

WRITTEN STATEMENT TO LAND USE COMMISSION FOR APRIL 28, 2021 HEARING ON THE
CONFORMANCE OF C&C HONOLULU IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL LANDS (IAL)
RECOMMENDATION TO APPLICABLE STATUTORY AND PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

I, along with my husband, son, mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law, live at 85-1516 Waianae Valley Road on one of the parcels the City and County of Honolulu would like to re-designate as Important Agricultural Lands (“IAL”). This is land that has been in my husband’s family since the 1960s and we are extremely fortunate to call this land home. Living at the base of Mount Ka’ala with all the beauty and remoteness the Waianae Valley offers is a blessing not many people have and my husband and I look forward to raising our son in this environment and with the opportunities the land offers. We do not oppose the land being re-designated as IAL as the benefits of such a designation allows our family to cultivate the land for agriculturally, sustainable purposes which has been the goal for my husband since he returned to Waianae from the mainland in 2018.

However, with this beauty and remoteness comes dangers, specifically fires. Each year there are several fires, either intentionally or accidentally set, that occur along upper Waianae Valley Road (the one lane road leading to the base of Mount Ka’ala). Approximately every other year there is a fire that either destroys land and properties in our area – land that is generationally owned and occupied – or comes close to doing so. In fact, two weeks after my son was born last summer, a fire ravaged hundreds of acres throughout Waianae Valley and came within 100 yards of our property. Had it not been for the quick response and actions taken by the Honolulu Fire Department (“HFD”), my family (and my neighbors) would have lost everything. The reason we would have lost everything comes down to one single factor – the inability to obtain property and/or homeowners’ insurance because the property does not have a fire hydrant within the necessary range required by Hawai’i insurance companies (within 1,000 feet). Despite having three main Board of Water (“BoW”) water lines immediately outside our front gate and a BoW pump station directly across the street from our property, the closest fire hydrant to our property (which is also surrounded by three other properties with three clusters of homes) is at the beginning of upper Waianae Valley Road where the bus turnaround is, more than 350 yards away. When fighting fires along our road, the HFD has to refill its water truck throughout the duration of its firefighting work from this point rather than having the ability to tie into a fire hydrant in close proximity to where the fire is located. There is not one single fire hydrant along

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this road that will now contain IAL parcels. While we credit the HFD with its great work in fighting fires, there is always a concern that one of these fires will be too large and be too great to fight, thus destroying the properties and livelihoods of the landowners along upper Waianae Valley Road. Without fire hydrants being placed along this road and available to IALs, should such a travesty occur, none of the landowners will have the assurances that they will be able to rebuild because of the lack of insurance to cover their losses. I submit this written statement and provide this background, not specifically in reference to my husband's family land and its surrounding area along upper Waianae Valley Road, but to address all IALs on O'ahu that may be affected by fires and without recourse or the financial means to rebuild should fires decimate properties and lands.

The inability to insure IALs along upper Waianae Valley Road (and more than likely along many of the roads throughout the county abutting properties that are and will be designated as IAL) is frightening and flies in the face of the City and County of Honolulu's desire to protect high-quality farm land that is capable to handle active agricultural production. One of the main purposes of designating land as IALs is to "promote[] the economic viability of farming and make it possible for landowners to keep agricultural lands active, ultimately leading to the long-term *preservation and protection* of productive agricultural land." Report on the O'ahu Important Agricultural Land Mapping Project, August 2018, p. 1 (citing Hawaii Revised Statutes, Chapter 205-42) (emphasis added). Additionally, one of the main IAL incentives is to provide "[s]tate funding mechanisms to fund business viability and *land protection programs*[]" Id. at p. 15-6, citing HRS § HRS 205-26(c)(8) (emphasis added). Thus, it is the position of the City and County of Honolulu that IALs are to be preserved and protected in order to "promote the long-term agricultural productivity and use of important agricultural lands[.]" Id. at p. 15. In order for such preservation and production to occur – and to provide assurances to IAL landowners throughout the county that their livelihoods will not be destroyed by fires because of the un-insurability of their lands due to lack of available fire protection – fire hydrants are necessary and should be required to be installed along roads containing IALs.

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Therefore, I respectfully request that the City and County of Honolulu, in furthering their goals in preserving and protecting IALs and the benefits stemming from such lands, begin the process to install fire hydrants where possible along IAL roads to provide assurance to IAL landowners that their livelihoods and land, both for themselves and generations to come, will be preserved and protected. This simple means of fire protection, available to the vast majority of other types of landowners in the county, will be a huge step for IAL landowners in insuring their properties should they lose everything to fires (and providing them with the means to start over) and for the City and County of Honolulu in meeting its goal of sustaining agriculture lands and activities on O'ahu. I, along with my family and neighbors, hope that the City and County of Honolulu will take the time to evaluate such a request and consider implementing fire protection measures for IALs which, in turn, will only benefit the entirety of O'ahu and its people.

Mahalo.

Michelle Correia

Resident of 85-1516 Waianae Valley Road