



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for SB27 – Relating to Housing
House Committee on Housing
Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 1:00PM Conf. Rm. 225 and via Videoconference

Aloha Chair Chang, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and members of the committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of SB27**, which would exempt state-financed housing developments from county council approval requirements. This measure is a critical step toward addressing Hawaii's dire need for affordable rental housing.

State financing is essential for the development of affordable rental housing projects, which provide a lifeline for Hawaii's cost-burdened renters. These projects are designed specifically to serve families and individuals whose incomes cannot compete with . Exempting such projects from county council approval will help accelerate their development and ensure that much-needed units are delivered to residents in a timely manner. This exemption will also provide much needed certainty for developers by removing the risk of discretionary approvals, enabling them to better plan and execute projects without the unpredictability of local council decisions.

Hawaii is currently experiencing one of the most severe housing crises in the nation¹:

- Over 50% of renters are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
- The median home price exceeds \$1.1 million, leaving homeownership out of reach for most residents.
- Hawaii has a shortfall of affordable housing units, with tens of thousands more needed to meet current demand.

While state-financed projects already undergo rigorous reviews by the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC), requiring additional approval from county councils introduces duplicative layers of bureaucracy. **This redundancy often leads to significant delays, increased costs, and, in some cases, the outright halting of projects due to local opposition.**

For example, in 2020 the Kawainui Street Apartments in Kailua—a project offering affordable rents starting at \$521 for one-bedroom units—faced substantial delays and opposition under the current approval process². Despite the overwhelming need for affordable housing in Kailua, no affordable housing project has been approved there since 1992. This demonstrates how the current system which values minority opposition over majority need can stifle the development of affordable rental housing, even in areas where it is desperately needed.

¹ <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HawaiiHousingFactbook2024.pdf>

² <https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/06/when-housing-turns-political-in-kailua/>



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Exempting state-financed housing projects from county council approval would streamline the process and reduce unnecessary delays, ensuring these projects can move forward without sacrificing oversight. Under this bill:

- Projects must still meet strict health and safety standards.
- The Land Use Commission retains oversight of boundary changes.
- All units must be dedicated to qualified residents and meet state affordability criteria.

This bill also reflects successful policies in other states. For example, similar streamlining measures in California have reduced development timelines by 25–48%³, helping to address housing shortages more efficiently while maintaining quality and safety standards.

Passing SB27 is a necessary step to remove administrative barriers and support the development of affordable rental housing across all communities in Hawaii. We urge the committee to support this legislation and prioritize the needs of Hawaii's families, who cannot wait any longer for relief from the housing crisis.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

³ <https://ternercenter.berkeley.edu/blog/sb-35-evaluation/>

January 28, 2025

TO: Chair Chang and members of the Senate Housing Committee
RE: SB 27 RELATING TO HOUSING.

Dear Chair Chang 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 SB 27, a measure to streamline the approval process for affordable housing projects seeking 201H-38 exemptions.

Projects that seek 201H-38 approval supplement Hawai'i's inventory of workforce housing. However, history shows that when these projects become subject to county approval, their timelines and construction costs can increase due to 'not-in-by-backyard' (NIMBY) opposition.

The result is not better housing. Instead, concessions extracted from county review processes increase the cost of housing, stifling housing projects. Housing unaffordability—or the lack of more workforce housing—is the product of unnecessary risk, uncertainty, and delay to well-scrutinized developments.

The result is a housing crisis. And here we are.

We need to expedite the construction of affordable workforce housing.

We are grateful for your careful consideration of SB 27.

Thank you,



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



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



MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
VOICE OF BUSINESS

LATE

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 225
Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 1:00 P.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Stanley Chang, Chair
The Honorable Senator Troy N. Hashimoto, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Housing

SUPPORT SB27 RELATING TO HOUSING

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS SB27** which exempts state-financed housing developments from the requirement to obtain approval from the applicable county council.

The Chamber recognizes that, historically, many projects have gone to the county council for approval, only to face significant conditions that render them financially unfeasible. This is particularly disconcerting for state-funded projects (201H), which already must meet special conditions and are intended to provide affordable housing. Given the urgency of the housing crisis, we need to expedite the development of housing as quickly as possible. The county approval process is often time-consuming and subject to extensive testimony, and additional delays can result in increased costs.

In light of the severe housing shortage in both the State and Maui County, we strongly support initiatives that promote, rather than hinder, the development of housing for our residents.

For these reasons we **SUPPORT SB27** and respectfully request its passage.

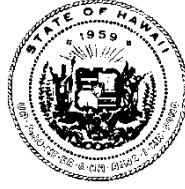
Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



DEAN MINAKAMI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
HAWAII HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
677 QUEEN STREET, SUITE 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
FAX: (808) 587-0600

Statement of
DEAN MINAKAMI
Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation
Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

January 28, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 225

In consideration of
S.B. 27
RELATING TO HOUSING.

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and members of the Committee.

HHFDC has comments on SB 27, which exempts state-financed housing developments from the requirement to obtain approval from the applicable county council.

HHFDC supports efforts to streamline approvals to expedite the development of critically needed affordable housing. This bill streamlines approval for 201H-38 projects by not requiring county council approval for projects that will receive State financing. We note, however, that projects going through the 201H-38 process typically may have received a financing commitment from the state, rather than actually having received financing. We therefore request that the language be amended to:

provided further that projects that have received a **financing commitment** from the State shall be exempt from approval by the legislative body of the county in which the housing project is to be situated;

We also caution that by excluding counties from the approval of 201H-38 projects, this may result in delays associated with the issuance of building permits or the dedication of infrastructure, such as what occurred in the Villages of Kapolei.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND PERMITTING
KA 'OIHANA HO'OLĀLĀ A ME NĀ PALAPALA 'AE
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

650 SOUTH KING STREET, 7TH FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



DAWN TAKEUCHI APUNA
DIRECTOR
PO'O

BRYAN GALLAGHER, P.E.
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

REGINA MALEPEAI
2ND DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O KUALUA

January 28, 2025

The Honorable Stanley Chang, Chair
and Members of the Committee on Housing
Hawai'i State Senate
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

LATE

**Subject: Senate Bill No. 27
Relating to Housing**

Dear Chair Chang and Committee Members:

The Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) **opposes** Senate Bill No. 27, which exempts state-financed housing developments from the requirement to obtain approval from the applicable county council.

While the City supports policies that will stimulate affordable housing production, removing the role of the county legislative body from the review of projects that are designed with greater heights and densities than allowed under adopted plans and regulations eliminates an important review component. Many Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 201H approvals are tantamount to a zone change of the project site. Zone changes are adopted as ordinances during which the DPP and Honolulu City Council evaluate potential impacts to critical infrastructure and services, and ensures the change in allowable densities, heights, and uses can be accommodated without adverse impacts. This is a vitally important part of the process and should not be eliminated.

If the legislative body's role is removed, it is unclear who would make the final decision that the project could move forward without adverse impacts to the counties and their communities. Would it be the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation? If so, would it adopt administrative rules to guide their procedures and create an appeal process?

The Honorable Stanley Chang, Chair
and Members of the Committee on Housing
Hawai'i State Senate
Senate Bill No. 27
January 28, 2025
Page 2

The description of the Bill states that it “exempts state-financed housing developments.” Was the intention to limit the exemption to State projects proposed and financed by public agencies such as the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority and Department of Hawaiian Homelands? If that is the case, we recommend clarifying the Bill because nearly all of the 201H projects we review will ultimately receive some kind of financing from the State, so the Bill as written would remove almost all 201H projects from the purview of the legislative body. Finally, we note the HHFDC's current rules require applicants to obtain a 201H approval from the legislative body before applying for funding.

To this end, we respectfully request that Senate Bill No. 27 be held in committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Very truly yours,



Dawn Takeuchi Apuna
Director Designate



Testimony of **Lahaina Strong**
Before the Senate Committee on
Housing

In Opposition of Senate Bill No. 27
RELATING TO HOUSING

To Chair Stanley, Vice Chair Hashimoto, and the honorable members of the committee,

We are writing on behalf of Lahaina Strong, an organization deeply rooted in our community's resilience and advocacy. Originally formed in 2018 following the Hurricane Lane fire in Lahaina and revitalized after the devastating fires of August 8, 2023, Lahaina Strong has become the largest grassroots, Lahaina-based community organization, with over 20,000 supporters. Our mission is to amplify local voices and champion community-driven solutions, which are more critical than ever as we continue rebuilding and recovering.

Lahaina Strong **stands in strong opposition to Senate Bill 27**, which exempts state-financed projects from requiring approval by the county's legislative body where the housing project is located.

The 45-day review period in the current 201H process ensures that housing projects are reviewed thoroughly while remaining time-sensitive. In the broader context of Maui's permitting process, 45 days is not a significant delay. If a project truly meets the intent of the 201H law to prioritize affordable housing, then it should easily gain County Council approval. Eliminating this review period undermines the County Council's role and the community's opportunity to weigh in on projects that directly impact their lives.

West Maui, in particular, has had to grapple with the misuse of the 201H process. Developers have used it to push projects that may technically include affordable housing units but ultimately serve to subdivide rural land into multi-million-dollar "gentlemen's estates." These projects have created deep mistrust in the community, as

they fail to address the pressing need for truly affordable housing while exploiting loopholes for profit.

For Lahaina, this is not just an abstract policy concern—it's a matter of survival. Our community faces unique challenges, including water scarcity and ongoing infrastructure recovery, which demand thoughtful, inclusive decision-making. Senate Bill 27 would sideline these considerations by fast-tracking projects without sufficient community engagement, exacerbating an already fragile situation.

We urge you to **oppose Senate Bill 27**, which strips away critical local oversight, creates exploitable loopholes for developers, and diminishes the voices of the communities most affected by these decisions. Protecting the 45-day review period is essential to ensuring responsible, community-driven development that meets the needs of all Maui residents and protects our precious resources.

Mahalo for your attention to this vital matter and your dedication to safeguarding our community.

Lahaina Strong

LATE

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 6:18:22 PM
Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine Otto Zaa	Testifying for HI Good Neighbor	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

I strongly oppose SB27. The county councils are better equipped at reviewing housing developments and allowing for community input. When the Kobayashi Group's 201H project, Kuilei Place, came before the Honolulu City Council, the developer agreed to increasing the number of affordable units and extending the resident only buying period as a result of Council review and community input.

Please don't silence the public's voice. We are a democracy.

Thank you,

Christine Otto Zaa, HI Good Neighbor

January 27, 2025

Trevor Nagamine
PO Box 37966
Honolulu, HI 96837
tnagamine.nb25@gmail.com

Sen. Stanley Chang, Chair
Committee on Housing
Hawai'i State Senate
415 S. Beretania St. Rm. 226
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB27 — RELATING TO HOUSING

Dear Chair Chang and Members of the Committee,

My name is Trevor Nagamine, and I am a resident of Mililani. I am also a member of Neighborhood Board No. 25 (Mililani/Waipio/Melemanu); however, I am submitting this testimony in my individual capacity, and this testimony does not reflect an official position of Neighborhood Board No. 25. I am writing today in support of SB27.

SB27 is a necessary measure to expedite the construction of affordable housing on O'ahu given the repeated obstinacy of the Honolulu City Council in refusing to permit new housing construction, despite the extreme shortage of housing on this island. SB27 would allow housing projects financed by HHFDC to bypass City Council approval entirely.

I respectfully ask that the committee pass this bill. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Mahalo,

Trevor Nagamine

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/25/2025 11:37:02 PM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Seth Kamemoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying on behalf of myself, a Hawaii resident, in **opposition** to SB27 as the exemption is much too broad; simply “receiving financing from the State” is not a high enough bar to justify removing any and all city involvement.

According to HOU Chair Chang’s Joint Housing Preview presentation: “HHFDC is now the market maker for financing new housing construction statewide” with “2,156 units financed by HHFDC in FY23”, which would mean that if this bill passes, the State financing received from HHFDC would allow HHFDC to bypass the city entirely in all of these types of projects.

This would concentrate too much power into HHFDC itself, since the granting of funds would also become a guarantee to build, regardless of the intent of the respective county.

In privately-owned projects, this gives too much value to developers and landowners while removing any and all city oversight and opportunity for public input. For reference, the Kuilei Place HHFDC Proposal (https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hhfdc/files/2022/10/2022-1013-III.F.-Kuilei-Place_Document-Execution.pdf) takes land valued at \$43.6M and transforms it into \$765M of revenue. This is a staggering 1,755% increase in value, driven almost entirely by the exemptions allowed in 201H-38.

As currently written, this bill is even broader than the current Housing Emergency Proclamation which states: “Section 201 H-38(a)(3), HRS, Housing development; Exemption from statutes, ordinances, charter provisions, and rules, that require approval of the legislative body of the county in which the housing project is situated. This exemption shall be **applicable to only state or county affordable housing projects** that receive approval of HHFDC.”, where “‘State affordable housing project’ or a ‘county affordable housing project’ is an affordable housing project **in which the land is owned by the state or county and either the project is subject to an affordability restriction whether through a development agreement or funding appropriation, or the housing units are owned or have the potential to be owned** by right of first refusal by one of the following state housing agencies:”, providing further that: “Instead, the county may approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the project **through action of the county planning director**“. Even a declared emergency has more guardrails than this current bill proposes.

In general, I believe that the counties should be empowered to execute their defined planning and zoning strategies, and not be undermined by spot zoning and exemptions as provided by 201H-38.

Thank you for your consideration,
Seth Kamemoto

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/23/2025 9:55:14 PM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Demiliza Saramosing	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB 27.

State-financed housing developments must be required to obtain approval from the applicable county council. For something as dire as ensuring housing fits the needs for Hawai'i's people, especially in my neighborhood of Kalihi, there must be a protocol in place for city & counties to exercise agency and power when it comes to the state-financed housing developments.

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 8:36:16 AM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tamara Paltin	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair and members,

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. I think this measure sets a dangerous precedent in usurping home rule. It is often the county councils that are more intimately familiar with areas that are being proposed for development and to be able to make projects better. Local county councils operate year round and are generally more accessible to constituents and so to take away their ability to hear these types of projects is essentially cutting out constituents voices and rights to be heard about issues that directly affect them. Please do not remove home rule.

Mahalo,

Tamara

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:42:00 AM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jolyn Okimoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Housing Committee,

I am writing to OPPOSE SB27. Proposed housing developments should continue to be subject to City Council approval regardless of how the developments are to be financed.

If this bill were to pass, it would likely skew the approval process so that even small amount of state funding (such as by HHFDC) would allow a developer to bypass the city approval process.

Also, Section 201H-38, HRS, is already problematic and should not be strengthened. If anything, it should be repealed because its exemptions are too great.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

J. Okimoto, resident of Honolulu

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:51:37 AM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
robin knox	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am opposed to this bill. The County Council should not be removed from decisionmaking even when state funding is usutilized. Home rule should always prevail

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 11:39:40 AM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ellen sofio	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Ellen Sofio

2708 Hipawai Place Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96822

Testimony in Opposition to SB 27

I am vehemently opposed to this outrageous bill which makes already reckless and dangerous 201H-38 even more reckless and dangerous. Section 1C ii exempting the county decision makers from any legal liability for approving these project proposals should be illegal right on the face of it. Removing the recourse of the citizenry to sue when harmed by people who are supposed to be serving the public interest and protecting the public safety is a slap in the face to constituents and ethics.

Section 1C iii allowing 201H-38 projects to skirt the requirement for city council review if they receive even one penny of state funding is another slap in the face to those of us that know these projects are not genuinely about affordability, and that 201H-38 is not being limited to the rail corridor and therefore already puts the entire state’s precious and irreplaceable cultural historic resources and fragile ecosystems and preservation zoned lands in jeopardy. Removing the city council oversight is tantamount to declaring open season for greedy landowners and developers and corporations like Black Rock and the private construction industry beneficiaries and unions who we all know line politicians pockets on all of Hawai‘i.

201H-38 should be revised to be strictly limited to the immediate rail corridor or better yet repealed completely. Building like there is no tomorrow on an island that already has 1/3 of its groundwater contaminated with more to come from the long term consequences of Red Hill for East Honolulu, and which is at daily risk of fines from the EPA because of its overwhelmed waste water capacity, and where siting of a new landfill that will not further contaminate limited groundwater resources has not yet been accomplished, is unethical, stupid and corrupt to the highest levels of government.

Ellen Sofio M.D. Mānoa

LATE

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 1:54:01 PM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brett Kurashige	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in strong opposition to SB27 (https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session/measure_indiv.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=27&year=2025) which proposed to amend Hawaii Revised Statutes 201H-38 in order to revoke the authority of County representative bodies/appointed officials to act on any project approved for Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) financing (regardless of the amount to be financed).

HRS 201H-38 already grants HHFDC (governed by a nine member Board of unelected political appointees) - and HHFDC's eligible developers - broad exemptions from "all statutes, ordinances, charter provisions, and rules of any governmental agency relating to planning, zoning and construction standards" to develop so-called affordable housing.

In my opinion, SB27 sets a potentially dangerous (and undemocratic) precedent that may curtail all our elected County Councils in the State of Hawaii from acting on any proposed so-called affordable housing project within their counties.

Worst-case scenario: if SB27 (as currently written) became law, HHFDC could conceivably finance any development project it saw fit for, say, a penny. Our County governments would then have zero ability to weigh-in on any of those development projects within their jurisdictions, despite County governments being ultimately responsible for all County-level infrastructure and services as well as the general well-being of communities within their respective Counties.

It would be far better, in my opinion, for State and County governments to work together in a Pono and community-friendly way to preserve our precious Aina and make permanent progress of truly affordable housing solutions for local residents and families.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB27.

LATE

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 7:57:21 PM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Makana Hicks	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

There is no evidence that County Councils are routinely shooting down projects. Nor should democratic participation be made the bogeyman of affordable housing. It isn't. This bill will do nothing to make Hawaii more affordable but will remove opportunity for Hawaii residents to participate in the process of shaping their communities.

LATE

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 2:14:01 PM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in strong opposition to SB27. HRS 201H-38 already grants HHFDC (governed by a nine member Board of unelected political appointees) - and HHFDC's eligible developers - broad exemptions from "all statutes, ordinances, charter provisions, and rules of any governmental agency relating to planning, zoning and construction standards" to develop so-called affordable housing. In my opinion, SB27 sets a potentially dangerous (and undemocratic) precedent that may curtail all our elected County Councils in the State of Hawaii from acting on any proposed so-called affordable housing project within their counties. Worst-case scenario: if SB27 (as currently written) became law, HHFDC could conceivably finance any development project it saw fit for, say, a penny. Our County governments would then have zero ability to weigh-in on any of those development projects within their jurisdictions, despite County governments being ultimately responsible for all County-level infrastructure and services as well as the general well-being of communities within their respective Counties. It would be far better, in my opinion, for State and County governments to work together in a Pono and community-friendly way to preserve our precious Aina and make permanent progress of truly affordable housing solutions for local residents and families.

LATE

Senate Bill 27, Opposed!

To: Senator Stanley Chang, Chair

Senator Troy N. Hashimoto, Vice Chair

From: Sage-Lee Medeiros-Garcia

Date: 01/27/2025

Subject: Opposition to Bill SN27 - Relating to Housing

Greetings gentlemen,

Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono! The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Bill SN27, which proposes to exempt state-financed housing developments from the requirement to obtain approval from the applicable county council.

By overstepping your boundaries and disregarding the concerns and input of the councils and community leaders, you are putting Hawai'i in grave danger of relinquishing county councils' governance in their own density and use of their own resources. By developing this affordable housing project, you are increasing density with the limited resources this 'āina must provide and further exasperating the issue of sustainability. There is the pono way of doing things and the not so pono way of doing things. Understanding you want to secure contracts for your affordable housing projects, this is not the pono way of doing so. You are not listening to the people of Hawai'i. By doing an injustice to long standing community members of areas, you wish to exempt your greedy initiatives from zoning laws, community involvement, and more. You are willing to disregard the presentation of valuable facts and opinions to feed your wallets. The reason we have zoning laws is to preserve and perpetuate this land we have in a righteous way. Our current zoning laws are important for:

☐ **Preservation of Natural Resources:** Hawaii's unique landscapes, ecosystems, and cultural heritage sites need protection from unchecked development. Zoning laws help ensure that certain areas remain untouched or are developed in an environmentally responsible way.

☐ **Urban Planning:** These laws help in organizing the use of land within communities. They guide where residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural areas should be located, helping to prevent overdevelopment and ensuring that infrastructure like roads and utilities are efficiently planned.

☐ **Safety and Health:** Zoning laws help maintain safe distances between industrial areas and residential neighborhoods, thus reducing the risk of pollution and other hazards. They also ensure that buildings adhere to standards that protect public health and safety.

☐ **Community Character:** They help maintain the aesthetic and cultural character of neighborhoods. By regulating the types of buildings and their uses, zoning laws preserve the unique feel and look of different areas within Hawaii.

While the intent to streamline the development process is understandable, this bill poses significant risks to local governance, community involvement, and the quality of housing projects.

Firstly, bypassing county council approval undermines the principle of local control and accountability. County councils are elected bodies that represent the interests and concerns of their constituents. Removing their oversight could lead to decisions that do not reflect the needs and desires of the local community. This could result in developments that are out of sync with the character and infrastructure of the area, causing long-term negative impacts.

Secondly, county council approval serves as a critical check on the quality and sustainability of housing projects. County councils have the expertise and resources to evaluate the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts of proposed developments. Without their input, there is a risk that state-financed projects may not meet the necessary standards, leading to subpar housing conditions and increased strain on local services.

Lastly, community involvement is a cornerstone of successful housing development. County councils facilitate public hearings and community input, ensuring that residents have a voice in the decision-making process. Exempting state-financed projects from this requirement could disenfranchise local communities, leading to a lack of trust and cooperation between developers and residents.

In conclusion, while the goal of expediting housing development is commendable, it should not come at the expense of local control, quality assurance, and community involvement. I urge you to oppose Bill SB27 and instead seek solutions that balance efficiency with the need for thorough oversight and public participation.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Sage-Lee Medeiros-Garcia
795 McNeill St.
Honolulu, HI 96814

LATE

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 5:12:59 PM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janyce Mitchell	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I vehemently oppose the change to Hawaii Revised Statutes 201H-38 in SB27.

This amendment usurps the counties' authority to properly manage development within the county. According to this bill, a project that receives **any** financing from the state (e.g. HHFDC) is no longer subject to approval by the legislative body of the county (e.g. the County Council). Instead, approval would effectively lie with the members of the HHFDC or other body that approves funding for such projects. This **unelected** body might fund (e.g. provide \$1 in funding) any and all projects it considers. Thus, any ability of the county to manage development of 201H projects within the county would be ended.

It has long been accepted that duties such as review and approval of building projects are the purview of the counties. According to the current version of HRS 201H-38, county councils are tasked with final approval of projects under HRS201H-38. This is sensible and consistent with well-established practices. County councils are **elected** bodies that represent the residents of the county and are, therefore, attuned to the specific needs of the county. HHFDC may not be aware of specific goals of or issues faced by individual counties. As such, HHFDC is not best suited to approve or disapprove of such projects. Further, HHFDC does not represent the interests of the voters of the county. Thus, this amendment not only places review and approval in the hands of those less prepared to make the proper decision for the counties, by putting more power in the hands of an unelected body, this amendment is also patently undemocratic.

Please allow the counties to continue to properly review and manage all projects, including those for affordable housing. I urge you to vote no on this SB27.

Thank you for your time and attention.

LATE

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:59:19 PM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline Wah	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am strongly opposed to SB27.

State-financed housing developments should continue the requirement to obtain approval from their respective county councils. Revoking the authority of county representatives and appointed officials to make decisions on HHFDC approved projects undermines an important safeguard in protecting communities.

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 12:58:58 AM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly Nishimura	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill because it goes against the public interest by barring community input and county council participation. As an advocate of affordable housing and responsible development, I understand the importance of the involvement of the community and county council in decision-making. Bills such as SB27 favor developers over the needs and interests of our communities.

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:37:47 AM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Whitney Bosel	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose SB27. Calling for the county to no longer have any hand at all in approving or requesting modifications to, or denying building proposals because they are for housing is undemocratic, goes against the very home rule powers that this body has vested in the city through its Charter, and is massively undemocratic. As a citizen I absolutely do not agree to having my voice ripped away from me and given solely to HHFDC, an entity who does not answer to the people, to have the sole power to approve projects that they decide to back. It's truly boggling that this bill would suggest to take away the power from the people in this manner.

Please do NOT pass this bill. It sets an extremely dangerous precedent. While perhaps sometimes cumbersome, it is absolutely *necessary* to have safeguards, and to continue to allow the citizens to have a say in how development in the state proceeds. Taking away the public's voice entirely is abominable. Without approval still resting with the county the only opportunity for the public to even know about a project is through the single community meeting requirement when a project is first proposed, which is a joke. As long as a project is presented it doesn't matter what citizens think, the requirement is simply to hold one meeting. To think that that would be the extent of the democratic process for any project receiving even a cent of funding from HHFDC is horrible. The county oversight that the current approval process still affords is absolutely necessary to be maintained if we are to continue to consider this a democracy. Do not steal the people's voice in this process.

201H-38 already allows exemptions to basically everything as a way to streamline development, and yet this attempts to strap a rocket to projects and give an unelected corporation the ability to investigate and approve projects on its own with carte- blanche and no guardrails, Oversight by those best in the position to provide it, at the county level, is why counties were given the powers they were. What on earth was the point of vesting power in the city through the City Charter, in agencies like DPP, or renewing and reinvesting in the Oahu general plan and the PUCDP, if at every turn the only methods for actually implementing these well-studied goals is tossed out the window?

I urge you to reject this bill.

LATE

SB-27

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 4:29:44 AM

Testimony for HOU on 1/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Summer Yadao	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha kakou,

In opposition to SB27 - the city and county needs to stay in the law, as they hold the balance to make sure that hopefully no further harm is done in our housing situation, as well as no further harm done to our 'aina in the name of 'progress' or supposed 'affordable housing' (as deemed by irrelevant standards), that have no benefit to our people of Hawai'i.

The lack of accountability has led to where we are today with only a few benefiting from our housing/real estate market, while local people grown and rooted here are having to live on the streets, beaches or move out of the islands all together.

Focus on policies that would commit developers to upholding their contractual agreements to create truly affordable housing for our people.

Focus on policies that put in place a dedicated stream of funding that will subsidize (like Aspen, Colorado) rents, mortgages and living costs for our local workforce that has been born and raised in Hawai'i for generations.

Those who have shown that their interests lie in protecting greed and profiting off the backs of Hawai'i's people, will no longer be tolerated. You are in those seats of the legislature to make decisions for the best interest of the people of Hawai'i, not in the best interest of a few at the expense of our land, water, sea and well-being of Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Summer Yadao

SB-27

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