

**White, George**

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**From:** James Williston <jswilliston@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 12:30 PM  
**To:** White, George  
**Subject:** Testimony for Salary Commission Public Hearing

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Dear Mr. White,

Attached is my testimony for the Salary Commission Public Hearing scheduled for Thursday, March 17, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.

I do not intend to submit oral testimony since I will be working at the time of the hearing.

Mahalo,

Jim Williston

James Williston  
3623 Manamana Pl.  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

Public Hearing Testimony for 2021 Honolulu Salary Commission

Dear Mr. Tamamoto and Members of the Salary Commission,

I am a 37-year employee of the City and County of Honolulu ("City") and the current Director of City Council's Office of Council Services, but I present this testimony in my personal capacity. By ordinance, my salary is tied to the salary of the majority of City Department Heads, or if there is no majority, to the salary of the Director of Budget and Fiscal Services.

It is my understanding that the Permitted Interaction Group tasked with reviewing the salaries for elected and certain appointed officers of the City has recommended that, for the third consecutive year, these salaries remain unchanged.

The City Charter provides that one of the two factors to be considered by the Salary Commission in setting salaries is "preservation of a sensible relationship with the salaries of other city employees."

In reviewing the video of the last meeting of the Commission, it appeared that the focus was on Resolution 22-35, which proposes a \$1,000 and 3.72% pay increase for employees in the City's blue collar, non-supervisory positions, with a view toward possibly adjusting the Commission's salary recommendation next year to take that Resolution (and presumably others that might be adopted this year) into consideration. As I write this testimony, I do not know whether Resolution 22-35 (which is on the Council Agenda for adoption on the day before the Commission's public hearing) has been adopted or not, although the odds are that the recommendation of the Council's Budget Committee will be followed and the measure will be adopted.

I believe that instead of focusing on Resolution 22-35, the Commission should look to the salary increases that have already been approved and implemented for nearly every other City employee over the past three years. I attach a spreadsheet demonstrating that, except for white collar, non-supervisory employees, over the past three years every City employee covered by collective bargaining received at least a 2% salary increase, in some instances with cash bonuses to supplement the increase. The spreadsheet does not even consider step increases and non-salary benefits that many of these employees received.

I note, in particular, that white collar, supervisory employees, those in the positions most similar to those of elected City officials and Department Heads, received in 2020 a lump-sum payment of 5.98% based on their prior year's salary, and in 2021 received a 3.74% salary increase. Because these individuals tend to be the highest

paid in their departments, freezing the pay of their department heads will not preserve a "sensible relationship with the salaries of other city employees," and the City will end up with qualified employees turning down department head positions because accepting those positions will require a reduction in salary.

For example, during her last two or three years of City service, Kathy Sokugawa (who had been with the Department of Planning and Permitting for over 37 years, many as its Chief Planner and a division chief) served as the "Acting Director" of the Department, probably because becoming the official "Director" would have caused a loss of salary. This deprived the City Council of its authority under City Charter Section 4-104.1 to confirm (or deny confirmation to) a Department Head. The annual Civil Beat salary disclosure for 2021 (covering the salary for 2020) noted her "salary range" as being between \$106,572 and \$177,408. Although the exact salary was not disclosed, this range indicates that employees in the Department with sufficient seniority are eligible for salaries exceeding that of the Director (\$166,560) by in excess of \$11,000 a year. I do not believe that this preserves "a sensible relationship with the salaries of other city employees."

I respectfully suggest that the Commission consider a 2½% to 3% salary increase for the elected and appointed officers of the City whose salaries are under its purview. The jobs of Mayor, Councilmember, and City Department Head did not get easier during the pandemic, with responsibility (in addition to their other responsibilities) for ensuring the health and safety of the City employees under their charge, and for keeping up with the frequent adjustments to employee safety protocols and "Sunshine" requirements.

At the Council, on top of its normal workload, my office drafted over 30 measures relating to City and State COVID and economic recovery policies, redrafted Council and Council Committee agenda boilerplate at least 20 times to keep up with the latest COVID protocols on public access and testimonies as well as Sunshine Law amendments and waivers, and had to get up to speed on several complex federal statutes and regulations aimed at ameliorating the economic effects of the COVID pandemic. In short, the workload did not diminish during the pandemic.

**Honolulu City Employee Salary Increases  
2020-2022**

<b>BU</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Reso.</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	Blue Collar Non-superv.	22-35 (not yet adopted)		\$1,000	3.72%	3.72% + \$1,000
2	Blue Collar Superv.	19-281	5.29%			5.29%
3	White collar non-superv.	17-149				
4	White collar superv.	20-78	5.98% lump sum	3.74%		3.74% + 5.98% lump sum
5-9	DOE, UH & nurses					
10	Health care employees	19-107	2%	1.07%		3.07%
11	Firefighters	19-96	2% + \$1800-\$2000			2% + \$1,800-\$2,000
12	Police Officers	17-334	2% + \$1800-\$2000			2% + \$1,800-\$2,000
13	Prof. & scientific	19-269	2.03%			2.03%
14	State Law Enforc.					
15	Ocean Safety	20-98	4.50%			4.50%
	<b>SALARY COMMISSION</b>		0%	0%	0%	0%