BILL037(26)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 366

*ZONING & PLANNING (ZON)

***ZONING & PLANNING (ZON) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Aug 27, 2026 @ 09:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Sam Kim	skim@hrcc-hawaii.com	96817
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Hawaii Regional Council of Carpenters	Support	Aug 24, 2026 @ 02:23 PM

HAWAII REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS

August 27, 2026

TO: The Honorable Esther Kiaʻāina, Chair
The Honorable Tommy Waters, Vice Chair
Members of the Honolulu City Council Committee on Zoning & Planning

RE: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF BILL 37 (2026) — TO AMEND PORTIONS (APPROXIMATELY 14.837 ACRES) OF THE STATE LAND USE DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAPS (SCHOFIELD QUADRANGLE AND ʻEWA QUADRANGLE) FROM THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT TO THE URBAN DISTRICT FOR CERTAIN LANDS SITUATED AT KAPOLEI AND HONOULIULI IN ʻEWA, O'AHU, HAWAII.

Aloha Chair Kiaʻāina, Vice Chair Waters, and Members of the Zoning & Planning Committee,

The Hawaii Regional Council of Carpenters (HRCC), representing over 6,000 union carpenters and tradespeople across the Hawaiian Islands, submits this testimony in strong support of Bill 37 (2026). This measure reclassifies approximately 14.837 acres of land in ʻEwa from the State Land Use Agricultural District to the Urban District, enabling the planned expansion of the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Special District and the implementation of the East Kapolei Neighborhood TOD Plan.

The Hawaii Business Magazine reported, state administrative rules, state laws, and county ordinances still rely on outdated land classifications that were based on data organized before Hawaiʻi became a state in 1959, including surveys from the 1930s.[1] It also mentions how a 2024 state report concluded that these legacy classifications obscure the true potential of Hawaiʻi's lands and complicate efforts to adapt to modern agricultural and land development needs. Of Hawaiʻi's total area of 4.11 million acres, approximately 47 percent, or 1.93 million acres, is classified as agricultural, yet only 120,632 acres were farmed for crops in 2020. In other words, vast amounts of land in Hawaiʻi carry an agricultural designation that has nothing to do with how the land is used or whether it is suitable for farming.

Bill 37 is a great step in correcting a designation that no longer reflects reality on the ground. As noted by the Planning Commission, the petition area has "low, if any, potential for agricultural productivity due to being comprised of remnant SLU Agricultural District lands with extensive modification and conversion to urban types of uses for transportation and utility purposes." The land is also not designated as Important Agricultural Lands. Reclassifying these specific 14.837 acres of urbanized remnant parcels is exactly the evidence-based correction that the state and county should be making.

Furthermore, HRCC has long supported TOD as one of the most important strategies available to Hawaiʻi for addressing the housing crisis, reducing car dependency, and building durable, livable communities. Bill 37 advances that strategy directly. The reclassification facilitates the East Kapolei Neighborhood TOD Plan and unlocks proposed zone changes to AMX-2 Medium Density Apartment Mixed-Use, B-2 Community Business,

[1] Perry Arrasmith, "Outdated Classifications Still Guide the Use of Hawaiʻi's Ag Lands, Hawaii Business Magazine," July 14, 2025, https://www.hawaiibusiness.com/outdated-classifications-still-guide-the-use-of-hawaiis-ag-lands/.

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BMX-3 Community Business Mixed-Use, and IMX-1 Industrial-Commercial Mixed-Use districts. These are the building blocks of compact, mixed-use, transit-served neighborhoods.

By concentrating housing, jobs, retail, and public amenities near Skyline rail stations, TOD allows working families to live within walking distance of transit, reducing both household transportation costs and dependence on single-occupancy vehicles. It maximizes the public's substantial investment in the Skyline system by ensuring riders, employment, and economic activity are located near the stations. It supports the diversified, multimodal transportation system that the O‘ahu General Plan and ‘Ewa Development Plan have long called for. And it concentrates growth where infrastructure already exists, rather than pushing development outward into truly productive agricultural land or open space. For our members, TOD allows for dense, vertical, infrastructure-rich building that sustains long-term construction employment for Hawai‘i's skilled trades and creates the housing supply that allows our workers to live in the communities they help build.

Considering these reasons, we respectfully ask this Committee to pass Bill 37 (2026). Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sam Kim
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Hawaii Regional Council of Carpenters