

RES24-143
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 311

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Jul 10, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 2

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Tina Yamaki	Email: tyamaki@rmhawaii.org	Zip: 96816
Representing: Retail Merchants of Hawaii	Position: Support	Submitted: Jul 8, 2024 @ 03:47 PM
Name: Ian Ross	Email: ianross.hi@gmail.com	Zip: 96826
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Jul 10, 2024 @ 01:57 AM
<p>Testimony:</p> <p>Aloha Chair Waters, Vice Chair Dos Santos-Tam, and members of the City Council,</p> <p>My name is Ian Ross, and I am testifying on my own behalf. I am in support of Resolution 24-143, which establishes a task force on illegal game rooms, a measure crucial for the safety and well-being of our communities.</p> <p>Previously, I testified in support of Bill 57 and Bill 58, which would help stop the proliferation of illegal game rooms that foster criminal activities harmful to our neighborhoods. These establishments are not merely nuisances but are epicenters for serious crimes including drug trafficking, violent assaults, and other illegal activities that degrade our community fabric.</p> <p>The establishment of a task force as proposed in Resolution 24-143 is a step forward in enhancing the efficacy of law enforcement and regulatory agencies. By facilitating better coordination and sharing of information among city departments, this task force can more effectively identify, investigate, and shut down illegal game rooms. This collaborative approach is essential for ensuring thorough inspections and the enforcement of codes and laws that these operations frequently violate.</p> <p>I commend the leadership of Chair Waters and Councilmember Dos Santos-Tam for introducing this resolution. The recent raids of three illegal game rooms near my residence on Young Street, which led to the discovery of multiple illegal activities, served as a reminder to me just how widespread this problem is.</p> <p>I urge the Council to pass Resolution 24-143 promptly, thereby recognizing the hard work of Neighborhood Boards and advocates who have been calling for a stronger stance against these illegal and harmful activities. Let us work together to improve the safety of our neighborhoods.</p> <p>Mahalo,</p> <p>Ian Ross</p>		



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI
PRESIDENT
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
JULY 10, 2024**

Re: RESO 24-143 ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE ON GAMBLING ROOMS.

Aloha, Chair Waters, and members of the Honolulu City Council. I am Tina Yamaki, President of the Retail Merchants of Hawaii and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii, established in 1901, is a statewide nonprofit trade organization committed to fostering the growth and development of Hawaii's retail sector. Our diverse membership encompasses small mom-and-pop stores, large box stores, resellers, luxury retailers, department stores, shopping malls, online sellers, and local, national, and international chains.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii is in strong support of establishing a task force on gambling rooms. Illegal gambling establishments has significant negative implications for our community's social, economic, and public health landscape. Establishing a dedicated task force will enable us to address these issues comprehensively and proactively.

Gambling rooms contribute to an increased crime rates and financial instability among residents and businesses. We are seeing that many of the stolen items at a substantial value are being recovered from the law enforcement raids on gaming rooms.

Organized retail crime has become an issue for retailers not only nationwide but even in Hawaii with stores closing due to theft losses and for safety precautions. As incidents of retail crime continue to escalate throughout the country, retailers have seen a dramatic jump in financial losses associated with theft. When taken as a percentage of total retail sales in 2022, shoplifting accounted for \$112.1 billion in losses, up from \$93.9 billion in 2021, according to the 2023 National Retail Security Survey (<https://nrf.com/research/national-retail-security-survey-2023>) . Forbes Advisor report (<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business-insurance/impact-retail-theft-on-small-businesses/>) that came out this past December analyzed all 50 states to find which areas are the most and least affected by retail crime, and Hawaii ranked 4th as the most impacted. Among all the states, Hawaii has the fifth highest value of stolen goods per resident at \$288. In comparison, D.C.'s average is \$173. Hawaii's resident count (<https://census.hawaii.gov/main/2023-state-pe/#:-:text=On%20July%201%2C%202023%2C%20the,State%20of%20Hawaii%20was%201%2C435%2C138>) in July was 1,435,138.

The establishment of a task force on gambling rooms is a vital step towards safeguarding our businesses' and community's prosperity and well-being.

Again, mahalo for this opportunity to testify.