

From: [Jeni Herberger](#)
To: [Planning WPC Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony Bill 147
Date: Tuesday, June 2, 2026 10:29:47 AM

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Planning Commissioners,

My name is Jeni Herberger, and I am a Hawai'i Island resident, farmer, and hosted vacation rental operator. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill 147.

I understand and support the County's efforts to address concerns related to investor-owned vacation rentals and housing availability. However, I respectfully ask that the County distinguish between absentee investors and local residents who live on, work, and steward their properties.

I live on my agricultural property and have legally operated a hosted vacation rental for approximately 15 years while paying all required GET and TAT taxes. My farm produces roughly 6,000 pounds of avocados annually, supplies culinary herbs to the local market, and supports livestock, including sheep and chickens. Like many small farms in Hawai'i, agriculture alone does not generate enough income to sustain rising property taxes, insurance, maintenance, labor, and production costs. The hosted vacation rental income is what allows me to continue farming and remain on the land.

Each year I host approximately 200 guests. These visitors support our local economy by shopping at farmers markets, booking charter fishing trips, dining at local restaurants, and utilizing local tour operators and small businesses throughout West Hawai'i. The economic impact extends far beyond my property.

What concerns me most about Bill 147 is the possibility that lawful, long-established operations like mine could gradually lose the ability to operate through increasing regulation and uncertainty. Those of us who have followed the rules, paid taxes, and operated responsibly for many years deserve clear protections and certainty moving forward.

I respectfully ask the Council to clearly grandfather existing lawful rentals and ensure that agricultural properties are treated differently from investment properties. Working farms often rely on diversified income streams to survive, and hosted accommodations can be an essential part of that model.

I also find it difficult to reconcile the County and State's strong support for local agriculture with policies that could undermine the financial sustainability of small farms. We are encouraged to "Buy Local," participate in the Hawai'i Seal of Quality program, improve food security, and pursue agricultural grants and initiatives. Yet the reality is that many small farmers cannot survive on agricultural income alone. If Hawai'i truly values local food production and working agricultural lands, policies must recognize the economic realities farmers face.

I urge you to support regulations that target problem operators without jeopardizing resident-owned, tax-paying, working agricultural properties that have been operating legally for years.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Jeni Herberger