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GOVERNOR



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STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
HAWAII HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
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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 10, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 423

In consideration of
H.B. 2022
RELATING TO HOUSING.

The HHFDC **supports the intent** of H.B. 2022, which removes requirements for housing projects developed by the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation to obtain approval from county legislative bodies; provided the project meets the appropriate zoning and plan designations.

The purpose of Hawaii Revised Statutes Section 201H-38 is to expedite affordable housing development by providing an alternative to the zoning and development plan amendment process, which can take years. HHFDC supports efforts to streamline legislative body and ministerial approvals to expedite the development of critically-needed affordable housing.

This bill has the potential to create a streamlining effect by eliminating the need for county council approval of so-called 201H projects. However, conditioning the approval of a 201H project on the project meeting the appropriate zoning designation or plan designation would erode the efficacy of Section 201H-38. In many cases, 201H-38 is used specifically because the project does not meet the appropriate zoning or plan designation. For example, HHFDC's current Keawe Street Apartments project in Lahaina, Maui would be disqualified under this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on this bill.

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/7/2022 9:06:50 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Toni Pedro	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill which removes purview from the county or city council legislative body. The city council is the civilians' voice. Passing HB2022 would be a severe affront to transparent government, our rights to be aware of what is planned for our neighborhoods, and a negligent consideration of our development and sustainable community plans.

OPPOSE HB2022.

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/8/2022 10:58:09 AM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kim Rogers	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to urge the passing of the bill to name ‘ōhi‘a lehua as the Hawai‘i State Endemic Tree. ‘Ōhi‘a is critically important to our everyday life, helping ensure we have fresh water to drink and water for our vegetable gardens. ‘Ōhi‘a is also critically important to numerous flora and fauna--many endangered--in our forests. Many rely on ‘ōhi‘a for all forms of their life history requirements. Lastly, ‘ōhi‘a plays a strong role in the culture of Hawai‘i in hula, mele, oli, and many other traditional practices. It would be great to celebrate ‘ōhi‘a by naming it our State Endemic Tree.

Mahalo,

Kim Rogers

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/8/2022 6:45:48 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Susan Polanco de Couet	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in opposition to the changes proposed by HB2022; bypassing the review and approval of the counties/county council. It is important to have said new projects be reviewed by the counties to make sure they are aligned with County Development and Community Plans. Given the many variances these projects will receive, it is only right that the communities have a right to review these projects and make sure they support current community planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

S.Polanco de Couet

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/8/2022 9:00:43 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Lea Hollingsworth-Ramsey	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I am strongly opposed to HB2022 as it removes an important part of the development process, which is the input of the community and the input of their elected officials. HHFDC is not an elected body, it is a board of POLITICALLY APPOINTED OFFICIALS. They do not know our communities, nor do they represent the values of the community. All HHFDC does, is look to see if the project meets certain criteria that they have established as important, not what the community or even the general public thinks is important. Yet they are spending our tax dollars, and on top of it, they want to have unlimited authority to develop a community without any community input or the input of their elected officials. No, this is not acceptable. The process as it stands is already prohibitive to community participation, with its narrow timeline that doesn't allow us to fully evaluate the project and envision how it will affect the community. Nor does it allow most citizens enough time to adequately evaluate if the project reflects the vision for that particular community, as the vision for each community differs. Giving HHFDC full reign over these decisions must not happen. I urge you to OPPOSE HB2022.

LATE

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 5:37:23 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Carol Abe	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

Citizens/residents don't want *LESS* input on development in residential neighborhoods, which could well be the result of House Bill 2022 (and Senate Bill 2229) that removes City Council approval from HHFD Corporation developments. HB 2022 will bypass an important checkpoint for community input on projects that may violate Sustainable Communities Plans. The State is less accessible to the individual citizen than the City Council, which also feeds community input via Neighborhood Boards. There are developers who take advantage of insider knowledge of the convoluted HHFDC rules that the ordinary citizen finds difficult to understand, with meetings held during daytime working hours, so working individuals can't easily attend.

This proposal appears to relate directly to the 460 Kawainui Apts, a monster development—relative to the existing community--that was planned for Oneawa St in Kailua. The developers would love to have this bill pass to try again to shove an unwise project that would disrupt the lives of not only immediate residents but tens of thousands of regular folks who transit the narrow corridor.

Committee members: Please keep the safeguards in place to protect our communities from ill-advised developments, regardless of perceived benefit that may not be actualized. -Mahalo

LATE

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 6:55:11 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Bruce L Hultgren	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I encourage all legislators to oppose this measure. This removes some opportunities for citizen opposition to (or support for) building projects that may greatly influence our quality of life.

This is hardly the time to decrease citizen input and watchfulness over the decision making process in Hawaii.

Respectfully,

Bruce Hultgren

Kailua, HI

LATE

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 7:40:49 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Scott Noborikawa	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I oppose HB2022 not requiring approval from legislative body for housing projects.

Yes, there is a need for more affordable housing but, everyone who is a stakeholder or impacted by this should have a say in the project.

This is an attempt to ram projects down our throats hoping no one will be the wiser until it's too late.

LATE

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 7:41:32 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
janice zane	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I strongly believe that any housing projects developed by the Hawaii Housing and Finance and Development Corporation needs to obtain approval from county legislative bodies. The community needs to be able to provide input and oppose any development that might affect the lives of the community and be detrimental to the homeless that the affordable housing development is supposed to help.

LATE

HB-2022

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 11:42:26 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/10/2022 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Bill Hicks	Individual	Oppose	Yes

Comments:

My name is Bill Hicks. I am the Chairman of the Kailua Neighborhood Board but am testifying as an individual. I am very strongly opposed to House Bill 2022.

House Bill 2022 reads: “The corporation may develop on behalf of the State or with an eligible developer, or may assist under a government assistance program in the development of, housing projects that shall be exempt from all statutes, ordinances, charter provisions, and rules of any government agency relating to planning, zoning, construction standards for subdivisions, development and improvement of land, and the construction of dwelling units thereon.”

The short title says: HB 2022 “removes requirements for housing projects developed by the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation to obtain approval from county legislative bodies; provided the project meets the appropriate zoning and plan designations.”

The language itself seems to be a contradiction. The bill reads “**exempt** from all statutes, ordinances, charter provisions, and rules of any government agency relating to planning, zoning, construction standards for subdivisions, development and improvement of land, and the construction of dwelling units thereon” – so why does the short title say “**provided** the project meets the appropriate zoning and plan designations”? Since it is the bill’s language that would be enacted, the short title seems very misleading.

Why is a bill like this even under consideration? What would prompt such extreme measures? Exactly how many times has a Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) project ever been rejected by a City/County Council? I hope the rare rejection of a proposed apartment complex on residential land in Kailua in 2020 is not the cause for this bill. If it is, however, this Committee has an obligation to fully understand the circumstances of that 2020 decision before supporting a bill as reckless as this one which would remove any remaining check and balance.

In the extremely rare event that a City/County Council should reject any HHFDC project, there would certainly be valid cause to reject it. For 201H-38 applications, the decision currently rests with elected members of the City/County Council and not unelected commissioners or bureaucrats. That is exactly where the buck should stop. Elected representatives should be able to consider input directly received from the community and factor that in while also weighing the prospective benefits of a project, especially in the exceedingly rare case when a large project is proposed on developed residential land.

Properly zoned land exists for HHFDC projects and such land should be used as intended. If residential land is chosen for such a project, it is especially important that elected officials who in theory represent “we the people” are the ones responsible for weighing the pros and cons in making the decision.

Please reject this bill.