

BILL022(25)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 189

BUDGET (BUD)

BUDGET (BUD) Meeting

Meeting Date: Mar 31, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 0

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 2

Name: Daniel Dinell	Email: ddinell@treesforhonolulu.org	Zip: 96822
Representing: Trees for Honolulu's Future	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Mar 29, 2025 @ 02:59 PM
Name: Natalie Iwasa	Email: iwasajunk@mail.com	Zip: 96825
Representing: Self	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Mar 30, 2025 @ 11:04 PM



Testimony before the
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET
Monday, March 31, 2025 (10:00 AM)

RE: BILL 22 (2025)–EXECUTIVE OPERATING BUDGET FOR FY 2026

Aloha Committee Chair Dos Santos-Tam and Committee Members:

Trees for Honolulu's Future (TFHF) is a nonprofit organization with a vision for a tree-filled island that preserves and enhances our quality of life, especially in the face of climate change.

Trees create multiple benefits well documented by research. They create shade and use evapotranspiration to lower temperature. Trees recharge groundwater and decrease surface runoff protecting our reefs. Trees trap pollutants and store CO2. Trees calm traffic. They are critical infrastructure. Numerous jurisdictions, including Honolulu, have recognized this, and are making tremendous progress in greening their cities.

In 2018, the City Council unanimously adopted resolution 18-55 setting a goal of achieving 35% urban tree canopy by 2035. In 2023, and again, in 2024, the Council put additional funds into the Executive Budget for tree planting. We appreciate the Council putting funding behind your policy directive.

One concern this year is the loss of federal funds in the City's Division of Urban Forestry's (DUF) community forestry program. TFHF, as a small nonprofit, had a \$141,000 EPA environmental justice subaward terminated, with well under half of that amount drawn over the past year, just 10 days ago. Should DUF experience similar disruption, it will negatively impact its community forestry work. Trees are being planted. Community is being engaged. The City is on the right track. Don't stop now. We suggest the Council inquire with DPR if there are any status updates from page 15 of its 3-11-25 FY26 Budget Presentation for Council.

An additional concern beyond the loss of federal funds whether sufficient monetary resources are allocated for replacement of coconut palms removed due to Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle infestation and general maintenance costs. Planting a tree is just the first step, caring for it is the essential next step.

Note that unlike most infrastructure, trees appreciate in value over time. They are, in short, worth the investment. We thank the hardworking folks at DPR and the Administration, along with the Council, for working to make Honolulu a more livable and resilient city.

Aloha,

Daniel Dinell, President

HONOLULU is HOT TREES are COOL

Visit us: www.TreesForHonolulu.org Contact us: info@TreesForHonolulu.org Voice/Fax/Text: 808-707-6353
P.O. Box 12051, Honolulu, Hawaii 96828

TO: Members of the Budget Committee

FROM: Natalie Iwasa, CPA, CFE
808-395-3233

DATE: Monday, March 31, 2025

SUBJECT: Bill 22, Operating Budget
Proposed Cuts to Vacant-Funded Positions – **OPPOSED**
Proposed Use of General Funds for City Sewer System – **OPPOSED**

Aloha Chair Dos Santos-Tam and Councilmembers,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on Bill 22, which is the city's operating budget.

Cuts totaling \$25 million to vacant-funded positions (open three years or more) have been proposed to help pay for the city's sewer system. Proposed cuts to the police department's vacant positions alone are over \$12 million, and that's after a councilmember criticized the police chief for not doing enough to hire more officers. Now you want to decrease funding for the open positions? What kind of message does that send to the chief?

Two other proposed amendments totaling almost \$49 million would take money from the general fund and use it for "sewer activities" and infrastructure.

Decades ago, the city told Henry Kaiser that **the city would not provide sewer services** to Hawaii Kai. Hawaii Kai residents have been paying for their own sewer system since then.

It is flat out wrong for the Council now to say to Hawaii Kai residents that we must help pay for the city sewer system via the general fund.

Any savings in vacant-funded position or other cuts should either go to needed services, such as park maintenance, or real property rates should be reduced, starting with Residential A.

Please do not include any of the proposed changes to use general funds for the city's sewer system and the draft that goes to full council.