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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA PĀKA A ME NĀ HANA HO'ONANEA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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March 30, 2026

The Honorable Andria Tupola, Chair
and Members
Committee on Housing, Homelessness & Parks
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Suite 202
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Tupola and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Bill 32 (2026), Relating to Public Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Botanical Gardens

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) supports the proposed approach of Bill 32 (2026) and offers the following recommendations and alternative language.

DPR respectfully recommends the following amendments:

1. Section 2: Amend the proposed language in Bill 32 (2026)

"(a) *Authorization.* ~~The director of parks and recreation is authorized to set reasonable fees for the use and rental of a botanical garden or a botanical garden parking lot to help cover operating and maintenance costs. The department of parks and recreation may require a custodial deposit to serve as security for the cleaning, repairing, and restoration of any damage resulting from the use of the botanical garden or botanical garden parking lot. Before establishing the fees, the director of parks and recreation shall notify all duly constituted botanical garden advisory organizations concerning the proposed fees.~~"

DPR proposes the following:

"(a) *Authorization.* Unless otherwise specified, the director is authorized to establish fees and charges by rule for the commercial

and noncommercial use of botanical gardens, including entry to and use of botanical garden facilities, parking lots, and other recreational areas under the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation, to help cover operating and maintenance costs."

DPR proposes this change because some botanical gardens may not generate revenue if fees are limited only to parking. For example, at Ho'omaluhia Botanical Garden, many visitors will bypass parking for a fee and instead remain in their vehicle and drive through the gardens, stopping along the half-mile roadway to take photographs of the Ko'olau Mountains, which will create traffic jams and safety hazards for pedestrians.

2. In addition, DPR notes that the admission fees for Foster Botanical Garden under the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu §9-3.1 (a) would need to be evaluated if this bill is adopted. DPR proposes that the following language be stricken, so that the department may adopt a fee structure for all botanical gardens which could include passes to multiple gardens for one fee.

~~"(a) The following daily admission fees shall be assessed for the Foster Botanical Garden:~~

~~(1) Child five years of age and under: free. Child must be accompanied by a person 18 years old or older;~~

~~(2) Annual family pass holder as specified in subsection (b): free;~~

~~(3) Child six to 12 years of age: $1 per person;~~

~~(4) Resident of Hawaii, 13 years of age and older: $3 per person;~~

~~(5) Nonresident of Hawaii, 13 years of age and older: $5 per person;~~

~~(6) Member of the Friends of the Honolulu Botanical Garden: free; and~~

~~(7) The director of parks and recreation is authorized to set reduced rates for persons participating in structured~~

~~educational tours, group purchases, and promotional packages and persons with promotional coupons. The director is also authorized to allow entry of any person into the Foster Botanical Garden as part of a promotional offer or package made available by the city.~~

~~(b) An annual family pass may be purchased for $25 each. An annual family pass holder is the person or persons named on the pass who is or are entitled to free unlimited admission, during operating hours, to the Foster Botanical Garden for the period specified in the pass.~~"

3. Section 4: Amend the new language in Revised Ordinances of Honolulu §10-2.1 (e) as follows:

"10-2.1 Fees for the commercial and noncommercial use of public parks, recreational facilities, parking lots, and other recreational areas.

(e) Civil penalty. A person found by the director, after an opportunity for a hearing in accordance with HRS Chapter 91, to have violated any provision of this section is subject to a fine of $~~35~~500.

DPR proposes this change to align with the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu §10-1.6(d), under which a person may be assessed a fine of no more than $500.

DPR provides these suggestions to help ensure that fees assessed at City facilities support the effective management, operation, and maintenance of City parks and botanical gardens.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill 32 (2026).

Sincerely,

Laura H. Thielen
Director

APPROVED:

Michael D. Formby, Managing Director
Office of the Managing Director