



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

May 22, 2012

Councilmember Tom Berg
Chair, Committee on Parks & Cultural Affairs
530 Street King, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Councilmember Ikaika Anderson
Vice-Chair, Committee on Parks & Cultural Affairs
530 South King Street Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Councilmember Berg and Councilmember Anderson,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of Bill 11. However, I defer to my Council Member with respect to the specific language and details contained within the bill.

Bill 11 is important because it will finally begin to address a number of growing issues at Kailua Beach Park and the surrounding community. Increasing park usage and a lack of meaningful enforcement has led to the proliferation of dozens of illegal businesses operating in and around Kailua Beach Park on a daily basis. These operations have sometimes created and exacerbated dangerous health safety issues, and magnified the lack of infrastructure capacity in the area which has begun to heavily impact surrounding neighborhoods and the broader community.

The growing number of lunch wagons and food vendors that frequent the park, including those with permits, have led to a loss of valuable parking stalls at the beach park. The single permitted operation at the busy entrance to the boat ramp parking lot has created serious safety concerns, mixing lines of customers in the middle of the parking lot with lines of vehicles driving in to park, often leading to pedestrian near-misses and traffic backups along the adjacent main road. The illegal vendors create similar safety issues parking on the edge of the beach park selling to customers lining up along the busy roadside, slowing traffic, and taking up more of the limited public parking.

Irregular and inconsistent tour bus drop-offs, often finding space wherever they can, increasingly block traffic along the only road into and out of the area. Often while loading and unloading they

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51st House District

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have regularly blocked access into and out of the boat ramp area entirely, and frequently block access to or take up a dozen or more parking stalls as they wait for their passengers to return.

Ocean sports rentals are regularly reported to take up large areas of the beach closest to limited loading zones near the boat ramp, laying out dozens of kayaks or paddle boards at a time. While the intent of the law clearly prohibits their operation within the beach park, multiple rental trucks also take up valuable parking or park on the grass and rent equipment daily. With little regulation or enforcement, and equipment often rented to people physically unfit for the offshore conditions, taxpayers end up on the hook paying for rescues every week, to say nothing of regular injuries, or worse.

The cumulative effect this has had on the surrounding community has led to a tremendous health and safety issue for park users, pedestrians, and everyone who lives in the area. With one road in and out of the beach park area, many of these conflicting uses and the additional tourist draw has led to regularly gridlocked traffic. At its worst, we were blocked into Lanikai with no entry or exit for two to three hours. Emergency access to the community was cut off.

Kailua is not Waikiki. Kailua Beach Park is a relatively small beach park for the number of people who visit it. The beach park and surrounding infrastructure were not designed to handle the influx of visitors and businesses that are currently proliferating in the area. I am not against business at all, but it must be conducted legally, safely, and properly to ensure no adverse impact on the surrounding community. We cannot control how popular Kailua Beach Park is, or how many people come to visit, but we can take steps to prevent the congestion, capacity, and safety issues from worsening. Unless the City and County is ready to spend tens of millions of dollars on new bridges, roads, and other infrastructure in and around the beach park, Bill 11 is one of the only tools we have to mitigate the growing health and safety issues at the beach park and in our surrounding communities. I defer on the details to our local councilmember, but I support its intent as a step in the right direction, and urge its adoption.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Chris Lee
State Representative