BILL011(26)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 457

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Nov 5, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Damien Waikoloa	damien.waikoloa@gmail.com	96822
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Hawai'i YIMBY	Oppose	Nov 1, 2026 @ 11:51 AM

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Ross Isokane	isokane@gmail.com	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Nov 3, 2026 @ 11:58 AM

Testimony:

I strongly support Bill 11.

Over the years, stacking local, state, and federal subsidies, tax exemptions, fee waivers, and zoning relief has become a key business process in its own right – one that drives real returns for the industry. Each incentive may be defensible on its own, but no one – not even the department that administers them – can tell you what they add up to.

These are public resources, including the authority over our limited land that we entrust to our elected representatives. If the Council can't see the full cost, it can't weigh those public concessions against what it's getting in return.

This bill is the first step toward fixing that. Even with reasonable estimates, divide a project's cumulative incentives by its affordable units and you get the number that matters most: public cost per affordable unit. That's how you tell whether the juice is worth the squeeze – and today, the Council has no way to compare projects on an apples-to-apples basis.

I agree that we also must address permitting delays and zoning and land use rules that no longer make sense. But subsidizing affordable housing has become extremely expensive...justifiably, given our current crisis. And that's exactly why we should be working harder to measure and present it in full and on a comparable basis. Knowing it's expensive isn't the same as knowing how expensive, for which projects, and for how many units.

Projects that are good deals for the public have nothing to fear from a spreadsheet.

To the Administration: please give it the ol' college try. The bill asks for estimates and the method behind them, not a bulletproof masterpiece. Produce the best first report you can and refine it as the conversation unfolds. If no useful conversation follows, that's your evidence to retire the requirement.

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November 5, 2026

Honolulu City Council
530 South King St.
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RE: OPPOSE BILL 11 (2026) - RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVES

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

On behalf of Hawai‘i YIMBY, we submit testimony **in opposition to Bill 11 (2026), CD1**, and ask the bill be deferred or returned to committee for additional refinement.

From introduction, it was clear that **this bill's primary purpose was to sow doubt** about public investment in affordable housing. Rather than proposing bold, meaningful solutions to Honolulu's housing crisis, the introducers have chosen to overemphasize **something we already know: subsidizing the construction of affordable housing, particularly for lower-income households, is extremely expensive when it is the primary tool we rely on to deliver it.** This is an unfortunate reality created by our overreliance on government subsidies and mandated affordability instead of pursuing a more multifaceted approach that includes broad upzoning, allowing more multifamily homes, and reducing the regulatory barriers that make housing unnecessarily expensive. These reforms could increase the supply of homes, particularly in urban Honolulu where infrastructure, jobs, and public transportation already exist, while requiring little to no direct taxpayer subsidy. Instead, the introducers would rather spend taxpayer time and money producing an extensive semiannual report that will largely tell us what we already know and do nothing to create more affordable homes on O‘ahu.

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The Department of Housing and Land Management has already raised significant concerns about how this reporting requirement would function in practice. The Department's testimony outlined the administrative challenges and practical limitations of implementing the bill in its current form. These concerns came directly from the very department that would be responsible for producing the reports. Yet, despite this clear warning, the Housing, Homelessness and Parks Committee has failed to meaningfully address the Department's concerns in the CD1 version. It is difficult to understand why the Council would advance a reporting mandate without first addressing the implementation challenges identified by the department expected to carry it out.

Our original concerns with this bill also remain unresolved. The reporting requirements focus heavily on quantifying incentives without adequately measuring the public benefits those incentives produce. While the bill requires reporting on the total number of homes and affordable homes in each project, it does not evaluate long-term affordability, economic impacts, job creation, additional tax revenue, or whether these investments are advancing the City's broader housing goals. It also creates a substantial, recurring administrative responsibility without identifying the funding or staffing needed to support it. **Simply documenting the cost of incentives without evaluating their results provides an incomplete picture of the City's affordable housing efforts.**

We would much prefer to see this Council focus its attention on the actual barriers preventing more affordable homes from being built on O'ahu. Our permitting process is a prime example. Excessively long permitting timelines affect both single-family and multifamily home construction, adding costs, delaying projects, and making it more difficult to deliver homes at prices local residents can afford. These are real problems that deserve the Council's attention and legislative action. Every additional month a project spends waiting for permits is another month that homes are not being built.

To be clear, Hawai'i YIMBY is not opposed to transparency or responsible oversight of public investments. **If the Council were willing to refine this reporting requirement**

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to focus more narrowly on the most impactful incentives, particularly those with a clear and measurable connection to getting homes built, we would wholeheartedly support that effort. A focused reporting system that uses existing information, minimizes administrative burdens, and measures the actual results of public investments could provide meaningful value to policymakers and the public. But that is not what Bill 11 currently accomplishes.

If this Council genuinely wants to see more affordable homes built on O‘ahu, it needs to take actual action to make that happen. Honolulu does not have a shortage of reports explaining why affordable housing is expensive. **We have a shortage of affordable homes.** The Council should focus legislative efforts on solving that problem. We urge the Council to defer Bill 11 or return it to committee for substantial refinement.

Hawai‘i YIMBY *(Yes In My Backyard)* is a volunteer-led grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to supporting bold and effective solutions for Hawai‘i’s devastating housing crisis. Our members are deeply concerned about Hawai‘i’s chronic and worsening housing shortage, which has caused home prices to rise much faster than incomes and pushes thousands of kama‘āina out to the mainland or into poverty and homelessness every single year.

Mahalo,

Damien Waikoloa
Chapter Lead, Hawai‘i YIMBY

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Chapter Lead, Hawai‘i YIMBY