BILL005(26)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 22

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Jan 28, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 6

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Jacob Wiencek	jacob.m.wiencek@pm.me	96815
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 22, 2026 @ 08:57 PM

Testimony:

Aloha Councilmembers,

Housing affordability is perhaps the key challenge to afford living in Honolulu. So many working- and middle-class families are unable to stay because they cannot afford housing costs. We must reverse this. I am very glad to see Council Chair Waters bring forward this urgently needed proposal. We've got to sustainably urbanize so we don't drive hardworking families away.

I strongly urge the Council to SUPPORT this bill!

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Ted Kefalas	tkefalas@grassrootinstitute.org	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii	Support	Jan 26, 2026 @ 01:01 PM

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Geena Thielen	geena@ccs-hawaii.com	96734
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 27, 2026 @ 04:44 PM

Testimony:

I am writing in support of both Bill 5 and Bill 6. Both have excellent ideas and a hybrid of the two would be best.

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Stefanie Sakamoto	ssakamoto@imanaka-asato.com	96789
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
BIA Hawaii	Support	Jan 27, 2026 @ 07:40 PM

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Dalan Kam	dailybusphoto808@gmail.com	96821
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 27, 2026 @ 08:21 PM

Testimony:

Aloha Council, I am writing in support of Bill 5.

Housing is top of mind for everyone, and this bill is a great step towards reducing the barriers to building affordable housing while eliminating parking mandates that only push more people towards car ownership, and its ever increasing financial burden on families.		
Name: Perry Arrasmith	Email: perry@hawaiisfuture.org	Zip: 96797
Representing: Housing Hawai'i's Future	Position: Support	Submitted: Jan 28, 2026 @ 07:51 AM

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII

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Removing barriers to Hawaii's prosperity

Jan. 28, 2026, 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 5 (2026) and Bill 6 (2026) — RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS IN THE APARTMENT AND APARTMENT MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

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

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** — and **offers amendments** to — Bill 5 (2026) and Bill 6 (2026), both of which would amend development standards for the apartment and apartment mixed-use zoning districts.

Grassroot believes these bills could unlock a range of new housing opportunities for Honolulu residents and would result in more plentiful, affordable housing.

In particular, both would reduce the minimum lot sizes for these districts and increase floor-area ratios. The floor-area ratio for a property is currently calculated using a complicated formula tied to the size of the lot and the zoning district. Table 1 below shows the current maximum FARs by zoning district compared to the new ratios proposed in the bills.

Table 1: Current and proposed maximum floor-area ratios

Zone	Maximum current FAR	Proposed residential FAR
A-1, AMX-1	0.9	2.0
A-2, AMX-2	1.9	3.0
A-3, AMX-3	2.8	4.0

A greater floor-area ratio means more building square footage can be built on a parcel. Increasing these ratios is critical because Honolulu needs more housing units. According to the 2019 Hawaii Housing Planning study, Honolulu needed 22,168 new units between 2020 and 2025.[1] A 2024 update to the Hawaii housing planning study estimated that Honolulu needs 27,710 new units built between 2023 and 2027 to meet demand.[2]

For homebuilders to justify buying a property and replacing aging buildings, they must be sure the project can be profitable.

Grassroot analyzed the potential impact of this bill by identifying apartment and apartment mixed-use parcels that have buildings 50 years old or older, none of which is designated as a condominium unit.[3] We identified 1,230 such parcels in the A-1, A-2, A-3 and AMX-2 zones, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Current actual and legal average floor-area ratios

Zone	Count of parcels	Average actual FAR	Average max. FAR	Proposed FAR
A-1	185	0.28	0.46	2.0
A-2	994	0.26	1.31	3.0
A-3	27	0.23	1.31	4.0
AMX-2	24	0.28	0.92	3.0

Increasing the allowable floor-area ratios could move some projects from questionably to realistically profitable. Consider a 10,000-square-foot A-2 lot where a 1,500-square-foot, 70-year-old single-family home now sits. The land value of that property could easily be $1 million.

If a homebuilder acquired that property, current FAR limits would allow up to 13,000 square feet of building area,[4] with a land cost per square foot of $79.

On the other hand, increasing the allowable FAR for that parcel to 3.0 would increase the amount of building area to 30,000, which would lower the land cost per square foot to $33 — a more than 50% reduction that could help the project pencil out.

[1] "Hawai'i Housing Planning Study, 2019," prepared for the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation by SMS Research and Marketing Services, Inc., December 2019, p. 56.
[2] "Hawaii Housing Planning Study 2024," prepared by SMS Research and Marketing Services, Inc., FSR Consulting LLC and Ward Research, Inc. for the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation, Table 39A, p. 124.
[3] Data from Hawaii Information Service's Multiple Listing Service, which requires a subscription to access. Reviewed tax year 2024 parcels with condominiums and properties without year built information excluded.
[4] Calculated by multiplying the lot size (10,000 square feet) by the current A-2 FAR calculation (FAR = 0.00002 x lot area + 1.1).

Although both bills would improve the financial feasibility of infill projects, there are minor differences between them that are worth noting:

>> Each bill would reduce the minimum lot sizes for apartment and apartment mixed-use zones, but Bill 5 (2025) would eliminate the minimums completely for A-3 and AMX-3 zones.

>> Bill 5 (2026) would reduce the minimum lot widths and depths from 70 feet to 45 or 50 feet, depending on the zone, while Bill 6 (2026) would reduce the lot widths and depths from 70 feet to 60 feet.

>> Bill 6 (2026) would set the maximum building area at 60% of the lot area for all apartment zones and all lot sizes, while Bill 5 (2026) would keep the current building area limitations, which impose stricter maximum building areas on larger parcels.

Grassroot believes that Bill 5's adjustments to the minimum lot areas and lot widths and depths should be combined with Bill 6's maximum building area changes.

The resulting legislation would give homebuilders greater flexibility in constructing apartment units in these zones that are already selected for higher-density development.

Lastly, Grassroot requests that the FAR for A-2 and AMX-2 parcels be increased to 4.0.

A-2 parcels with older, non-condominium dwellings make up 80% of the properties Grassroot reviewed. Allowing more density in those areas would help ensure that new housing comes on line at a quicker rate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
HONOLULU HALE
10:00 AM

January 28, 2026

Subject: Bill 5 - Relating to Development Standards in Apartment and Apartment Mixed Use Districts

Chair Waters, Vice Chair Tupola, and members of the Council::

My name is Roseann Freitas, CEO of the Building Industry Association of Hawaii (BIA-Hawaii). Chartered in 1955, the Building Industry Association of Hawaii is a professional trade organization affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders, representing the building industry and its associates. BIA-Hawaii takes a leadership role in unifying and promoting the interests of the industry to enhance the quality of life for the people of Hawaii. Our members build the communities we all call home.

BIA-Hawaii is in support of Bill 5, Relating to Development Standards in Apartment and Apartment Mixed Use Districts. At its core, this measure represents an effort to ensure that zoning regulations in areas already designated for residential growth better support the development of housing. As Honolulu continues to face a significant housing shortage, especially for local working families, policies that improve the ability to build homes in appropriate urban locations are both timely and necessary.

BIA Hawaii supports the general concept behind this bill: aligning development standards with the City's housing goals. Apartment and Apartment Mixed-Use districts are intended to accommodate higher-density residential living, often near jobs, services, and transit. When standards in these districts are modernized and made more workable, it becomes more feasible to move housing projects from the planning phase to construction.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments on this matter.

Housing Hawaii's Future
PO Box 3043
Honolulu, HI 96802-3043

January 28, 2025

TO: Chair Waters and Members of the Honolulu City Council

RE: Bill 5 and Bill 6, Relating to Development Standards in the Apartment and Apartment Mixed-Use Districts

Housing Hawai'i's Future is a movement led by young residents fighting to create opportunities for Hawai'i's next generations by ending the workforce housing shortage. Our organization supports attainable, workforce housing in areas with existing development and infrastructure, including many of those existing areas directly impacted by these measures.

We strongly support Bill 5 and Bill 6. Our organization has closely followed the debate over Resolution 25-105, which proceeded to the Planning Commission last year for review before transmittal back to the Council as these two measures.

Both measures will decrease the minimum lot size, increase the maximum building area, increase the floor area ratio, and decrease the minimum lot width and depths within Apartment and Apartment Mixed Use districts.

We urge the Council to entertain the elements of both measures that maximize options for prospective homebuilders. When taken together, these reforms could generate more than 5,000 new subdivided lots for residents, per the Department of Planning and Permitting's own estimates.[1]

Let's advance the conversation, and advance **Bill 5** and **Bill 6.**

Aloha,

Lee Wang
Executive Director
Housing Hawai'i's Future
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Perry Arrasmith
Director of Policy
Housing Hawai'i's Future
perry@hawaiisfuture.org

[1] See P. 4 of the memorandum here: https://hnldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnldoc/document-download?id=26870