

February 26, 2026

Via Electronic Mail

Board of Land and Natural Resources
Kalanimoku Building
1151 Punchbowl St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

Re: Issuance of a Revocable Permit to Hilo Products, Inc., for Limited Industrial Uses Allowed Under the Current County of Hawai'i Zoning Code Purposes, Kanoiehua Industrial Area, Waiākea, South Hilo, Hawai'i, Tax Map Key: (3) 2-2-050:085.

Request for Approval for a FY26 State-Funded Project Agreement Between the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the University of Hawai'i for Statewide Coral Nursery and Restoration Support in Alignment with the Division of Aquatic Resources' Management Goals.

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to express a neutral position on Item D-2 – “Issuance of a Revocable Permit to Hilo Products, Inc., for Limited Industrial Uses Allowed Under the Current County of Hawai'i Zoning Code Purposes, Kanoiehua Industrial Area, Waiākea, South Hilo, Hawai'i, Tax Map Key: (3) 2-2-050:085.” I am also writing to express support for Item F-1 – “Request for Approval for a FY26 State-Funded Project Agreement Between the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the University of Hawai'i for Statewide Coral Nursery and Restoration Support in Alignment with the Division of Aquatic Resources' Management Goals.”

I do not have academic or professional experience in either area. As someone born and raised on O'ahu, I simply offer my perspective as a community member.

Regarding Item D-2, my understanding is that Hilo Products, Inc. is a long-standing local business that supports local farmers. The mission statement of this company, as stated on their website, is “to bring fresh, local produce to Hawaii's communities.” Thus, I have no argument and remain neutral regarding the issuance of a revocable permit to Hilo Products, Inc. However, since the subject site is currently vacant, I think an environmental assessment is appropriate. The property is located in Kanoiehua Industrial area, a heavily developed zone. Given that Hilo Products, Inc. stores and delivers fresh produce, it may be worth ruling out potential health impacts that a vacant industrial site could have on these products and on the health of Hilo Products, Inc. employees. This is just a consideration for the Board's review.

Regarding Item F-1, I support approving the state-funded project agreement between DLNR and the University of Hawai'i for statewide coral nursery and restoration. Growing up, I would often spearfish for tako with my dad, and those experiences gave me a deep appreciation for our unique marine environment. In recent years, however, I have noticed a significant decline in the health of O'ahu's coral reefs. Coral bleaching has become increasingly common. Boat anchors

have caused visible trails of damage. Fishing lines remain entangled in the reefs. As a result, there are noticeably fewer tako and other fish compared to 10 years ago.

Partnering with the University of Hawai'i is smart. As stated in the project objectives, the University will assist with coral nursery grow-out, out-planting coral modules, and identifying suitable artificial reef outplant sites and appropriate coral species. By involving trained aquatic biologists, technicians, and specialists in coral reef restoration, the project builds credibility and increases public confidence in its effectiveness. In addition, this partnership could offer University of Hawai'i undergraduates valuable hands-on experience with coral reef restoration, which would help increase public awareness coral reef damage and the importance of conservation amongst the next generation.

In the recommendations section of Item F-1, it mentions that the Division of Aquatic Resources requests that the Board find that the actions of the project would have minimal effect on the environment. I think that this is a very important recommendation for the Board to consider before approving the project; especially, if there is data that runs counter to coral restoration. If the Board is able to determine that the project will not contribute to the degradation of Hawai'i's coral reefs or create additional problems—such as disease outbreaks or introduction of invasive coral species—then such a project would surely garner public support.

In conclusion, I express neutral position for Item D-2 and support for Item F-1. Thank you for your time and for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Community Member