MAKIKI / LOWER PUNCHBOWL / TANTALUS NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD NO. 10

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RESOLUTION URGING LEGISLATURE TO ADOPT GOOD-GOVERNMENT REFORMS

WHEREAS, the Makiki Tantalus Neighborhood Board No. 10 ("Board") is a citizens' advisory board whose purpose is to "increase and assure effective citizen participation in the decisions of government"; and

WHEREAS, although the Hawai'i State Legislature convened the Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct (CISC) in 2022 "for the purpose of reforming basic underpinnings of our state governance, specifically the laws surrounding corruption, lobbying, ethics, and campaign spending" during the legislative sessions that followed the CISC's issuance of its final report legislators failed to act on its most impactful proposals, including, increasing safeguards on campaign contributions, prohibiting unilateral power to kill bills, allowing public immediate viewing of testimony, improving public financing of elections and allowing the public to vote on term limits for legislators; and

WHEREAS, the legislature adopts its own rules of operation because the Hawai'i Constitution contains very few requirements and has the authority to implement rules changes to make itself more transparent and ethical; and

WHEREAS, both the House and Senate have adopted rules that give committee chairs the power to decide which bills referred to their committees receive hearings and which do not; and

WHEREAS, the rules regarding the releasing the testimony only require release at the time of the hearing, which impedes committee members and the public from gaining a better understanding of the issues prior to the hearing; and

WHEREAS, bills that do not create or expend funds (non-fiscal bills) are often needlessly referred to the House and Senate finance committees, creating an insurmountable backlog and inevitably giving chairs the authority to defer bills not in their purview; and

WHEREAS, co-sponsorship of bills promotes collaboration and ensures that bills with board support receive proper consideration and ensuring popular bills can't be blocked by leadership; and

WHEREAS, bills can be substantially amended without prior notice or public discussion, and amendments in writing provide clarity for the public but also for the legislators themselves, along with ensuring all amendments are voted on in public; and

WHEREAS, bills introduced by request do not always include disclosure of the entity that made the introduction and allow lawmakers to be inculpable; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Makiki Tantalus Neighborhood Board respectfully urges the legislature to pass the following amendments to the House and Senate Rules before the 2025 Legislative Session:

1. Each committee shall make all testimony it receives immediately available for public review – at least 22 hours before the hearing, and at least 2 hours before hearing for "late" testimony,
2. Each committee shall vote on the disposition of all bills referred to the committee and shall not use "deferrals," as a means of hiding committee member positions on bills;
3. Bills that do not create or expend funds (non-fiscal bills) shall not be referred to finance committees,
4. All bills shall be circulated for co-sponsorship to all legislators in their respective chamber, and any house bill with at least 17 co-introducers and any senate bill with at least 9 co-introducers shall be scheduled for at least one hearing,
5. Amendments to bills must be in the possession of all committee legislators before the amended version of the bill can be voted on;
6. Bills introduced "by request" must include a disclosure of the entity that made the request;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor of Hawai'i, members of the 2025 Hawai'i State Legislature, and all Neighborhood Boards.