

BILL006(26)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 114

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Mar 25, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 7

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Ted Kefalas	Email: tkefalas@grassrootinstitute.org	Zip: 96813
Representing: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 24, 2026 @ 08:09 AM

Name: Damien Waikoloa	Email: damien.waikoloa@gmail.com	Zip: 96822
Representing: Hawai'i YIMBY	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 24, 2026 @ 09:21 AM

Name: Ross Isokane	Email: isokane@gmail.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Self	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 24, 2026 @ 04:28 PM

Testimony:

I support Bill 6 (2026), CD1.

I have followed and supported this effort since Resolution 25-105 was introduced in April 2025. As someone who lives in the urban core and values safe, walkable, vibrant neighborhoods with reliable public transportation, I welcome zoning reforms that enable more housing in areas already planned for density. Current development standards have made it far too difficult to build moderate-scale housing by right in apartment-zoned districts, and Bill 6 takes a practical, long-overdue step toward changing that.

But I want to be candid about something I have raised in prior testimony on this concept (during the resolution phase): supply-side reform is necessary, but it is not sufficient if we don't also address global demand and speculative investment.

On O'ahu, we are not just short on housing — we also have tens of thousands of units sitting vacant or underutilized, often functioning as investment assets rather than homes. If we modernize zoning to make it easier to build — as we should — but do nothing to address the demand-side forces that drive up the cost of housing, we risk building more units that get absorbed by global speculative capital rather than housing local families.

The Council has a tool to address this. If Bill 6 addresses our ability to build, then policies like Bill 46 (2024), the Empty Homes Tax, address the incentive to actually use housing as housing. Without aligning both, we risk doing the hard work of reforming our zoning code without fully realizing the housing availability those reforms are meant to produce.

Bill 46 (2024), the Empty Homes Tax, has been independently studied, has strong public support, and would both nudge vacant units back into productive use and generate meaningful revenue for affordable housing. I respectfully urge the Council to treat Bill 6 not as the finish line, but as one half of a complete housing strategy — and to bring the Empty

Homes Tax across the finish line alongside it.

We should make it easier to build housing. And we should also discourage homes from being left empty (or tax such uses and generate potentially tens of millions per year for our budget).

Name: Perry Arrasmith	Email: perry@hawaiiisfuture.org	Zip: 96797
Representing: Housing Hawai'i's Future	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 25, 2026 @ 07:08 AM
Name: Stefanie Sakamoto	Email: ssakamoto@imanaka-asato.com	Zip: 96789
Representing: BIA Hawaii	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 25, 2026 @ 07:20 AM
Name: McKinley Eads	Email: mckinleye@avalonhi.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Avalon Group	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 25, 2026 @ 08:53 AM
Name: Arjuna Heim	Email: arjuna@hiappleseed.org	Zip: 96816
Representing: Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice	Position: Support	Submitted: Mar 25, 2026 @ 08:58 AM

March 25, 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 6 (2026), CD1 — 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 6 \(2026\), CD1](#), which would amend development standards for the apartment and apartment mixed-use zoning districts.

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

In particular, Bill 6 (2026) 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 bill.

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 ($\text{FAR} = 0.00002 \times \text{lot area} + 1.1$).

Although Bill 6 (2026) would improve the financial feasibility of infill projects, Grassroot urges the Council to adopt two amendments.

First, 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 online at a quicker rate.

Second, Grassroot requests that the minimum lot width and depth be set to no more than 50 feet.

Martin Nguyen has explained in testimony on this bill that many existing apartment and apartment mixed-use lots are 45 or 50 feet wide,⁵ which would mean any homebuilder trying to meet the 60-foot width and depth proposed in this legislation would need to obtain some sort of time-consuming discretionary approval, such as a variance or a consolidation and resubdivision.

Adopting these two amendments would give homebuilders greater flexibility in constructing apartment units in zones that are already selected for higher-density development.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

⁵ Martin Nguyen, "[Testimony In Support Of Bills 5 And 6 \(2026\) – Relating To The Development Standards For The Apartment And Apartment Mixed-Use Districts](#)," Feb. 3, 2026, p. 7.



Hawai'i YIMBY

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March 25, 2026

Honolulu City Council

530 South King St.

Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: SUPPORT BILL 6 (2026), CD1 - RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
IN THE APARTMENT AND APARTMENT MIXED-USE DISTRICTS**

Aloha Chair Waters, Vice Chair Tupola, and Council Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i YIMBY, we submit testimony in **support of Bill 6 (26), CD1**, which updates development standards in apartment and apartment mixed-use districts. This bill makes practical changes that help reduce barriers to building new housing, especially in areas already zoned for apartments.

By lowering minimum lot sizes, reducing lot dimensions, and simplifying density rules, the bill makes it easier to build more homes on more sites. Just as importantly, it supports the creation of mixed-use buildings, allowing housing to be built alongside or above small businesses and services in existing apartment-zoned areas. This flexibility can help increase the overall supply of housing and make better use of limited land.

Mixed-use development also makes neighborhoods more livable. When shops and services are closer to where people live, residents have better access to daily needs without having to travel far. This supports walkability, reduces transportation costs, and creates more active, connected communities. It also helps local businesses by bringing more customers within walking distance.



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Overall, this bill is a meaningful step toward increasing housing opportunities while creating more convenient and vibrant neighborhoods.

We respectfully ask your support for this bill and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Damien Waikoloa

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY

Edgardo Díaz Vega

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY

Huey Kwik

Chapter Lead, Hawai'i YIMBY



March 25, 2026

TO: Chair Waters and Members of the Honolulu City Council

RE: Bill 6, CD1, Relating to Development Standards in the Apartment and Apartment Mixed-Use Districts

Aloha Chair Waters and Members of the Council,

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.

We strongly support Bill 6, Committee Draft (CD) 1, with comments. 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 Bill 5 and Bill 6. To that end, we support Bill 6's movement as the reform vehicle for Resolution 25-106.

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 **As Bill 6 advances, we humbly ask the City Council to adopt the reductions in minimum lot area and width and depth proposed in Bill 5.** These reductions are reasonable and will result in even more housing options for homebuilders, communities, and residents down the road.

Let's advance the conversation and advance a flexible, cohesive measure that marries the best of both Bill 5 and Bill 6. **Let's advance Bill 6, CD1.**

Aloha,



Lee Wang
Executive Director
Housing Hawai'i's Future
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Perry Arrasmith
Director of Policy
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¹ See P. 4 of the memorandum here: <https://hnlidoc.ehawaii.gov/hnlidoc/document-download?id=26870>



**HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
HONOLULU HALE
10:00 AM**

March 25, 2026

Subject: Bill 6 - 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 6, Relating to Development Standards in Apartment and Apartment Mixed Use Districts, which addresses development standards within the Apartment and Apartment Mixed-Use zoning districts.

Regulatory improvements like these put forth in Bill 6 help support housing production through better land use policy rather than relying solely on public funding. Creating a regulatory environment that enables housing in appropriate urban areas is one of the tools the City has to address supply constraints over the long term.

For these reasons, BIA Hawaii supports the general intent of Bill 6 (2026) as a measure that can help facilitate additional housing opportunities in Honolulu's urban core.

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



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

RE: Bill 6 (2026), CD1 – Relating to Development Standards in the Apartment and Apartment Mixed-Use Districts

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Councilmembers,

My name is McKinley Eads, and I am testifying on behalf of the Avalon Group in support of Bill 6 (2026), CD1. This bill makes targeted updates to apartment and apartment mixed-use zoning standards that directly address barriers to housing production while maintaining the existing framework for where and how multifamily development occurs in Honolulu.

A key strength of this bill is that increasing allowable floor area on a parcel has a direct and meaningful impact on housing affordability. When more usable space can be built on the same lot, land costs are spread across more units, reducing per-unit land cost. This is one of the few zoning-based tools available to local governments that can influence housing prices without relying on subsidies or public funding. In practice, it improves the feasibility of delivering more attainable units in higher density areas, and helps projects move forward without requiring additional concessions or exceptions.

Just as importantly by increasing the allowable floor area ratio while retaining existing yard and setback requirements. This approach adds housing capacity without altering the fundamental form of development in these districts. By keeping setbacks unchanged, new buildings continue to follow established spacing and relationships to neighboring properties and the street, allowing additional housing to be accommodated within the same sites rather than through outward expansion that can feel more disruptive to surrounding areas.

The bill also improves regulatory clarity. Simplifying and standardizing development standards reduces entitlement risk, shortens project timelines, and lowers soft costs that otherwise compound over years of uncertainty. These cost savings ultimately benefit renters and buyers, and in a city where regulatory delays significantly increase housing costs, predictability itself is an important affordability strategy.

Finally, Bill 6 is appropriately limited in scope. It applies only to apartment and apartment mixed-use zoning districts and does not introduce new uses or expand zoning into new areas. By modernizing outdated standards where multifamily housing is already planned, the bill increases flexibility without shifting development pressure into areas not designated for apartment use.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Council to support Bill 6 (2026), CD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued efforts to advance practical housing solutions for Honolulu.



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
**Support to Bill 6 – Relating to Development Standards in the Apartment and Apartment
Mixed-Use Districts**

Honolulu City & County Council Meeting (Third Reading)
Wednesday, March, 13 2026 at 10:00AM

Aloha Chair Water, Vice Chair Tupola, and Council Members;

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of Bill 6 (2026), CD1**, with some suggested amendments.

Hawaii Appleseed's mission is to advance economic and social justice for all people in Hawai'i, with a particular focus on low-income families and communities most harmed by the housing crisis. Honolulu's severe housing shortage drives up rents, forces families into overcrowded conditions, and pushes working people off the island. Structural land-use reform is essential to turning this crisis around, Bill 6 is the kind of reform our community needs.

By reducing minimum lot sizes and significantly increasing allowable floor-area ratios in apartment and apartment mixed-use districts, Bill 6 would make infill housing development more financially feasible across a wider range of sites. According to a 2024 update to the Hawaii Housing Planning Study, Honolulu needs approximately 27,710 new units built between 2023 and 2027 to meet demand. We cannot meet that need by relying solely on large, complex development programs. We need zoning that allows moderate-scale, by-right housing to be built in the neighborhoods where people already live and where infrastructure already exists.

Hawaii Appleseed urges the Council to adopt two amendments alongside this bill which would strengthen housing opportunities for mid:

1. Increase the FAR for A-2 and AMX-2 parcels to 4.0. A higher FAR in these zones would accelerate the production of new housing in areas where it is most needed and most appropriate.
2. Reduce the minimum lot width and depth to no more than 50 feet. As currently drafted, the bill sets a 60-foot minimum lot dimension. Reducing the minimum to 45 or 50 feet would bring the standard in line with the actual urban fabric of Honolulu, put the bill's benefits within reach of small and mid-sized local property owners, and make a meaningful difference in how much housing actually gets built.

These amendments would enable more housing, in more places, for more people. Hawaii Appleseed urges the Council to pass Bill 6 (2026), CD1, and to consider the suggested amendments. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.