RES26-268
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 484

*ZONING & PLANNING (ZON)

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

Meeting Date: Nov 18, 2026 @ 09:00 AM

Support: 2

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Uilani Naipo	uilani.naipo@me.com	96704
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Nov 16, 2026 @ 11:33 AM

Testimony:

Aloha Honolulu County Council Chair and Honorable Council Members,

My name is U'ilani Naipo. I am writing to express my strong support for the adoption of Resolution 26-268, which identifies priority bills for inclusion in the 2027 Hawai'i State Association of Counties (HSAC) Legislative Package.

In particular, I stand firm among many marine advocates and stewards in support of Hawai'i County's legislative proposal, "A Bill for an Act Relating to Commercial Aquarium Collection." This measure continues our long-standing efforts to protect our reef fish, uphold our collective kuleana, and safeguard Hawai'i's cultural and natural resources from commercial exploitation.

Our reefs and marine ecosystems have been sacrificed for far too long. Millions of fish have been removed from Hawai'i's reefs, disrupting their essential ecological roles. Once shipped to the continent, many endure extreme stress and mortality, all for the ornamental aquarium trade.

Hawai'i's reef fish and the ecosystems that sustain them are public trust resources, held for the benefit of the people of Hawai'i—not ornamental commodities for private profit. Our cultural and natural resources must take precedence over commercial exploitation.

The commercial aquarium collection industry benefits very few operators while imposing significantly high costs on the State for regulation, oversight, enforcement, and resource management. These public resources should not be compromised to sustain private commercial interests at the expense of our communities and marine ecosystems.

These actions reflect more than policy positions. They demonstrate a shared commitment to mālama i ke kai and recognize that protecting Hawai'i's marine life is a collective responsibility that transcends island boundaries.

I respectfully urge this Council to adopt Resolution 26-268 in advancing legislation that protects our nearshore cultural and natural resources for present and future generations.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

U'ilani Naipo

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Rene Umberger	rene@forthefishes.org	96753
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
For the Fishes	Support	Nov 17, 2026 @ 05:45 AM

To: Honolulu City Council Committee on Zoning & Planning

November 18, 2026

RE: STRONG SUPPORT FOR Res. 26-268, INCLUDING PROPOSAL 4, A Bill for an Act Relating to Commercial Aquarium Collection

Aloha Chair Kiaʻāina, Vice Chair Waters, and Committee members,

For the Fishes strongly supports Resolution 26-268, including Proposal 4, to include legislation prohibiting commercial aquarium collection statewide in the Hawaiʻi State Association of Counties' 2027 state legislative package. Our organization is dedicated to protecting and restoring Hawaiʻi's reef wildlife for present and future generations.

We thank the Committee for approving Resolutions 26-159 and 26-160 in July in support of a permanent prohibition on commercial aquarium collection, which was subsequently adopted by the full council later that month. All four county councils have now called for an end to this destructive activity. Supporting Proposal 4 would build on that unified position and help turn the counties' call for protection into a statewide legislative priority for 2027.

Since the Committee's July vote, the need for a permanent ban has become even more urgent. **A new assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies 96% of the world's assessed coral reef ecosystems, including Hawaiʻi's, as Critically Endangered and at extremely high risk of collapse within the next 50 years**.[1] The assessment incorporates observed changes and projected marine heat stress, alongside pressures including overfishing and pollution.

The IUCN assessment found that the ecological balance between corals, algae, and fish has been disrupted in most coral reef ecosystems. **But it's not too late to prevent their collapse.** While Hawaiʻi cannot stop marine heat waves on its own, we can reduce the local pressures that make our reefs more vulnerable. Rebuilding fish populations and reducing pollution are critical to strengthening reef resilience.[2]

[1] International Union for Conservation of Nature. "Red List of Coral Reef Ecosystems." October 22, 2026. https://iucn.org/story/202610/red-list-coral-reef-ecosystems
[2] Ibid.

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The November 2026 issue of *National Geographic* magazine identifies fishing and other forms of harvesting as the most prevalent threats to marine life, specifically citing the localized impacts of the home aquarium trade.[3]

Commercial aquarium collecting has already removed millions of reef fish from Hawai'i's waters. Allowing this unnecessary extractive activity to resume would add yet another pressure to ecosystems already struggling to survive. With the very survival of Hawai'i's reefs at stake, reopening commercial aquarium collection would be extremely irresponsible.

The reasons for a permanent prohibition are compelling:

- Hawai'i cannot risk losing its coral reefs. From shoreline protection to food security, cultural practices, jobs, and recreation, reefs are essential to Hawai'i's way of life.
- Protecting subsistence and cultural fishing must take priority over the removal of reef wildlife for the frivolous global aquarium pet trade.
- Continued illegal aquarium collection and sales despite the current statewide closure demonstrate the impossible enforcement challenges that would accompany reopening the trade.
- The aquarium trade imposes environmental, management, and enforcement costs on Hawai'i while primarily serving out-of-state and international markets. Our reefs and communities bear the costs of removing wildlife for private aquariums.
- A permanent prohibition would support mālama 'āina and the protection of natural resources for present and future generations. Reef wildlife should remain on Hawai'i's reefs, where it supports ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

The IUCN findings underscore why protecting reef fish is urgent. Together with the National Geographic team's assessment of the threats posed by the aquarium trade, it is clear that reducing local pressures and rebuilding fish populations are actions governments can take now. Hawai'i should act on that warning by permanently ending commercial aquarium collection.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass Resolution 26-268, including Proposal 4, and help make a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection a priority in the counties' 2027 legislative package. The City and County of Honolulu has already called for permanent protection. This is an opportunity to help secure it.

Mahalo,

Rene Umberger
Executive Director
For the Fishes

[3] *National Geographic*, "Deep Impact: The Pressures Forcing Marine Species to the Brink," insert in *Our One Ocean: A Remarkable Journey to the Blue Heart of Our Planet*, special issue, vol. 250, no. 5 (November 2026).

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