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GOVERNOR



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IN REPLY REFER TO:

Statement of
DENISE ISERI-MATSUBARA
Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

February 9, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 423

In consideration of
H.B. 1277
RELATING TO HOUSING.

The HHFDC **supports the intent** of H.B. 1277, provided that its passage does not adversely impact fiscal priorities in the Executive Biennium Budget. This bill creates a new Office of the Housing Advocate in the Office of the Governor, to be responsible for coordinating State resources for housing development and for developing and advocating for policies to address the State's housing shortage.

At present, several agencies attached to different departments are responsible for some portion of the State's housing need. HHFDC provides financing and development tools to promote the development of workforce housing. The Hawaii Public Housing Authority provides public housing and housing assistance to very low-income households. The Hawaii Community Development Authority provides moderate-income housing through its Reserved Housing Program. It would be beneficial if a Housing Advocate existed to ensure that these and any other State agency with a housing function work together to maximize housing development efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE, 2021**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1277, RELATING TO AN OFFICE OF THE HOUSING ADVOCATE.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

DATE: Tuesday, February 9, 2021 **TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 423, Via Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY.**
(For more information, contact Klemen Urbanc,
Deputy Attorney General, at 587-2978)

Chair Nakamura and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments regarding this bill.

The purpose of the bill is to establish the Office of the Housing Advocate, to be placed within the Office of the Governor for administrative purposes.

By placing the Office of the Housing Advocate within the Office of the Governor, the bill could violate section 6 of article V of the Hawai'i State Constitution, which requires all executive and administrative offices, departments and instrumentalities of the State to be placed within the principal departments of the executive branch unless they are temporary and for a special purpose. The Office of the Governor is not a principal department of the executive branch. See section 26-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). The bill also does not appear to make the Office of the Housing Advocate temporary.

To avoid the constitutional concern above, we recommend amending page 1, line 8, of the bill to place the Office of the Housing Advocate in one of the eighteen principal executive departments listed in section 26-4, HRS, for administrative purposes, rather than the Office of the Governor and further, amending section 2 (page 2, lines 8-11) so that one full-time equivalent position is established in the applicable principal executive department for the position of the Housing Advocate.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
State Capitol, Conference Room 229
415 South Beretania Street
1:00 PM**

February 9, 2021

RE: HB 1277, RELATING TO AN OFFICE OF THE HOUSING ADVOCATE

Chair Nakamura, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and members of the committee:

My name is Beau Nobmann, 2021 President of the Building Industry Association of Hawaii (BIA-Hawaii). Chartered in 1955, the Building Industry Association of Hawaii is a professional trade organization affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders, representing the building industry and its associates. BIA-Hawaii takes a leadership role in unifying and promoting the interests of the industry to enhance the quality of life for the people of Hawaii. Our members build the communities we all call home.

BIA-Hawaii is in strong support of HB 1277, which proposes to create the position of Housing Advocate within the Office of the Governor.

The bill addresses a glaring problem in government as it attempts to address the housing crisis in Hawaii. The state lacks a dedicated housing coordinator who understands real estate development and the government land process. This has resulted in "silos" being created by agencies who have control of land (i.e. lease or Executive Order), but no understanding of the state's overall goal to increase the supply of housing at all price points. Agencies want to accommodate their own specific goals/mission on the lands they control right now. As a result, state land assets are redeveloped for uses that do not achieve a greater public purpose.

We would suggest that the position be provided with enough authority to break down the agency silos and move projects forward that will increase the supply of housing at all price points.

We are in strong support of HB 1277, and appreciate the opportunity to express our views on this matter.

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