



February 9, 2021

1:00 p.m.

Conference Room 225

**To: Senate Committee on Housing
Sen. Stanley Chang, Chair
Sen. Dru Mamo Kanuha, Vice Chair**

**From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Joe Kent, Executive Vice President**

RE: SB10 — RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Comments Only

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii would like to offer its comments on [SB10](#), which would require counties to adopt rules allowing educational and religious institutions to build affordable housing units on their property, regardless of existing zoning restrictions.

We commend the Legislature for considering new ways to help address the state housing crisis. It is easy to focus solely on new building projects and overlook how much it could help to lift the zoning restrictions that hamper creative solutions to the lack of affordable housing.

Recently, the Grassroot Institute has distributed two publications to legislators on the ways zoning and other regulations throttle the growth of housing.

One was our policy report, [“Reform the Hawaii LUC to encourage more housing,”](#) which advocates giving the counties more authority to make decisions at the county level, thus reducing the amount of bureaucracy in development and preventing the LUC from becoming a kind of state zoning commission.

The other was a zoning reform toolkit, [“How to Build Affordable, Thriving Neighborhoods”](#) which explores different ways to grow housing and improve affordability by reforming state

and local zoning restrictions. We summarized proposals from the toolkit in a commentary published in The Maui News, ["50 ways — at least — to update Maui's zoning code."](#)

We are pleased to see that SB10 embraces two principles in the zoning toolkit: It allows for creative options aimed at solving serious social problems related to housing (especially as housing from such institutions will likely be aimed at those with the greatest need), and it reduces the bureaucratic burden involved in building such housing by reducing the political approvals required to move forward.

By allowing religious and educational institutions to build affordable housing on their own land, regardless of existing zoning restrictions, SB10 would comprise a positive step toward addressing the state housing shortage.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments.

Sincerely,
Joe Kent
Executive Vice President, Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

TESTIMONY OF ELLEN GODBEY CARSON IN SUPPORT OF SB10

To the Senate Committee on Housing

For Hearing on February 9, 2021 at 1:00pm, Conference Room 225

I strongly support SB10, to require county planning for affordable housing.

While I write as an individual, I have served as President and director of Institute for Human Services, leader for Faith Action for Community Equity, and member of the Church of the Crossroads Peace and Justice Mission Team, spending hundreds of volunteer hours helping Hawaii find better systemic ways to address its dual crises of homelessness and lack of affordable housing.

SB10 can allow us to increase our affordable housing stock without impact on our state treasury. Many religious and educational institutions in Hawaii own substantial property holdings and are dedicated to serving the needs of the most vulnerable in our society – those without homes. They have the willingness to find and fund creative options for our homeless residents, using their own lands. Serving those in need, with food and shelter, is one of the basic missions of a faith-filled life, and a goal that is supported as well by many of our educational institutions.

We should allow our religious and educational organizations to help be part of the solution to our affordable housing needs.

Thank you for your consideration and for seeking better solutions for our crises of homelessness and lack of affordable housing.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Godbey Carson

Honolulu, Hawaii February 6, 2021