

BILL049(26)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 285

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Jul 8, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 0

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

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Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Jul 2, 2026 @ 07:20 PM

Testimony:

Chair Waters, and Members of the Council,

Aloha, my name is Brett Kulbis. I am a proud resident of 'Ewa Beach and a 26-year U.S. Navy veteran. As a concerned citizen who values limited government, fiscal responsibility, and real accountability to the people, I submit this testimony in opposition of Bill 49, Relating To Revenues And Funds, as currently written.

My first concern is process. Parks, recreation programs, botanical gardens, and urban forestry already fall under existing departments and should be funded through the normal annual budget process. Each year, those departments can bring their requests, and the Council can weigh them against core needs like public safety, basic infrastructure, and tax relief. By hard-earmarking portions of the transient accommodations tax into special and revolving funds, Bill 49 sidesteps that yearly scrutiny and weakens your ability to make trade-offs.

My second concern is that the bill effectively upgrades "nice-to-have" amenities into guaranteed "must-fund" expenditures. The "supplement, not supplant" language locks in automatic spending for these programs, regardless of the city's fiscal condition or competing priorities. Instead of allowing the Council to adjust funding up or down based on performance and need, the bill pre-commits more money off the top.

Together, these provisions put this spending on auto-pilot with limited Council oversight. Once the percentages are codified, money will flow every year with far less opportunity for you, as elected officials, to ask hard questions, set priorities, or redirect funds in a downturn. That loss of flexibility is a serious problem for anyone who values fiscal responsibility and accountable government.

For these reasons, I oppose Bill 49 as written. If the Council wishes to move forward, I respectfully recommend the following amendments:

1. Remove or sunset the fixed earmark percentages, so that TAT revenues can be allocated each year through the regular budget process.
2. Strike or narrow the "supplement, not supplant" clause, so the Council can adjust overall spending instead of automatically ratcheting it upward.
3. If any dedicated funds are retained, require periodic Council review and reauthorization, with clear reporting on outcomes and an explicit opportunity to revise or end the earmarks.

If parks and botanical gardens truly need more support, that case can and should be made in the open during the annual budget. The Council should retain full authority to balance those requests against the essential needs of Honolulu's residents and taxpayers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of these amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

Brett Kulbis, Navy Veteran

Ewa Beach