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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
KA ʻOIHANA MĀLAMA PĀKA A ME NĀ HANA HOʻONANEA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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June 2, 2026

The Honorable Tommy Waters, Chair
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Suite 202
Honolulu, Hawaiʻi 96813

Dear Chair Waters and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Bill 22 (2026) Relating to the Executive Operating Budget and Program for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) respectfully submits the following comments and requests regarding Bill 22 (2026), CD2, proposed FD1 (TW):

1- **DPR appreciates and supports the restoration of Current Expense funds in the Urban Forestry Program, Recreation Services, and Grounds Maintenance.** These funds are critical to maintaining park operations, supporting recreational programming, and managing the City's urban canopy for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

2- **DPR respectfully requests that the City Council remove the proposed addition of $500,000 in Current Expense funds with the proviso for turf and electrical improvements at the Keʻehi Lagoon Beach Park pavilion.** Electrical improvements and expansion at Keʻehi Lagoon Beach Park would likely be a capital improvement project. DPR has submitted a request to the Department of Facility Maintenance (DFM) to do an electrical assessment at Keʻehi to determine if a new transformer would need to be added to the park before it can submit a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budget proposal to replace and install new lighting for its parking lots, pavilion, and outdoor courts. DPR is currently planning to include this project in its FY28 CIP proposal.

3- **DPR respectfully requests the restoration of $51,536 in Current Expense funds in Administration.** Executive Services is a small but critical division within DPR that oversees recruitment and hiring, employee training and retention, workplace safety, strategic planning, Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

oversight, department-wide budget development and monitoring, and department initiatives like asset management inventory and master planning for Kalaeloa.

Although the proposed reduction represents a relatively small amount, it would have a disproportionate impact on DPR's ability to recruit and fill vacant positions, provide retention training and professional development opportunities for current staff, equip safety personnel with tablets needed to conduct field inspections more efficiently, and maintain current levels of security services for 400+ acres of Kalaeloa park parcels. Restoring these funds will help DPR improve workforce capacity, operational efficiency, and employee retention at a time when staffing challenges continue to affect service delivery.

4- **DPR respectfully requests that the City Council remove the proposed addition of $100,000 in Current Expense funds in the Urban Forestry program with the proviso that funds be used to expand the tree canopy in District 4.** Expanding O'ahu's urban tree canopy is a core objective of DPR. The Division of Urban Forestry (DUF) already conducts ongoing tree planting initiatives and community tree giveaways across the island through our Community Forestry program. DUF strategically prioritizes tree planting efforts in areas with the greatest need, based on factors such as heat index, existing canopy cover, environmental conditions, and equity considerations. This data-driven, island-wide approach allows the Division to allocate resources where they will have the greatest impact, including within District 4, while maintaining an equitable and strategic expansion of the urban forest across O'ahu. The Department's proposed budget already includes funding to support these efforts, and DUF is confident in its ability to continue advancing tree canopy expansion initiatives within its existing resources.

5- **DPR respectfully requests the restoration of $140,004 in Current Expense funds for Maintenance Support Services (MSS).** MSS performs critical repair and maintenance work throughout the department, including roof repairs, repaving projects, backflow prevention repairs, and other facility maintenance projects.

The proposed reduction would limit the division's ability to purchase raw materials and supplies necessary to complete these projects in a timely manner. In recent years, MSS has successfully delivered numerous small-scale CIP and repair projects, allowing DPR to address facility deficiencies more quickly and cost-effectively while improving park conditions for the public. Restoring these funds will help ensure that needed repairs are completed promptly and that facilities remain safe, functional, and accessible.

6- **DPR respectfully requests that the City Council remove the proposed additions in Maintenance Support Services Current Expense funds for the following Council initiated projects:**

- **$500,000 with proviso for overt video monitoring at City parks and City park-and-ride facilities.** DPR supports exploring the use of video monitoring to enhance safety and security at City parks. To that end, the Department has initiated discussions with the Department of Information Technology (DIT) to assess the infrastructure requirements, technology needs, and associated costs for the installation and operation of camera systems at park facilities.

  Because this assessment is still underway, DPR is not yet in a position to determine the appropriate scope, locations, or funding requirements for such an initiative. Upon completion of the assessment, the Department anticipates incorporating a funding request into its FY28 or FY29 budget proposal based on documented needs and cost estimates. Accordingly, DPR believes it would be premature to appropriate funding at this time before the necessary planning and evaluation process has been completed.

- **$150,000 with proviso for the installation of a dog park at Ke'ehi Lagoon Beach Park (KLBP).** DPR does not support the installation of a dog park at KLBP at this time. The master plan for KLBP does not include the installation of a dog park. Although portions of the park may appear underutilized at certain times, KLBP serves as a major recreational venue that accommodates a wide range of activities, including baseball, tennis, pickleball, and paddling programs and practices. The park also hosts numerous large-scale events, festivals, and regattas throughout the year.

  Given the park's extensive existing uses and operational demands, the addition of a dog park would create additional maintenance, management, and resource requirements at a facility that already has significant operational needs. DPR believes that the proposed dog park would place further strain on existing resources and may conflict with the park's current recreational programming and event functions. Moanalua Dog Park is a nearby off-leash option for both small and large dogs where there is opportunity for increased utilization by users.

- **$10,000 with proviso for the installation of signage for the renaming of Wai'anae District Park to the Shinyei Nagamine and 100th Infantry Battalion Memorial Park, Wai'anae District Park.** DPR does not require this additional appropriation, as the Department is able to initiate the

fabrication and installation of the signage using existing FY26 funds. Accordingly, the proposed funding is unnecessary and may be redirected to other priorities of the Administration.

- **$25,000 with proviso for a cattle gate at Kaupuni Neighborhood Park.** DPR does not require this additional appropriation. This project can be completed utilizing MSS' FY27 existing budget.

7- **DPR respectfully requests the restoration of salary funding in the amount of $228,797 for Recreation Services and $400,000 for Grounds Maintenance to the Department's operating budget, rather than placement in a provisional account.** DPR appreciates the intent to provide funding for vacant positions. However, under current hiring procedures, departments must certify the availability of funds before initiating a request to fill a position. Placing salary funding in a provisional account would require DPR to return to the City Council to seek release of the funds through a separate resolution process before recruitment can begin. This additional administrative step would extend hiring timelines and delay the recruitment and onboarding of qualified employees, particularly during the latter half of the fiscal year.

DPR continues to face staffing challenges and actively recruits year-round to fill critical vacancies across its operations. These efforts are necessary to address ongoing retirements, employee separations, and transfers to other City departments. Restoring the salary funding directly to the Department's operating budget will support timely and efficient recruitment, reduce procedural delays, and help ensure that essential services are adequately staffed and maintained.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill 22 (2026), CD2, proposed FD1 (TW).

Sincerely,

Laura H. Thielen
Director

APPROVED:

Krishna Jayaram, Managing Director Designate
Office of the Managing Director