

March 21, 2025, 9 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 430 and Videoconference

To: House Committee on Housing
Rep. Luke Evslin, Chair
Rep. Tyson Miyake, Vice-Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: HR60/HCR66 — REQUESTING THE STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL TO ADOPT, AMEND, OR UPDATE THE STATE BUILDING CODE TO AUTHORIZE POINT ACCESS BLOCK CONSTRUCTION FOR RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS UP TO SIX STORIES IN THE STATE.

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice-Chair Miyake and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [HR60/HCR66](#), which would request that the State Building Code Council allow “point access block” construction for residences up to six stories. “Point access block” refers to buildings with only one means of egress — in other words, one staircase. Honolulu County authorized such buildings in 2020.¹

Stephen Smith, executive director of the Center for Building in North America, has documented that allowing single-stair apartment buildings could slash land costs for homebuilders² — one of the most significant cost components of construction in Hawaii.

In addition to Honolulu, New York City and Seattle permit single-stair apartment buildings, as do numerous Asian and European countries. Hawaii should join their lead and take this proposed small step toward solving its housing crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns,
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ Alex Horowitz, “[Small Single-Stairway Apartment Buildings Have Strong Safety Record](#),” Pew Charitable Trusts, Feb. 27, 2025.

² “[Staircase proposal could be small step toward more housing](#),” Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, Aug. 8, 2023.



Housing Hawai'i's Future
PO Box 3043
Honolulu, HI 96802-3043

March 21, 2025

TO: Chair Evslin and members of the House Committee on Housing
RE: HCR 66 (HR 60)

Dear Chair Evslin and Committee Members,

Housing Hawai'i's Future is a nonprofit dedicated to creating opportunities for Hawai'i's next generation by ending the workforce housing shortage.

We support HCR 66 (HR 60), requesting that the State Building Code Council consider **Point Blank Access Construction (PBAC)** for residential buildings up to six stories in the State.

We're very different from most of the world, where PBAC buildings are common. These buildings cost less to build and require less space for more units. They also permit a greater diversity of unit mixes, including 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units. Known as 'point-access' blocks, these buildings will be found across Europe and Asia.

Historically, the construction of multistory buildings with PBAC was rendered illegal across the United States due to the use of poor, fire-prone building materials. In January 2025, the Pew Charitable Trusts (PCT) and the Center for Building in North America (CBNA) found that single-stairway buildings as tall as six stories are as safe as other types of housing; such buildings could also provide more efficient, more cost-effective housing (including homes for people with modest incomes) in urban communities throughout places like Hawai'i.¹

Across the United States, cities like Seattle and New York City already permit PBAC construction.² On May 9, 2023, Washington State passed Senate Bill 5491 into law as Chapter 372, Session Laws 2023.³ The legislation, similar to HCR 66, called for the study of single-stairway residential buildings. To date, sixteen cities and states have passed legislation that provides for this mode of construction.

Building policy has not evolved with the times. The State of Hawai'i, through the Building Code Council, should consider the implementation of PBAC across the State of Hawai'i. **Let's advance HCR 66 (HR 60).**

Thank you,

A stylized, circular signature in black ink, appearing to be the name "Lee Wang".

Lee Wang
Executive Director
Housing Hawai'i's Future
lee@hawaiisfuture.org

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name "Perry Arrasmith".

Perry Arrasmith
Director of Policy
Housing Hawai'i's Future
perry@hawaiisfuture.org

¹ PCT & CBNA: <https://pew.org/4hljvsy>

² Larch Lab: https://www.larchlab.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Larch-Lab-PAB_Policy-Brief.pdf

³ See SB 5491's legislative journey here: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5491&Year=2023>.



March 21, 2025

TO: Honorable Luke Evslin, Chair
Honorable Tyson Miyake, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Housing

FROM: **American Institute of Architects, Hawaii State Council**
Legislative Advocacy Committee

SUBJECT: **HR 60 & HCR 66**

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Institute of Architects Hawaii State Council, we respectfully oppose HR60 and HCR66. The State Building Code Council (SBCC) was established to bring together professionals and experts in architecture, engineering, construction, and public safety to develop and amend the building code in a way that best serves the health, safety, and welfare of the people of Hawai'i. It is concerning that the legislature is seeking to mandate the work of this expert body rather than allowing the council to function as intended.

The SBCC has the authority to review and amend the International Building Code (IBC) as necessary to address local conditions and needs. If this type of construction is determined to be beneficial and safe for Hawai'i, the council has the ability to make the appropriate amendments through its established process. The resolution itself acknowledges that the City and County of Honolulu has already made an amendment to allow this type of construction, demonstrating that counties have the flexibility to make changes as needed. Other counties are equally empowered to do the same based on their specific circumstances.

By circumventing the SBCC's expertise and decision-making process, this resolution undermines the very purpose of having a specialized council dedicated to evaluating and adapting building codes. Rather than legislating technical amendments, we urge the legislature to support the SBCC's ability to convene, conduct its work, and make informed decisions based on industry knowledge and best practices.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that this committee not advance HR60/HCR66. Thank you for your consideration, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can collaboratively ensure safe and effective building codes for Hawai'i.

Sincerely,
American Institute of Architects, Hawaii State Council

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