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March 15, 2008

The Honorable Russell S. Kokubun, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection,
and Affordable Housing
State Capitol, Room 229
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: S.C.R. 87 / S.R.49 – Recommending that Realtors Promote the Principles of Universal Design.
Hearing Date: Monday, March 17, 2008 @ 9:30 a.m., Room 229

Dear Chair Kokubun and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Affordable Housing:

On behalf of our 10,000 members in Hawaii, the Hawaii Association of REALTORS® (HAR) submits comments on S.C.R 87 & S.R. 49.

This resolution requests Realtors to 1) promote the marketing of properties which incorporate the principles of universal design into their design; 2) develop standards for determining whether a property incorporates universal design principles into its design; and 3) designate a symbol, to be included within their listing of a property, which would indicate whether a property satisfied their standards for determining whether a property has incorporated universal design principles into its design.

We believe the organizations best suited to address the needs of residents are the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and AARP. They have developed the Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) program to address the needs of consumers who want to make their house a home for a lifetime - regardless of one's age, or functional abilities. AARP, with an online Universal Design Modification Program, educates its constituents on housing issues: <http://www.aarp.org/universalhome>.

The REALTORS® do not have the necessary training and expertise to advise on the principles of universal design and the provisions of the resolution would require REALTORS® to perform duties that fall outside of the licensing laws that govern real estate licensees.

The House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce passed out H.C.R. 120 on March 12, 2008 to replace all references to Realtors with the National Association of Home Builders. We would respectfully suggest that S.C.R.87 and S.R. 49 be revised as such, since the National Association of Home Builders would be the entity that has the expertise and knowledge on the principles of universal design.

Mahalo for this opportunity to submit testimony.