

BILL016(26)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 35

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

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

Support: 2

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Jeff Smoot	Email: jeff.smoot@yahoo.com	Zip: 96814
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Jan 26, 2026 @ 09:29 PM
Testimony: I support Bill016(26). Consistent enforcement is the key. Creating enclosed off-leash areas at places like Ala Moana Regional Park will help. Consistently issuing citations for dogs running off-leash in parks harassing other dogs, keiki, and migratory birds will help.		
Name: Stephanie Kendrick	Email: skendrick@hawaiianhumane.org	Zip: 96826-1806
Representing: Hawaiian Humane Society	Position: Support	Submitted: Jan 27, 2026 @ 03:51 PM
Name: Peter Thoenen	Email: peter.thoenen@protonmail.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jan 27, 2026 @ 11:25 PM



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: Jan. 27, 2026

To: Chair Tommy Waters
Vice Chair Andria Tupola
and Members of the City Council

Submitted By: Steph Kendrick, Vice President of Community Engagement
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Support for Bill 16, Relating to the Regulation of Dogs
Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026, 10 a.m., City Council Chamber

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, mahalo for considering our strong support of Bill 16, Relating to the Regulation of Dogs.

Creating civil penalties for the owners of dogs who are stray provides a much-needed tool for animal law enforcement officers. Our overburdened criminal court system struggles to hold offenders accountable in strays prohibited cases, most of which are dismissed without repercussions for those charged. The lack of consequences for these offenses is a source of frustration for the public.

Dogs who are stray not only cause community concern and pose potential safety threats, they are also at risk of injury and death themselves. More effective consequences for these offences would protect people and animals from harm. Having the opportunity to pursue civil penalties gives law enforcement a powerful new tool to urge better behavior on the part of pet owners.

We urge the council to refer Bill 16 to committee for further discussion about this opportunity to improve public safety and animal welfare. Mahalo for your consideration.

Date: 27 January 2026

To: Honolulu City Council

Submitted By: Peter Thoenen, self

Reference: Opposition to Bill 16 (2026) as written, Relating to the Regulation of
Dogs; Changes suggested.
Wednesday, 28 January 2026, 10 a.m., City Council Chamber

Hi, Peter Thoenen representing myself as a longtime resident of Honolulu. I am writing to express my opposition to Bill 16 (2026) as written for the reasons below though I want to be clear this is not a categorical opposition and as such, I am also recommending specific changes to the bill which would garner my support, and I think that of our fellow residents. To summarize, I am suggesting specific changes which would seem to be in line with the stated purpose of this bill. I acknowledge I don't know the history behind it but one might reasonably suppose that a vocal subset of Honolulu residents are upset that the existing law as written in the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu isn't being implemented when it comes to stray dogs and that purpose of this bill is to resolve that concern; it spectacularly falls well short as written.

On page 1 under section "12-4.5" the bill proposes changing "article ~~to~~ may issue" and yet that accomplishes nothing, in fact it actively goes against the spirit of the perceived public complaint. Currently law enforcement officers have a legal duty to issue a summons to the owner of said stray dog to appear before court and yet obviously they have been negligent in that duty hence the public concern that sparked this very bill. Changing that to a "may" alleviates that duty and makes them completely unaccountable for said dereliction of duty and that is counterproductive to the resolution of the issue. Likewise the introduction of enforcement discretion is always fraught with error as history has shown time and time again and generally leads to selective discriminatory enforcement which undermines public confidence in the rule of law. I highly recommend replacing "may" with "will" and the creation of a civil penalty scheme under this section for failure to execute said duty. People want law enforcement to handle stray dogs in accordance with the law as written, and as they are paid to do, when they show up after a valid criminal complaint. Not let owners of said stray dogs off the hook because of personnel relationships or they simply don't want to deal with it.

Also while still in this section I would also recommend removing "owner ~~or person~~ to report" as stray dogs are not the responsibility of anyone but the owner. If the owner can't be identified, we have other mechanisms to deal with that rather than the police requiring random people with no responsibility for the animal in question to show up to court.

On page 2 under section "12-4.9" likewise I recommend removing any reference to "[~~or any other person~~]" for reasons the same.

On these next recommendations take the exact wording with a grain of salt as proto language, people much more legally inclined and educated than me on law can most likely come up with better wording to further the effects being proposed below:

On page 3 under section "12-4 Civil Enforcement" I would suggest adding the following subsection: (d) Any person who is party to the criminal complaint (i.e. the complainant) whom is aware of a law enforcement officer not issuing a summons in violation of section 12-4.5. will notify the director who will investigate and vigorously prosecute said complaint under (c).

On page 4 under section "12-4 Civil Penalties" I would suggest adding the following subsection:

(d) Civil penalty. A law enforcement officer found, after opportunity for a hearing in accordance with HRS Chapter 91 to have violated this article will be penalized as follows:

- (1) A fine of \$1000 if the violation did not occur within ten years of the occurrence of a previous violation involving the same provision;
- (2) A fine of \$5000 if the violation occurred within ten years of the occurrence of a previous violation involving the same provision;
- (3) Termination of employment and a permanent bar on all future employment by the City and County of Honolulu, either directly or indirectly via contracts or grants, if the violation occurred within ten years of the occurrence of two or more previous violations involving the same provision.

The stated public policy goal here is to regulate stray dogs hence its criminalization and as such the law should be enforced and that goes for those with a duty to enforce law as well, not just those with a duty to obey it. If the residents of Honolulu, and their proxy the City and County of Honolulu, are no longer interested in seeing the law criminally enforced, and that is highly suggested with the proposal to removing the existing legal duty from law enforcement officers to actually enforce it via the aforementioned [~~may~~] change, then we should simply strike in full sections ROH 12-4.5 through 12-4.11 and make it a civil penalty only thereby freeing up limited law enforcement, court, prosecutor, public defender, and incarceration resources to focus on crime. But if we do think it should remain a crime, then the law should be enforced and since it's not currently we can reasonably presume from the fact this even bill exists, then we need to incentivize that enforcement, not the opposite. I like to think we all, or at least the majority of residents and the highly vocal minority, believe law enforcement officers have better things to do than chasing stray dogs around or trying to track down their owners. This law can be fully enforced civilly but if not, then we need to start criminally enforcing it as the public demands and incentivize that enforcement.