through targeted staffing, performance incentives, and interdepartmental competition. Authorizes increased pay for certain permitting positions and requires county personnel departments to prioritize the hiring of permitting positions as part of the pilot program. Requires participating county mayors and county agencies to establish goals for the pilot program. Requires participating county agencies to submit quarterly reports to the respective county councils on the pilot program. Sunsets the pilot project on 6/30/2030.

HEARING

DATE: Thursday, April 2, 2026  
TIME: 2:00 p.m.  
PLACE: Capitol Room 308

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committees,

The General Contractors Association of Hawaii (GCA) is an organization comprised of approximately five hundred (500) general contractors, subcontractors, and construction related firms. The GCA was established in 1932 and is the largest construction association in the State of Hawaii. Our mission is to elevate Hawaii's construction industry and strengthen the foundation of our community.

GCA **Supports** on S.B. 2671 SD1 HD2, which authorizes the mayor of each county with a population of less than five hundred thousand to implement a pilot program to improve the speed, accountability, and quality of permit processing within that county through targeted staffing, performance incentives, and interdepartmental competition. Authorizes increased pay for certain permitting positions and requires county personnel departments to prioritize the hiring of permitting positions as part of the pilot program. Requires participating county mayors and county agencies to establish goals for the pilot program. Requires participating county agencies to submit quarterly reports to the respective county councils on the pilot program. Sunsets the pilot project on 6/30/2030.

The GCA supports the implementation of a pilot program to increase recruitment and retention of permitting staff. Staff vacancies within the various permitting departments has been an ongoing issue and contributes to the delay of projects, which increases the cost of construction.



## HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Finance

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association

April 2, 2026

S.B. 2671 S.D.1 H.D.2– RELATING TO ESSENTIAL  
PERMITTING POSITIONS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of S.B. 2671 S.D.1 H.D.2, which authorizes the mayor of each county with a population of less than five hundred thousand to implement a pilot program to improve the speed, accountability, and quality of the permit process within that county through targeted staffing, performance incentives and interdepartmental competition.

Our organization represents hundreds of employees, across all counties, that are involved in the permitting process. For years we have been advocating that the counties put more focus and investment on the recruitment and retention of employees involved in the permitting process – such as increasing the pay, reducing hiring times, and providing financial awards for meeting milestones that encourage career growth and promote employment longevity. We would like to note that the counties already possess the authority as proposed in section 2, subsection (b)(2), that allows for differentials for recruitment and retention. However, we appreciate the intent of this measure as it continues the conversation about ways our counties can look to develop modern and attractive benefits of this century, to recruit and retain a qualified permitting workforce.

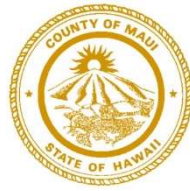
Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 2671 S.D.1 H.D.2.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**JOSIAH K. NISHITA**  
Managing Director



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
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**TO:** Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Committee on Finance

**FROM:** Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
Jordan Molina, Director of Public Works

**DATE:** March 31, 2026

**SUBJECT:** **SUPPORT OF SB2671 SD1 HD2, RELATING TO ESSENTIAL PERMITTING POSITIONS.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure which authorizes the mayor of each county with a population of less than five hundred thousand to implement a pilot program to improve the speed, accountability, and quality of permit processing within that county through targeted staffing, performance incentives, and interdepartmental competition. Authorizes increased pay for certain permitting positions and requires county personnel departments to prioritize the hiring of permitting positions as part of the pilot program. Requires participating county mayors and county agencies to establish goals for the pilot program. Requires participating county agencies to submit quarterly reports to the respective county councils on the pilot program. Sunsets the pilot project on 6/30/2030. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Permitting agencies ability to support the delivery of affordable housing is constrained by the capacity of its permitting staff. Increasing staffing resources is essential to ensuring timely permit review and approvals.
2. Incentivizing the recruitment and retention of qualified permitting staff is critical to expanding the operational capacity and effectiveness of permitting agencies.
3. This measure represents a meaningful demonstration of the State's commitment to addressing Hawai'i's affordable housing challenges and will significantly enhance the counties' ability to strengthen and modernize their permitting capabilities.

Mahalo for your consideration.



# MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 308  
THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2026 AT 2:00 P.M.**

To The Honorable Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Finance

## **SUPPORT SB2671 SD1 HD2 RELATING TO ESSENTIAL PERMITTING POSITIONS**

As an organization committed to fostering economic growth, diversification, and long-term prosperity for Hawai'i's communities, we view SB2671 SD1 HD2 as an important step toward addressing a persistent barrier to business and investment: inefficient permit processing. Timely and predictable permitting is critical for businesses seeking to expand, innovate, or recover from recent economic setbacks.

By establishing a pilot program that focuses on targeted staffing, performance incentives, and interdepartmental collaboration, this bill directly addresses bottlenecks that have historically delayed construction, renovation, and business development projects. The authorization for mayors to designate essential permitting positions and offer differential payments can help counties recruit and retain skilled personnel, which is vital for improving processing times and accountability. These measures align with our priorities of supporting productivity, predictability, and outcomes that benefit the broader economy.

The bill's approach of allowing counties to use existing county surcharge revenues for pilot program expenses is prudent, as it avoids imposing new taxes or fees on businesses—an outcome we strongly support. Prioritizing hiring for essential permitting positions also signals a commitment to responsive government and efficient service delivery, both of which are necessary for attracting investment and supporting economic diversification across sectors such as construction, technology, and manufacturing.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB2671 HD1 SD2 and ask that you move this bill forward.

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.



April 1, 2026

Representative Chris Todd, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance

**Support of the Intent of SB 2671, SD1, HD2 RELATING TO ESSENTIAL PERMITTING POSITIONS. (Authorizes the mayor of each county with a population of less than five hundred thousand to implement a pilot program to improve the speed, accountability, and quality of permit processing within that county through targeted staffing, performance incentives, and interdepartmental competition. Authorizes increased pay for certain permitting positions and requires county personnel departments to prioritize the hiring of permitting positions as part of the pilot program. Requires participating county mayors and county agencies to establish goals for the pilot program. Requires participating county agencies to submit quarterly reports to the respective county councils on the pilot program. Sunsets the pilot project on 6/30/2030. Effective 7/1/3000. [HD1])**

**FIN Hearing: Thursday, April 1, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308, and VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawai'i (LURF) is a private research and trade association 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 and sustainable economic growth in agriculture, housing, renewable energy, commercial and industrial uses, and tourism, while safeguarding Hawai'i's significant natural, environmental, historic, and cultural resources, public health, and safety.

**LURF's Position.** LURF supports the intent of SB 2671, SD1, HD1. Collectively and over the past 46 years, LURF members have helped to build the most affordable and market housing units in the State of Hawai'i by working collaboratively with all state and county administrations and permitting agencies. However, there are often significant delays in county permits for needed housing, infrastructure, commercial and industrial development, and renewable energy projects due to the shortage of county permitting workers, lack of training and efficient interdepartmental coordination.

LURF believes that the implementation of a pilot program that addresses the issues of staffing of permitting positions, performance incentives, and interdepartmental competition can improve the recruitment and retention of permitting workforce, and result in improved accountability, efficiency, timeliness, and quality of permit processing in county departments.

Based on the reasons stated above, LURF **supports the intent of SB 2671, SD1, HD2**, and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of this bill.

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