RES26-130
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 338

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Aug 12, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Dylan Armstrong	dylan.p.armstrong@gmail.com	96822
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Aug 11, 2026 @ 12:09 PM
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Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Oppose	Aug 11, 2026 @ 11:48 PM

Testimony for the Honolulu City Council
The Honorable Tommy Waters, Chair, and the Honorable Andria Tupola, Vice Chair

12 August 2026

RES26-130

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

Thank you for considering my SUPPORT for Melanie Islam's nomination for the Climate Change Commission, the Mayor's nominee via Res 26-130. I recommend Ms. Islam as a candidate for these reasons:

- Ms. Islam has already provided useful public service on the Commission since 2021. While we are not personally acquainted, Ms. Islam has the support of fellow commissioners whom are known to me, in leading as Commission Chair, which she has done capably since 2024.

- The nominee's experience in applied sustainability and architecture is valuable for adequate climate emergency response. Climate change is an interdisciplinary emergency, necessitating a diversity of career perspectives. Pairing infrastructure knowledge with scientific perspectives is absolutely the right direction for a climate change advisory commission.

- Ms. Islam has shown generosity of spirit and a willingness to work with the public as a community planner in her architecture practice, to provide public service in voluntary capacities, and shown the curiosity of spirit needed to incorporate incipient or rising climate knowledge and best practices as this emergency unfolds.

Having studied Natural Resources (which practically means applied ecology) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I was educated in climate change, both from the geology coursework which I sought out as an elective, and my departmental courses. Having worked for fifteen years in environmental management and urban planning, including emergency management, the climate emergency is *the* driving force in my civic life, and may soon be the dominant force in everyone's personal lives.

Please vote 'aye' in support of Melanie Islam, nominee for the Climate Change Commission.

Mahalo nui loa,
Dylan P. Armstrong
Individual Capacity

CONCERNS REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF MELANIE ISLAM TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE COMMISSION

Prepared for public testimony and Council consideration

Purpose of This Statement

This statement does not question Ms. Islam's professional accomplishments or her experience in sustainable design. Rather, it asks whether her demonstrated qualifications are sufficiently broad for the Climate Change Commission's public oversight role, particularly its responsibility to gather the latest science and information on climate-change effects in Honolulu and provide advice to the Mayor, City Council, and City departments and agencies.

1. Her résumé demonstrates substantial sustainability and architectural expertise

The résumé provided to the Council demonstrates nearly two decades of professional experience in architecture, sustainable building design, LEED certification, adaptive reuse, energy efficiency, renewable energy, battery storage, embodied carbon, and climate-responsive design. It also lists leadership roles with AIA Hawaii, AIA National, AIA Honolulu, the U.S. Green Building Council Hawaii, and the YWCA Oahu.

These are legitimate and relevant qualifications. However, they are concentrated primarily in the built environment and sustainable architecture.

2. The Commission's mandate is broader than sustainable building design

The City's own Climate Change Commission materials state that the Commission is charged under Revised Ordinances of Honolulu § 2-10.16(1) with gathering "the latest science and information on climate change effects in the city" and providing advice to the executive, Mayor, Council, and City departments and agencies.

That mandate encompasses a broader public-policy and scientific oversight function than architectural sustainability alone. A member should be able to critically evaluate climate information and its implications across issues such as sea-level rise, coastal hazards, flooding, extreme heat, water resources, ecosystems, infrastructure, public health, community vulnerability, adaptation, and mitigation.

3. The key question is breadth of expertise—not whether she has climate-related experience

The concern is not that Ms. Islam has no climate experience. Her résumé clearly shows extensive work related to sustainability and carbon reduction. The question is whether the record demonstrates sufficient expertise in climate science, climate-risk assessment, environmental systems, and climate policy to independently evaluate the full range of climate impacts facing Oahu.

Architecture, LEED, energy efficiency, photovoltaics, battery storage, and low-carbon materials can be important components of climate action. They should not, however, be treated as interchangeable with expertise in climate science or comprehensive climate-risk assessment.

4. Council should evaluate the Commission's disciplinary balance

The Climate Change Commission consists of five members. The Council has previously confirmed members with substantially different professional backgrounds, including individuals with advanced degrees and professional experience in climate and environmental fields. This makes disciplinary balance an important consideration when evaluating any appointment.

The Council should ask whether the Commission as a whole has adequate expertise in climate science, coastal

hazards, water resources, ecosystems, public health, infrastructure, community resilience, environmental policy, and climate adaptation—not simply whether an individual nominee has a credible sustainability résumé.

5. Her prior service makes measurable results a reasonable subject of inquiry

City records show that Ms. Islam was appointed to the Climate Change Commission in 2021 and served during a term ending in 2026. City records also identify her as Chair in 2025. Because this is not simply a first-time appointment, the Council can reasonably ask what measurable results arose from her prior service.

Questions could include: What recommendations did she author or lead? Which Commission recommendations were adopted by the City? What measurable climate outcomes resulted? What climate-risk assessments did she lead or independently evaluate? What adaptation or mitigation policies changed because of Commission work under her leadership? And where did her professional judgment differ from or challenge existing City policy?

Questions for the Council Before Confirmation

- What specific qualifications demonstrate expertise in evaluating climate science, rather than primarily sustainable architecture and building performance?
- What experience does the nominee have with sea-level rise, coastal hazards, flooding, water resources, ecosystems, extreme heat, public health, or other climate impacts affecting Oahu?
- What independent climate-risk assessments has the nominee authored, reviewed, or led?
- What measurable climate-policy outcomes resulted from the nominee's previous service on the Commission?
- How will the Council ensure that the five-member Commission has adequate disciplinary diversity and is not disproportionately weighted toward the architecture and sustainable-development sector?
- What safeguards ensure that the Commission provides independent scientific oversight rather than primarily promoting sustainable design and development practices?

Recommended Position

A reasonable position is to request that the Council pause or scrutinize the confirmation unless the nominee can demonstrate that her experience and prior Commission record meet the broader scientific, policy, and oversight needs of the Commission. The Council should consider not only whether Ms. Islam is accomplished, but whether her particular expertise fills a critical need on a five-member body whose statutory role extends beyond sustainable architecture.

The goal should be a Climate Change Commission with the collective expertise necessary to independently evaluate climate science, identify risks to Oahu communities and resources, assess adaptation and mitigation strategies, and provide rigorous advice to City government.

Sources Reviewed

- City and County of Honolulu, Resolution 21-166 / Mayor's Message 108 (2021): appointment of Melanie Islam to the Climate Change Commission.
- City and County of Honolulu, Climate Change Commission testimony dated August 5, 2025: description of the Commission's statutory role under Revised Ordinances of Honolulu § 2-10.16(1).
- City and County of Honolulu, Resolution 25-289 (2025): reappointment of Dr. Bradley Romine and description of Commission structure and appointment requirements.

• Résumé pages provided for review: Melanie Islam, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C, LFA.