

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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April 5, 2022

The Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair and Presiding Officer
and Members
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Bill 38 (2021), CD2 – Relating to Commercial Activities at Public Parks

I am forwarding Bill 38 (2021), CD2 ("Bill 38") to the Office of the City Clerk signed.

Signing Bill 38 gives me the opportunity to take a strong position, as opposed to returning Bill 38 unsigned, and share my thoughts on the bill and, more specifically, my thoughts on over-commercialization of our parks, residential neighborhoods, communities and natural resources.

As a general premise, I oppose government over-regulation and entered office speaking affirmatively about the role of government as a facilitator and partner versus a regulator when it comes to working with industry, listening to our communities and striking a delicate balance between often competing public, business and private interests.

In the case of Bill 38, I listened to all sides and initially felt the ban on commercial activity from Waimānalo to Makapu'u, including Hūnānāniho (formerly Waimānalo Bay Beach Park), was overly restrictive and unfair to an industry which suffered greatly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, I fought for reductions in restrictions on the wedding and events industry during the pandemic. I still have concerns for the economic health of this particular industry and others, all essential to O'ahu's economic recovery.

However, on Thursday afternoon, March 31, 2022, I had an opportunity to meet with Council Vice-Chair Esther Kia'āina and three constituents from Waimānalo. That meeting was not only informative, but intensely meaningful in understanding the impact of uncontrolled commercial activity in our neighborhood parks and how that activity negatively impacts, in a deeply personal way, the lives of local residents, including Native Hawaiian families in Waimānalo.

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Not necessarily apparent to all is the fact that the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resource (DLNR) issues permits for commercial activities (i.e., weddings) on state beaches. The industry supporting weddings on state beaches, however, uses our City parks for access, parking, staging and preparations for the wedding events on state lands.

In the case of Hūnānāniho, when City Council banned commercial activity in Kailua through Bill 11 in 2012, the commercial activity largely moved to other locations, including Hūnānāniho. This shifting of commercial activity to unregulated versus regulated City parks is a concern of mine that will not be resolved by my signing Bill 38. Unfortunately, not signing Bill 34 created more of a problem and did not lead to an island-wide solution which is what we are seeking.

As such, just as my administration introduced Bill 41 to restore the character of our residential neighborhoods and incentivize the supply of housing for local residents, supported legislation for the removal of Ha'ikū stairs after years of government's inability to regulate access through private property and prioritized the security and restoration of Chinatown after years of neglect, today I am signing Bill 38 and calling upon the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), working in concert with the wedding and events industry (and other tourism businesses), Honolulu City Council and DLNR, to come up with an enforceable and fair regulatory system that will respect and honor the rights of our local residents, protect our natural resources and establish a balanced system that allows local businesses to operate, grow and employ local residents under transparent and fair guidelines.

This is not an all or none situation. We can balance the rights of our local residents, respect our natural resources and support our local businesses if we work together on an island-wide solution. DPR will be lead for my administration in upcoming talks and proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Blangiardi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "R" and "B".

Rick Blangiardi
Mayor