



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

Ka 'Oihana Ho'oka'a'ike no ka Po'e Kīnānā

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April 23, 2026

### TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

Senate Concurrent Resolution 8 – Urging the Counties to Act on Any Building Permit Application for Modification of a Residence that is Prescribed by a Licensed Health Care Provider and Found by the County to be Essential to the Safety or Health of an Older Adult or Person with a Disability Within Forty-Five Days of Receipt of a Complete Application

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Concurrent Resolution 8 – Urging the Counties to Act on Any Building Permit Application for Modification of a Residence that is Prescribed by a Licensed Health Care Provider and Found by the County to be Essential to the Safety or Health of an Older Adult or Person with a Disability Within Forty-Five Days of Receipt of a Complete Application.

Many people prefer to age in place, and studies have shown this is beneficial to the individual. It also prevents unnecessary placement in an institutionalized nursing facility, of which Hawaii has a shortage of. For someone with a disability, this may require physical modifications to their unit or to common areas. However, if a permit is required and a county does not issue it in a timely manner, an individual may be forced to choose between moving or allowing unpermitted construction work.

DCAB would urge that a person with a disability be offered some type of remedy when a county does not act on an accessibility related permit request within forty-five days.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

KRISTINE PAGANO  
Acting Executive Director



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

**JOSH GREEN, MD**  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

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April 21, 2026

**TO:** HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND  
Representative Mark J. Hashem, Chair  
Representative Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair  
Honorable Members

**FROM:** John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to  
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

**RE:** **SCR 8 -- RELATING TO BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS**

**HEARING:** Thursday, April 23, 2026 @ 10:00 am; Conference Room 430

**POSITION:** SUPPORT with COMMENTS

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Testimony:

SCR 8 urges Hawai'i's counties to act within 45 days on complete building permit applications for home modifications that a licensed health care provider says are essential for the safety or health of an older adult or person with a disability. SCR 8 could help older adults and people with disabilities get needed home safety modifications approved faster, which may reduce the risk of falls, injuries, and health complications. SCR 8 could also reduce delays and stress for families trying to make homes safer and more accessible for loved ones.

Thank you for hearing this measure.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



## **SCR8 Counties Expedite Permitting for Aging & People with Disabilities (House WAL)**

COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

Thursday, Apr 23, 2026 10:00: Room 430 Videoconference

### **Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports SCR8:**

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the ad hoc leader of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder prevention and treatment agencies and recovery-oriented services such as stabilization crisis, harm reduction and supportive housing.*

We strongly support this measure urging counties to act within forty-five days on permit applications for medically necessary home modifications.

**Especially important now that substance abuse agencies are now entering the housing arena to provide professionally management housing for the most chronic disabled.**

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**Complex Patients Approach.** As treatment agencies evolve to address disabled patients through professionally managed housing for complex patients who have substance use disorders, co-occurring mental illness coupled with chronic physical health conditions, this can be important to have **professionally managed housing rather than self-managed housing.**

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For individuals with substance use disorders, recovery is a recognized disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Safe, stable, and appropriately modified housing is not optional—it is essential to health, safety, and sustained recovery.

**Delays in permitting can mean prolonged risk, relapse, or even loss of housing for vulnerable individuals.** SUD treatment providers and recovery residences serve people with disabilities and must be treated with the same urgency and protections afforded under the ADA.

This measure helps ensure timely, reasonable accommodations and supports continuity of care. We respectfully ask your support. We appreciate the opportunity to respond and are available for questions.



## **SCR8\_HSCR2181-26 Counties Expedite Permitting for Aging & People with Disabilities**

COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair

Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

Thursday, Apr 23, 2026 10:00: Room 430 Videoconference

### **Hina Mauka Strongly Supports SCR8,HSCR2181-26**

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Brian Baker. I am the President and CEO for Hina Mauka, a mental health and substance use disorder treatment and prevention agency for thousands of adults and adolescents on Oahu and Kauai, including recovery-oriented services and housing transitional living programs.*

We are writing in strong support of this measure requiring counties to act within forty-five days on applications related to medically necessary home modifications. However, we also highlight that this action is needed not just on medically necessary home modifications, but also on **all applications that relate to approvals for permits needed for the Aging and people with Disabilities**, which includes housing for **Substance Use Disorders**.

Timely access to appropriate housing is a critical component of care for individuals living with Substance Use Disorders (SUD). Increasingly, treatment providers are stepping forward to develop and operate professionally managed housing environments designed to serve individuals with the most complex and chronic needs. These settings are essential to stabilizing health, reducing relapse risk, and supporting long-term recovery.

Despite these efforts, providers routinely encounter significant barriers when attempting to establish or modify housing. These include burdensome permitting requirements, inconsistent local practices, and, in some cases, policies that raise serious concerns regarding fairness and legality. Stigma surrounding substance use disorders continues to influence decision-making in ways that delay or prevent the creation of safe and supportive housing options.

It is important to underscore that individuals in recovery are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Access to appropriate housing—particularly housing that may require modification to meet health and safety needs—is not discretionary. It is a

necessary accommodation that directly impacts an individual's ability to maintain recovery and avoid adverse outcomes.

When permitting processes are prolonged, the consequences are not merely administrative—they are human. Delays can disrupt care, increase the likelihood of relapse, and leave individuals without stable housing at critical moments in their recovery journey.

By establishing clear timelines for county action, this measure promotes accountability, reduces unnecessary delays, and helps ensure that providers can deliver housing solutions in a timely and effective manner. It is a practical step toward aligning local processes with the urgency of need and the legal protections afforded to this population.

We respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo for allowing us to testify.



[www.AlohaILHawaii.org](http://www.AlohaILHawaii.org)

Apr 23, 2026

#### MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Roxanne U. Bolden

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Scott Suzuki  
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The Honorable Mark J. Hashem, Chair  
House Committee on Water & Land  
The Thirty-Third Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawaii  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**SUBJECT:** SCR8 – Urging the Counties to Act on Any Building Permit Application for Modification of a Residence That is Prescribed by a Licensed Health Care Provider and Found by the County to be Essential to the Safety or Health of an Older Adult or Person with a Disability within Forty-five Days of Receipt of a Complete Application.

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) is a cross-disability, statewide, non-profit organization that supports people with disabilities of all ages to live independently in their own homes and communities. AILH **strongly supports SCR8.**

Across Hawaii, disabled residents and kupuna experience months-long delays in county building permits for basic accessibility modifications—such as ramps, grab bars, widened doorways, and bathroom adaptations—that are essential to safety and independent living. These delays trap people in unsafe homes, increase fall risk and injury, and in some cases force unnecessary moves to institutional or segregated settings, which is contrary to the State’s obligation to support community living and aging in place.

SCR8 is an important systems-level change because it urges each county to act on permit applications for essential safety-related home modifications within forty-five days of receiving a complete application. From a Water and Land perspective, this is about how county permitting systems manage residential properties in a way that promotes equitable, safe, and



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sustainable use of our existing housing stock, rather than pushing people into more costly and resource-intensive institutional settings.

We particularly appreciate that the resolution recognizes both “older adults” and “persons with a disability.” We respectfully offer the following comments to strengthen the resolution’s alignment with independent living principles and cross-disability equity:

### 1. Center consumer direction and disability expertise.

The current language conditions action on modifications “prescribed by a licensed health care provider” and “found by the county to be essential.” While medical providers play an important role, people with disabilities and their families often understand their accessibility and safety needs best. We encourage counties, in implementing this resolution, to accept documentation from a broader range of qualified professionals (such as occupational therapists, rehabilitation specialists, and independent living professionals) and to meaningfully consider the resident’s own description of what is essential to their safety and independence.

### 2. Ensure cross-disability access, not only age-based.

The findings focus heavily on older adults and fall-related injuries. Younger disabled people, including those with mobility, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, psychiatric, and chronic health conditions, also require timely home modifications to avoid injury, hospitalization, and institutionalization. We ask that counties apply any 45-day timelines and streamlined processes equally to all disabled residents, regardless of age, and that implementation guidance use explicitly cross-disability language.

### 3. Promote clear, predictable permitting pathways for accessibility projects.

From a Water and Land/land use standpoint, many of these modifications are minor changes to existing single-family homes that primarily affect the resident’s safety, not neighborhood density or



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environmental impact (for example, a ramp replacing steps, or grab bars in a bathroom). Counties can operationalize SCR8 by:

- Creating specific “accessibility modification” permit categories with simplified submittal checklists and clear timelines.
- Training permitting staff on disability access, ADA and Fair Housing Act concepts, and the importance of avoiding unnecessary delays for disability-related home changes.
- Tracking processing times and outcomes for accessibility-related permits and publicly reporting this information, disaggregated by island, to support accountability and equity.

#### 4. Avoid unintended barriers in implementation.

We caution against any implementation that would require intrusive medical documentation or repeated re-verification that may delay or discourage applications. A streamlined process that focuses on the nature of the modification (e.g., ramp, lift, grab bars, accessible bathroom) is more consistent with both civil rights and independent living principles than a process that over-medicalizes disability.

By acting quickly on these essential safety-related permits, counties can reduce injuries and hospitalization, support the State’s public health goals, and uphold the right of disabled residents and kupuna to remain in their own homes and communities as long as they choose. This is exactly the kind of practical, upstream systems change that prevents crises and makes better use of our existing housing and community infrastructure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,



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*Roxanne U. Bolden*

Roxanne Bolden  
Executive Director

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