BILL047(26)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 297

*BUDGET (BUD)

***BUDGET (BUD) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Jul 14, 2026 @ 09:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 2

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Jonathan Huynh	jhweather123@yahoo.com	96792
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Oppose	Jul 9, 2026 @ 06:52 AM

Testimony:

Aloha,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. As both a car owner and supporter of safer streets, I strongly oppose Bill 47 as currently written.

While I fully support the Council's desire to provide cost-of-living relief, Bill 47 is a flawed measure. It will strip vital funding from our road maintenance budgets while giving the largest tax cuts to the owners of the heaviest, most expensive luxury vehicles.

I respectfully urge the Council to reject this regressive cut and instead adopt a progressive vehicle weight tax. This amendment would provide genuine relief to working-class families without bankrupting our road safety and repaving budgets.

Why I oppose Bill 47 in its current form:

1. It helps luxury car owners, not struggling families:
A flat 1.5-cent cut is highly regressive. A working family driving a modest Honda Civic will save a negligible $42 per year ($3.50 a month). Meanwhile, a wealthy household driving a heavy, 6,000-pound luxury SUV will get a $90 annual discount.

2. The physics of road damage (the 16x Factor):
Pavement wear does not increase linearly with weight. A 6,000-pound luxury vehicle does not do twice the damage of a 3,000-pound compact car. It actually causes 16 times more wear-and-tear on our roads. By cutting taxes across the board, Bill 47 forces owners of light, economical cars and non-drivers to subsidize the extreme damage caused by the heaviest vehicles.

3. It starves maintenance and costs drivers more in repairs:
The county weight tax is the primary funding source for local road repairs. Cutting this revenue will worsen our pothole backlog. Poorly maintained roads cost drivers hundreds of dollars annually in flat tires, damaged rims, and ruined suspensions. Deferring road maintenance will cost locals far more in vehicle repairs than a tiny $42 tax discount.

4. It rewards heavier, more dangerous vehicles:
Larger, heavier passenger vehicles have larger blind spots, longer braking distances, and are far more lethal to bicyclists, pedestrians, kupuna, and keiki in our neighborhoods. The tax code should encourage the use of smaller, safer vehicles.

Bill 47 does the exact opposite by giving the largest financial discount to the largest, most dangerous vehicles on our streets.

5. It creates an unfair loophole for heavy EVs:
Because EVs do not buy gasoline, they pay $0.00 in county fuel taxes. The county weight tax is the only way EV owners contribute to local neighborhood street repairs. Because EVs are much heavier than gas cars (due to battery weight), giving them a massive weight tax cut means the heaviest vehicles are wearing down neighborhood roads for free, leaving local taxpayers to clean up the mess.

The solution: amend Bill 47 to a graduated weight tax.

I urge the Council to amend the bill to establish a tiered weight tax that rewards families that drive smaller, safer, and more fuel-efficient vehicles while ensuring heavy, road-damaging vehicles pay their fair share:

Tier 1: Lightweight Cars (Under 3,000 lbs): Reduce the rate from 7.0 cents to 5.0 cents per pound.
This gives maximum relief (nearly 30% off) directly to working-class families with smaller, economical cars.

Tier 2: Standard Vehicles (3,001 to 4,500 lbs): Maintain the rate at 7.0 cents per pound (no change).

Tier 3: Heavy Vehicles (Over 4,500 lbs): Increase the rate to 9.0 cents per pound to reflect the heavy damage and safety risks these vehicles bring to our streets.

The Council faces a choice between a flat tax cut that disproportionately benefits luxury vehicle owners at the expense of our infrastructure, or a smart, targeted amendment that provides real help to struggling families with small cars while protecting the budgets we need to keep our roads safe.

I urge the Council to oppose Bill 47 as written and amend it to a progressive, graduated weight tax.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Ted Kefalas	tkefalas@grassrootinstitute.org	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii	Support	Jul 13, 2026 @ 08:42 AM
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Self	Oppose	Jul 13, 2026 @ 03:28 PM

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Removing barriers to Hawaii's prosperity

July 14, 2026, 9 a.m.
Honolulu Hale

To: Honolulu City Council Committee on Budget
Val A. Okimoto, Chair
Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns

RE: Bill 47 (2026) — RELATING TO THE MOTOR VEHICLE WEIGHT TAX

Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Nishimoto and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** Bill 47 (2026), which would cut the city's vehicle weight tax by 1.5 cents per pound. Currently, Honolulu residents pay an annual 7-cent-per pound levy on all commercial and passenger vehicles registered in the county.

Each county levies weight taxes on vehicles, but Honolulu's is the highest by a substantial amount. For passenger vehicles, Maui County's weight tax is 3.5 cents per pound, Kauai County's is 2 cents, and Hawaii County's is 1.75 cents.[1] Each county's weight tax is imposed in addition to the state's per-pound weight tax of 1.75 cents to 2.25 cents, a state highway beautification fee and a city vehicle registration fee.

For context, the owner of a 2019 Toyota Tacoma would pay about $310 annually for only Honolulu's weight tax. That would decrease to about $265 under this proposed legislation.

This measure will make transportation more affordable for Honolulu residents struggling with high gas prices. Saving $45 will not be a make or break most residents, but it will help mitigate the affordability crisis that most people deal with everyday.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

[1] Daryl Huff, "Lawmakers moving to slash city vehicle tax by 75%," Hawaii News Now, April 14, 2026.

Damien Waikoloa
Honolulu, HI 96822

Honolulu City Council - Committee on Budget
530 S. King St.
Honolulu HI 96813

July 14, 2026

RE: Oppose Bill 47 (2026) - Relating to The Motor Vehicle Weight Tax

Aloha Chair Okimoto, Vice Chair Nishimoto, and Council Members,

I respectfully submit this testimony in **opposition to Bill 47.**

I oppose this measure because it represents a misguided approach to reducing the cost of living for O‘ahu residents. While lowering taxes may sound appealing, this bill provides only token savings for drivers while reducing City revenue that could instead be invested in projects and services that would produce meaningful, lasting reductions in the cost of living and improve quality of life for all residents.

Despite one Councilmember boasting on Instagram that this bill would save the owner of a 2026 Toyota Sienna about **$69 per year, that amount of money is meaningless when compared to the daily and weekly expenses facing O‘ahu families.** At today's gas prices ($5.45/gal.), $69 would not even fill the entire tank (18 gal.) of that Toyota Sienna. For the average family, that tank of gas would likely last only three or four days of commuting before the savings disappear entirely. **A one-time annual tax reduction of this size does nothing to meaningfully reduce the financial burden of living on O‘ahu.**

The Department of Customer Services estimates that this bill would reduce City revenue by approximately $20 million to $30 million each year. For comparison, the City's most recent budget allocated approximately $47.3 million for road maintenance. The question residents should be asking is simple: **What will be cut from the next budget to make up for this lost revenue? How many potholes will go unfilled so a vehicle owner can save about $69 a year?** Ironically, a quick internet search shows wheel alignments in Honolulu starting at around $150, more than double the annual savings this bill promises. Instead of reducing the revenue available to maintain our roads, the City should be investing more in giving commuters real choices so they can walk, bike, ride the bus, or take rail instead of driving. We should be making our streets safer for children walking to school and for kūpuna catching the bus to buy groceries.

Finally, this bill continues a pattern of transportation and economic policy that favors driving over other ways of getting around. **While the Council raises bus fares for transit riders, it**

proposes tax reductions for drivers that provide little meaningful financial relief. At the same time, the City loses revenue that could be used to fill potholes, repave aging roads, replace failing sidewalks, improve bike infrastructure, and install traffic calming measures that make our streets safer for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. These are investments that residents notice every day because they reduce vehicle damage, improve safety, and expand transportation choices. Small annual tax reductions may make for good headlines, but well-maintained streets and safer neighborhoods deliver far greater value to every resident.

I respectfully ask the Council to reject Bill 47. Instead of pursuing another round of symbolic tax reductions, I urge the Council to focus on meaningful investments and economic policies that reduce the weekly and monthly cost of living while strengthening our transportation system and making our communities safer for everyone.

Mahalo,

Damien Waikoloa