

Testimony of a Concerned Environmental Resident

Before the Environmental Management Commission
Regarding Bill No. 83, Draft 2 – Relating to Plastic and Polystyrene Waste

Date: October 19, 2025

To: The Respected Members of the Environmental Management Commission

Introduction and Background

Aloha Chair and Members of the Commission,

My name is Ramzi I. Mansour, and I am a concerned environmental resident of Hawai'i County. Having worked extensively in environmental management and infrastructure planning across Hawai'i, I am deeply invested in the protection of our island's natural resources and the advancement of sustainable waste reduction practices.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill No. 83, Draft 2, which proposes amendments to Chapter 20 of the Hawai'i County Code to regulate the use of plastic and polystyrene foodware and serviceware. This measure is an essential step in Hawai'i County's ongoing efforts to reduce pollution, promote zero-waste initiatives, and protect marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Support for the Intent of Bill 83

I strongly support the intent and goals of Bill 83. The widespread use of single-use plastics and polystyrene has caused significant harm to our island environment, including:

- Persistent litter in coastal and marine habitats,
- Contamination of soil and water systems,
- Increased landfill burdens, and
- Escalating greenhouse gas emissions from production and waste processing.

By advancing this bill, Hawai'i County continues to demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship, aligning with the Zero Waste Implementation Plan and the Aloha+ Challenge Solid Waste Reduction Goals.

Implementation Considerations

For the success of Bill 83, I respectfully recommend that the County consider the following key implementation factors:

1. Local Availability of Alternatives

Small local vendors and food providers often face higher costs and limited access to compostable or reusable alternatives. The County should help facilitate supplier networks or cooperative purchasing to make compliant products more affordable and accessible islandwide.

2. Composting and Processing Capacity

The bill appropriately references BPI and CMA certified compostable products. However, these materials must be supported by local composting infrastructure. Without local facilities capable of

processing certified compostables, these items risk ending up in the landfill, negating their environmental value.

3. Public Education and Outreach

Section 20-05-05 rightly calls for an education program. Clear communication about product labeling, acceptable materials, and disposal procedures is essential. Collaboration between the County, business associations, and sustainability programs will improve compliance through understanding rather than penalty.

4. Phased and Equitable Enforcement

To avoid undue hardship, enforcement should be phased, and temporary exemptions under Section 20-05-03(b) should be used responsibly. The County could also provide technical assistance or grants to help small businesses transition to reusable or compostable products.

Recommendations

To strengthen the ordinance's effectiveness, I recommend:

- Developing a County Implementation Plan with clear milestones and business engagement.
- Integrating Bill 83's provisions into the Zero Waste and Solid Waste Division programs for consistent tracking and reporting.
- Expanding composting capacity through County-private partnerships.
- Establishing periodic progress reports to measure reductions in single-use plastic and foam waste.

Conclusion

Bill 83 is a forward-looking and necessary policy that reflects Hawai'i County's commitment to a sustainable future. By reducing plastic and polystyrene waste, we protect our island's ecosystems, support the health of our communities, and uphold Hawai'i's values of *mālama 'āina* — caring for the land and ocean.

Mahalo for your attention and commitment to sustainability. I strongly urge the Commission to support Bill 83, Draft 2, and to recommend its adoption to the County Council.



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