



Honolulu Youth Commission

In Regards To Important Agricultural Land (IAL) Designations

November 29, 2021

Hawai'i State Land Use Commission

‘Ano‘ai kākou Commissioners,

I hope this letter finds you all well. I write to you on behalf of the Honolulu Youth Commission (HYC) per our resolution HYC 21-002, which is included in the electronic submission of this letter. The Honolulu Youth Commission requests that the State Land Use Commission approve the City and County of Honolulu (C&C Honolulu) proposed IAL designations.

We understand that there have been concerns shared regarding individual property rights which the Attorney General's office has addressed by recommending a quasi-judicial process, but we would like to remind the LUC that the purpose of these IAL designations was to prevent upzoning and ensure that these lands would be able to be cultivated for generations to come.

As it states in our resolution, under HRS §205-42 b (1) it mandates that IAL:

Promote agricultural development and land use planning that delineates blocks of productive agricultural land and areas of agricultural activity for protection from the encroachment of nonagricultural uses

The Honolulu Youth Commission not only takes a stance to protect said lands and safeguard the ability for future generations to cultivate such lands, but we would also like to inform the LUC that letters have been submitted to the C&C on behalf of the HYC to request further incentives to ensure the economic viability of cultivating IAL designated lands, a copy of one such letter is also included in the digital folder you should have received.

Our generation urges that these lands should be protected and allowed to contribute to our food security, rather than paved over for development. We need to see action from our officials that promote a sustainable future, this includes the action we are requesting, that the State and County uphold its mandate to delineate lands as IAL and ensure their protection for generations to come.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bronson Azama". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bronson Azama

Chair, Honolulu Youth Commission

RESOLUTION

URGING SUPPORT FOR IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL LANDS (IAL) DESIGNATIONS AND RECOMMENDING FURTHER IAL INCENTIVES

WHEREAS, HRS §205-42 b (1) regarding Important Agricultural Lands (IAL) mandates the importance to, “Promote agricultural development and land use planning that delineates blocks of productive agricultural land and areas of agricultural activity for protection from the encroachment of nonagricultural uses”; and

WHEREAS, HRS §205-47 (b) states, “Each county shall develop maps of potential lands to be considered for designation as important agricultural lands in consultation and cooperation with landowners, the department of agriculture, agricultural interest groups, including representatives from the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation and other agricultural organizations, the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service, the office of planning, and other groups as necessary.”; and

WHEREAS, in August 2018 the City and County of Honolulu unveiled its report for the O‘ahu Important Agricultural Land Mapping Project; and

WHEREAS, in section 3.3.2 of said report it states, “Measurements of self- sufficiency and import dependency from a study of Hawai‘i’s food consumption and supply sources published in Agriculture and Food Economics (Loke and Leung, 2013) estimates that only 11.6% of food available for Hawai‘i consumption in 2010 came from local production, and that 88.4% of the available food came from imports.”; and

WHEREAS, this is a huge concern for youth regarding disaster preparedness in the area of food security for Hawai‘i and subsequently the City and County of Honolulu; and

WHEREAS, on May 26-27, 2021, the Land Use Commission (LUC) suspended hearings on the City & County of Honolulu’s (“County”) Important Agricultural Lands (“IAL”) Recommendations until legal guidance was received by Attorney General;

WHEREAS, on October 21, 2021, the LUC voted to make public the legal opinion of the Attorney General; and

WHEREAS, the Attorney General in its final recommendation recommends, “that the LUC conduct the IAL designation process based on county maps pursuant to a quasi-judicial process”; and

WHEREAS, further education for the public about the importance and incentives of these designations may support the willingness of landowners to accept IAL designations; and

WHEREAS, with respect to individual property rights the ultimate purpose of these laws remains which is to prevent the up-zoning of these Important Agricultural Lands for future agricultural use; and

WHEREAS, the development of IAL designated lands would result in the inability to cultivate these lands in traditional practice and custom; and

WHEREAS, HRS §205-46 mandates the need to provide incentives stating, “State and county incentive programs shall provide preference to important agricultural lands and agricultural businesses on important agricultural lands. The State and each county shall cooperate in program development to prevent duplication of and to streamline”; and

WHEREAS, in section 1.3.4 of the O‘ahu Important Agricultural Land Mapping Project, it does not include a “Property Tax Caps” as an incentive; and

WHEREAS, a property tax caps would be a major incentive toward the preservation and continued use of O‘ahu’s Important Agricultural Lands; and

WHEREAS, the high cost of living affects all residents of Hawai‘i including our farmers and future farmers and more steps need to be taken by the City to reduce the economic burdens farmers face; and

WHEREAS, acceptance of the City and County of Honolulu’s proposed IAL designations will help preserve agricultural lands for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, further IAL incentives can support current and future farmers thus, improving the economic viability of farming and promote the growth of the County & State’s agricultural industry; and

WHEREAS, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of Hawai‘i’s economy and demonstrates the need to develop a resilient diversified economy; and

WHEREAS, agriculture is not only an economic benefit, but will improve Hawai‘i’s food security and disaster preparedness; and

WHEREAS, the impacts of IAL designations are exponential and beyond what this resolution has listed; and

WHEREAS, the Honolulu Youth Commission per its charter has a vested interest in advocating for the Youth of Honolulu which includes the economic vitality of the Agricultural industry and preservation of lands for such usage by said industry, and improved food security to be proactive in disaster preparedness; and now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, a copy of this resolution shall be sent electronically to the Mayor of Honolulu, all City Councilmembers, the Department of Permitting and Planning, Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency, the Hawai'i State Land Use Commission (LUC), and the State Attorney General's Office; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, a letter be submitted electronically requesting that the LUC accept the recommended IAL designations by the City and County of Honolulu and uphold the protection of IAL from up-zoning and further development, to ensure future opportunities in the ag-industry and improved food security for the City and County of Honolulu currently, and for the generations to come; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, a letter demanding further IAL incentives including but not limited to, a property tax rate cap, assessment cap, for those residing on properties designated as IAL be submitted electronically to the Mayor of Honolulu, Members of the Honolulu City Council, Department of Permitting and Planning, and the Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the letter also stress the importance of IAL designations and the need to protect said lands to provide economic viability for the industry and for the generations to come; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, a copy of the above letter shall be sent electronically to the Hawai'i State Land Use Commission.

Introduced by:

Bronson Aronson

Kéalewiliaki Loel

Rahma C.

Date Introduced:

NOV - 9 (2021)

Honolulu, Hawai'i

Youth Commissioners