
New Public Testimony

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To DBEDT LUC <dbedt.luc.web@hawaii.gov>



Name

Cory Harden

Email

333cory@gmail.com

ZIP / Postal Code

96720

Representing

self

Agenda Item

Info Briefing: SPEED Task Force

Position

Oppose

Testimony

comments on agenda item #2

Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development ("SPEED") Task Force
for Land Use Commission (LUC)

10 AM Wednesday, October 22, 2025

Aloha Land Use commissioners,

Please ask how environmental and cultural resources will be protected in recommendations by SPEED.

Every piece of testimony shown on the State legislature website re. the bill that set up SPEED is support from business people. There is nothing addressing environmental and cultural concerns.

Only four of the 23 members listed on the SPEED website have a strong focus on protection of environmental and cultural resources: the Commission on Water Resource Management, the State Historic Preservation Division, the Land Use Commission, and the Wastewater Branch of the Department of Health.

In the Permitted Interaction Groups (PIGs), where it appears most of the work will be done, the Commission on Water Resources Management is not represented in any group. LUC and SHPD (State Historic Preservation Division) both

are members of all three PIGs, meaning voices for the environment and culture will be working overtime.

The list of SPEED members includes some not mentioned in the law which set up SPEED: new homeowners, family businesses, and residential and commercial developers. None of these appears to be a voice for environment or culture.

https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/CommitteeFiles/Special/STF/Document/2025_SPEED_Task_Force_Orientation.pdf

One of the two SPEED goals is "Make Permitting Simple... A simpler process while keeping fairness and safety for everyone." No mention of preserving environment or culture.

https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/CommitteeFiles/Special/STF/Document/2025_SPEED_Task_Force_Orientation.pdf

It's unclear if any "simpler process" will address the barriers to timely approval of projects. Agencies reported three additional barriers at the September 11, 2025 meeting. One is lack of staff, due to low pay scales. The second is poorly prepared submittals from applicants. The third is requirements imposed by outside agencies and beyond the control of permitting staff.

State task force tackles slow Hawaii building permit process, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Sept. 12, 2025,

<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2025/09/12/hawaii-news/state-task-force-tackles-slow-hawaii-building-permit-process/?HSA=9bbb6f3d1904e8c342cdc89e2aa9dd634c9afa13>

Mahalo for your attention to these concerns.

Cory Harden, Hilo



SIERRA CLUB

HAWAI'I ISLAND GROUP

October 21, 2025

State of Hawai'i
Land Use Commission
235 S Beretania Street, Room 405
Honolulu, HI 96813



Re: Agenda item 2., Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development ("SPEED")
Task Force

Aloha Mr. Chair and members of the Commission,

At a time when federal funding and support to states is being greatly reduced and when already acknowledged issues with state and county administrative agencies' inability to regulate and enforce existing state and county laws, rules, and regulations, the Hawai'i Island Group of the Sierra Club of Hawai'i believes the assumptions upon which the SPEED task force is based is deeply flawed.

The SPEED Task Force powerpoint presentation describes three "bricks":

1. Building Permit
2. Historic Preservation Compliance
3. Individual Wastewater Treatment System (IWS) Permit

The fact that these three bricks have serious compliance flaws with existing laws, rules, and regulations is ignored.

For instance, in Hawai'i County, building permits are being issued that do not comply with state Supreme Court rulings, state land use law, and Hawai'i county code related to the dwellings in the state land use Agriculture district. The state Land Use Commission does not have enforcement authority, except to the extent to which Declaratory Orders can be enforced. Meanwhile, the Hawai'i County Planning Director recently issues the following statement:

"The Planning Department's policy has always been to inform the owner/applicant of a "first farm dwelling" that there are requirements under State Law for a farm dwelling. We do not enforce farming requirements for a first farm dwelling. This is beyond the ability of the Planning Department to enforce every first farm dwelling on the island along with all of the other complaints we receive on a daily basis. We do enforce any "additional farm dwelling," which requires information to be approved, and which is recorded with the Bureau of Conveyances."

In addition, the Hawai'i County EPIC system is extremely user-unfriendly and impenetrable to the vast majority of the public.

With regard to the second “brick”, it is common knowledge that the State Historic Preservation Division has been broken for decades and is unable to retain dedicated, qualified staffing because of the systemic, on-going dysfunction that no Director has been able and/or willing to address. This has led to irreparable harm to the state's historic and constitutionally-protected resources. Because of these unresolved challenges, qualified community volunteers on the island Burial Councils have been hamstrung. Lineal and cultural descendants have had to endure on-going tragedy and pain as wahi pana and iwi kupuna are desecrated and destroyed state-wide on a daily basis. SPEED does not acknowledge this well-known fact.

Finally, Hawai'i county has entered into three Administrative Orders of Consent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency related to wastewater treatment. The fact that the county is facing approximately \$1 billion in order to comply with these AOCs is being ignored.

But most importantly, SPEED does not acknowledge the fact that any and all newly approved development in Hawai'i County is not in compliance with federal law.

HIG urges the LUC to urge the state legislature and administration to fix existing problems before putting the pedal to the metal and causing more harm.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.



Attention LUC members

Re: Agenda item 2., Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development (“SPEED”) Task Force

Aloha Chair and members of the Commission,

Like the perennially suspect term “fast tracking”, hurried planning that diminishes protections of natural, cultural, and social resources without proper review— like SPEED potentially will — should raise commissioners’ concerns. As a 4-decades Hawai’i advocate for community-based land use planning, I certainly see the red flags. In fact, LUC commissioners, whose job it is to protect and uphold our State constitution’s tenets, should be as concerned as I and many other stakeholders are.

Instead of the SPEED acronym, how about I-I-I: Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Infrastructure? I don’t know about every county in our state, but I know that Hawai’i county where I reside has been underserved and under-planned including allowing critical wastewater treatment plants to run below legal EPA standards for years. But that’s not all. Lack of concurrently developed infrastructure affects everyone who drives a car, goes to school, or needs affordable— not junk, misplaced, unplanned — housing. And more luxury housing, which is all we seem to get, doesn’t fill the bill.

Despite individuals and groups advocating for development permitting that fits with sensible, protective, and legal county standards, development permitting in Hawai’i County continues to issue building permits that don’t comply with state Supreme Court rulings, state land use law, and Hawai’i county code that relate to dwellings in the state land use Agriculture district to name one example. Meanwhile, the state Land Use Commission lacks necessary enforcement authority except when Declaratory Orders can be enforced.

I can’t speak to the cultural disregard of development happening and proposed in our county and state, but I was directly involved in large land use cases on Hawai’i Island including the PASH Supreme Court ruling. I hope that others with cultural expertise will add to the many reasons why the SPEED initiative runs contrary to our State’s constitution.

In closing, at a time when the federal government is running roughshod over human rights, it’s the kuleana of you and other state and county leaders to protect our residents, our natural and cultural resources, and our collective futures by not allowing the likes of potentially devastating initiatives jauntily named SPEED to move forward in a race to allow development that appears likely to be at odds with the best long-term interests of our island’s residents.

Mahalo for your volunteer service and for using your integrity to vote against the SPEED initiative as proposed.

Best regards,

Janice Palma-Glennie

Kailua-Kona