

BILL049(25)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 461

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Sep 3, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 2

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Jacob Wiencek	jacob.m.wiencek@pm.me	96815
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Aug 31, 2025 @ 10:57 AM
Testimony: Aloha Councilmembers, High housing costs are a key driver of our broader affordability crisis. Reducing the housing burden on our older residents will help keep more people in their homes and manage the escalating cost-of-living challenges to remaining in Honolulu. I urge the Council to SUPPORT this bill!		
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Ted Kefalas	tkefalas@grassrootinstitute.org	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii	Support	Sep 2, 2025 @ 06:56 AM
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Travis Idol	twidol@alumni.wfu.edu	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Oppose	Sep 3, 2025 @ 06:47 AM
Testimony: This bill will not achieve any meaningful objective related to relieving financial burdens for homeowners and seniors. It is about appearance and politics. An average of \$70 in savings per year in property taxes amounts to less than \$6 a month, but it takes away millions in revenue for the city to maintain core services that affect the quality of life for all of us. There is no evidence that the beneficiaries of this bill are facing disproportionate or unreasonable financial burdens as a group, especially compared to renters, those with unstable living arrangements, working-age people parents, and children. The property tax rate and actual property taxes owed by homeowners in Hawai'i are lower than almost any other state in the US. My wife and I own 2-bedroom condo in North Carolina that we purchased as a home for my mother. Its assessed value is less than one-fifth the value of the condo we own here in Hawai'i, but the property tax we pay on her home is more than what we pay for our condo. Finally, the argument that seniors need relief because they live on "fixed incomes" is misleading, at best. Thankfully for all of us, Social Security benefits are increased each year based on a cost-of-living adjustment. This means that seniors who rely on these benefits to meet their living expenses get a "raise" every year to help pay for increased prices in everyday items and the assessed value of their home, should they own one. I urge you to vote against this bill and focus on providing better support and opportunities to better themselves for those who truly need it in our city and county. There are plenty of advocates and data available to identify those populations,		

learn of their struggles, and implement actions the council can take to improve their quality of life.

Sept. 3, 2025, 10 a.m.
Honolulu Hale

To: Honolulu City Council
Tommy Waters, Chair
Andria Tupola, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: Bill 49 (2025) — RELATING TO PROPERTY TAXATION

Aloha Chair Waters, Vice Chair Tupola and other members of the Council,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** [Bill 49 \(2025\)](#), which would increase the real property tax homeowner exemption for those 65 years old and older from \$160,000 to \$180,000 beginning in fiscal 2028.

Increasing the homeowner exemption by \$20,000 would save each homeowner \$70 at the current residential tax rate of \$3.50 per \$1,000 in assessed value.¹

The exemption was last increased in 2023, for the tax years beginning with fiscal 2024.² Passing Bill 49 (2025) now would head off possible increases in property values that could occur in the next two years.

Because many older folks rely on fixed incomes, increasing the amount of property tax relief they receive can reduce the “tax shock” of significant increases in property values.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

¹ [“Real Property Tax Rates for Tax Year July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025,”](#) City and County of Honolulu, accessed July 3, 2025.

² [Ordinance 23-33](#), Honolulu Records Collection, accessed Feb. 21, 2025.