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Sent: Tuesday, April 03, 2012 8:33 PM
To:
Cc:
Subject: Budget Committee Testimony

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C & C OF HONOLULU
2012 APR -4 AM 6:57

Bill 012

Bill 12 should include the equine family as livestock

Permitting dedication of land and property tax relief will allow the equine business to exist. Without it the equine community can't survive. The economic impact is far ranging. A large percentage of horse owners are not wealthy people. As the economy declines, the ownership of horses and/or their spending on them declines. Horse show participation, horse hauling, equine equipment and show attire decline. There are many businesses and individuals whose livelihood depends on equine and other livestock. It wouldn't take long for businesses and service providers to vanish. On Oahu there is Waimanalo Feed, VO Ranch and Feed and Farm to name a few. People who service the equine and large animal population include Veterinarians, Farriers, Trainers and Instructors, Horse facility workers (feeders, muckers, ranch maintenance, horse care facilitators (turnouts, exercise and misc other activities), including horse layover and transport. Equines that are shipped from the mainland or interisland often have a layover on Oahu before transporting on to their destination. Currently they are boarded at local stables until departure. Loss of facilities would hurt neighbor island transport. It is not feasible or humane to keep the animals in the shipping containers for days on end.

Therapeutic Horsemanship offers special needs children equine treatment. As many know the equine experience for these children enhances their connection to the world and provides physical stimulation not readily achieved otherwise. As facilities disappear and horse population diminishes, the equine pool shrinks dramatically. The special animals used are usually donated after years with good owners who provide consistent care and training. Only a few animals mature with the temperament that makes them safe and sure mounts for special needs children and adults.

Live donkeys and sheep for religious pageants, gone.

Some children develop a passion for horses that is life long. During teen and preteen years it occupies them during most of their free time, teaching many good habits while keeping them away from less desirable teenage activities. The media is full of the need to exercise to avoid the blight of obesity. Riding and equine care is an excellent form of exercise at all levels. Do we want to eliminate this option?

The city says it is trying to prevent gentleman farmers. An unintended consequence will be to promote what the city is trying to prevent. How will this happen? Valid horse facilities will be driven out of business leaving distressed property ripe for picking at devalued prices. The more affluent owner who is not trying to make a living off the land will not be dissuaded by the cumbersome rules and can afford the taxes. As the price of

land declines with the large inventory of farms on the market, savvy gentlemen farmers and developers will be able to pick up bargains. A piece of good luck here for these folks with the fair market value being recalculated at the newer sales comparables lowering the tax base. Just be patient developers and a large portion of Waimanalo horse facilities will be available.

Equine owners have one choice for their animals: stabling or pasturing on ag land. It must be reasonably affordable. Most owners are apartment or residential neighborhood dwellers that preclude livestock. Most of the horse boarders are not ag land residents. They are located in your neighborhood whether it is Kailua, Hawaii Kai, Mililani, Ewa Beach or downtown Honolulu.

Respectfully submitted

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