

SB 577

Measure Title: RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Report Title: Affordable Housing; Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation; Urban Core; Environmental Assessments; Environmental Impact Statements; Exemption

Description: Exempts the development of affordable housing projects developed in the urban core by the Hawaii housing finance and development corporation from environmental assessment and environmental impact statement requirements.

Companion: HB928

Package: None

Current Referral: HOU/AEN, WAM

Introducer(s): ESPERO, S. Chang, Dela Cruz, Keith-Agaran, Kidani, Nishihara, Taniguchi, Wakai

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
HAWAII HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
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Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

Statement of
Craig K. Hirai
Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

February 2, 2017 at 2:45 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 225

In consideration of
S.B. 577
RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

The HHFDC *supports the intent* of S.B. 577, which attempts to streamline the development of affordable housing projects within the urban core of Oahu. Because this bill amends Chapter 343, HRS, we defer to the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC) with respect to its impacts on federal or state environmental review requirements. We are willing to work with OEQC on necessary amendments to the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senator Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Gil Riviere, Vice Chair

DATE: Thursday, February 2, 2017
TIME: 2:45 p.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 225

re: SB 577 RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

PLEASE HOLD

Aloha Chairs Espero and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Harimoto and Riviere, and Members of the Committees

Life of the Land is Hawai`i's own energy, environmental and community action group advocating for the people and `aina for 47 years. Our mission is to preserve and protect the life of the land through sound energy and land use policies and to promote open government through research, education, advocacy and, when necessary, litigation.

SB 577 is a dangerous bill that needs to be held.

The preamble contains two dangerous statements.

“The legislature finds that ... in the urban core, where impacts to the environment may be inconsequential due to the existing development and population, additional impact statements and studies do not provide additional safeguards to the environment.”

Imagine an argument that the Honolulu Rail from Middle Street to wherever, does not need an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), because it is in the urban core, or that EIS-based cultural impact statements for Kaka`ako need not be completed, even though iwi have been found throughout the region.

The second statement states that because private developers get away without adequate EIS review, state projects should sink to that level.

“The legislature further finds that one of the triggers for environmental assessments and environmental impact statements is the use of state or county funds for the project, while privately financed projects do not similarly trigger environmental assessments or environmental impact statements.”

In reality, the need for an environmental review should be based on potential impacts, not location. The fact that the bill identifies a weakness in current law, that privately financed projects on private land escapes adequate environmental review, does not imply that State projects should sink to that level, but rather, that private projects should rise to the level where adequate reviews are possible.

Affordable housing would be in the picture, if developers were not able to avoid building units, by sliding money to the government. High rises that sell all of their units in less than 24-hours, before they are built, indicate that a slightly higher unit price, to cover some affordable units, would be quite possible.

Instead, the environmental review process is blamed for the lack of affordable housing.

Mahalo,

Henry Curtis
Executive Director

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2017 5:00 PM
To: HOU Testimony
Cc: mendezj@hawaii.edu
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB577 on Feb 2, 2017 14:45PM*

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SB577

Submitted on: 1/30/2017

Testimony for HOU/AEN on Feb 2, 2017 14:45PM in Conference Room 225

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Javier Mendez-Alvarez	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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