

BILL054(25)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 402

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Aug 6, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 2

I wish to comment: 1

Name: Brett Kulbis	Email: brett.kulbis@use.startmail.com	Zip: 96706
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 5, 2025 @ 09:54 AM
Name: Donald Sakamoto	Email: cylonone@aol.com	Zip: 96744
Representing: Self	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Aug 5, 2025 @ 10:09 AM
Testimony: Oral testimony via video conference only.		
Name: Dre Kalili	Email: dreanalee.k.kalili@hawaii.gov	Zip: 96813
Representing: Honolulu Rate Commission	Position: Support	Submitted: Aug 5, 2025 @ 06:56 PM
Name: Leah Salindong	Email: salindongl1@gmail.com	Zip: 96826
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 6, 2025 @ 09:27 AM
Testimony: The community does not want more development in this area. It will disrupt the current environment and the people who reside there. Please respect the wishes of the community and do not continue developing. Thank you.		

Testimony Opposing Bill 54 (2025) – First Reading

Chair Waters, Vice Chair Tupola, and Councilmembers,

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Bill 54 (2025) at its first reading. I recognize that passage at this stage is largely a procedural step; however, I urge you to commit to robust scrutiny and amendment in subsequent committee hearings in order to address serious concerns regarding unchecked city spending, expanded bureaucratic discretion, and potential inefficiencies.

Key Concerns:

1. **Removal of Low-Income Subsidy Cap — Risk of Unchecked Spending:** The bill removes the longstanding \$1.5 million fiscal-year cap on the low-income transit fare subsidy program. While the intention to help those most in need is commendable, eliminating the cap without a replacement fiscal safeguard invites the risk of runaway costs to taxpayers. Conservatives—and many fiscal moderates—rightly object to open-ended subsidy programs, especially in the absence of clear budgetary limits or robust mechanisms for ongoing oversight.
2. **Centralization of Discretionary Authority in City Officials:** The measure centralizes significant authority in the hands of the Director of Transportation Services and the Director of Community Services, especially regarding fare setting for special events and eligibility determinations for reduced fares. Such expansions of bureaucratic discretion raise red flags, as they reduce transparency and introduce potential for arbitrary or politically motivated decision-making. Too much administrative leeway undermines the public's trust that fare and subsidy policies are being managed with strict accountability.
3. **Complexity of Eligibility Verification – Red Tape Instead of Streamlining:** Although the bill reduces the number of general fare categories, it replaces a hard spending cap on low-income fares with increasingly detailed verification requirements, annual recertification, and document submission. This added red tape may deter truly eligible families while enlarging the administrative apparatus required to manage the program, in tension with conservative principles favoring streamlined, limited government.
4. **Discounted Fares Still Too Expansive:** Even targeted reduced fare programs for seniors, disabled, and low-income individuals now lack explicit sunset provisions or tighter eligibility thresholds. Without stronger fiscal controls—such as time-limited benefits, budget triggers, or periodic program reauthorization—discounted fares risk becoming a permanent and growing strain on city finances, especially with Honolulu's challenging fiscal outlook.

For these reasons, I respectfully oppose Bill 54 (2025) as currently drafted. I urge Council to use the committee process to:

- Reinstatement of reasonable annual subsidy caps, or require automatic Council review and approval for expenditure increases.
- Limit or more clearly define the Director's discretionary powers, ensuring public accountability in all fare-setting and eligibility decisions.
- Simplify eligibility verification processes to minimize bureaucratic inefficiency.
- Introduce stronger sunset clauses or periodic audits for all discounted fare programs.

Let us ensure that fiscal responsibility and transparency are restored before any final passage.

Mahalo for your attention.

Respectfully,

Brett Kulbis
U.S. Navy Veteran
Ewa Beach



Honolulu Rate Commission

Komikina Lākiō Kāki

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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August 6, 2025

The Honorable Thomas Waters, Chair & Presiding Officer
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Waters:

Subject: Bill 54 (2025); Testimony in Support

The Rate Commission testifies in support of this measure as it aligns with policy recommendations the commission adopted earlier this year. Specifically, the Rate Commission recommends the following revisions to the City's transit fare structure:

1. An incentive for bus riders to use the HOLO payment card and a disincentive to pay fares with cash to be implemented as a fare increase of \$0.25 for riders paying in cash;
2. An increase of the adult monthly capped HOLO card fare or prepaid pass from \$80.00 to \$90.00;
3. An increase of the youth monthly capped HOLO card fare or prepaid pass from \$40.00 to \$45.00;
4. An increase of the reduced fare category for single rides from \$1.25 to \$1.50;
5. An increase of the reduced fare category for daily/24-hour capped HOLO card fare from \$3.00 to \$3.75;
6. An increase of the reduced fare category for the annual pass HOLO card fare from \$45.00 to \$50.00;
7. An increase in the paratransit one-way trip fare from \$2.25 to \$2.50; and
8. An increase of the seven-day pass cost from \$35.00 to \$50.00.

In addition to these fare structure revisions, the Rate Commission also recommends that the ordinance be further amended to authorize the director of the Department of

Transportation Services to establish a special events single ride fare for special events at his/her discretion, as well as a repeal of the \$1.5 million per fiscal year limit for the subsidy available for the reduced fare program for individuals with extremely low incomes.

The members of the Rate Commission evaluated these proposals and received public testimony from nearly 100 individuals. In addition to its regularly scheduled meetings, the Rate Commission held four public outreach meetings including three evening meetings in Kalihi, Kapolei, and Kāne'ohe. These recommendations of the commission reflect an effort to achieve key fare policy objectives (e.g., a simplified fare structure that encourages intermodal trips and guarantees transit riders the best available fare) while weighing the expressed needs of the public. The Rate Commission approved these recommendations at its meeting on March 4, 2025.

Noting the numerous voiced concerns opposing the fare increases, the Rate Commission's recommendations to increase the fare caps instead of the single ride fares represent a balanced approach to supporting the City's transit service while minimizing the financial impact to its transit riders.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (808) 388-5969.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DreanaLee K. Kalili". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "DreanaLee" and last name "Kalili" clearly distinguishable.

DreanaLee K. Kalili, Chair
Honolulu Rate Commission