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Chamber of
Sustainable
Commerce
P.O. Box 22394
Honolulu, HI
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Rep. Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Vice-Chair
Comm. on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
2:00 PM, Room 329 or Via Videoconference

RE: **HB2525** Mandatory Denial of Liquor License - **Oppose**



Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama & Committee Members,

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 100 small businesses across the State that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity; we know Hawaii can strengthen its economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment. This is why we strongly oppose HB2525, which provides that the Liquor Commission or other licensing agency of each county shall deny the renewal of certain current liquor licenses upon receipt of sufficient protests.

The substance of this bill makes it too easy to scapegoat a specific bar or restaurant with a liquor license (bar) for all the collateral flaws of metropolitan living: compounded noise, architectural acoustic reverberation and higher pedestrian traffic.

A bar may have been operating in a retail or industrial area for decades and suddenly one residential tower is built on one side and then another tower goes up on another side, and the next year it is surrounded on all three sides. Perhaps the bar and its patrons did not get louder, instead the citing of the new towers bounced and amplified the sound up the three towers?

This could also be true for a new bar as well. Imagine investing millions of dollars to open your dream bar on the ground floor of one of these new residential towers. When you open for business, residents living above are dismayed by all the sounds of a pedestrian-friendly metropolis and they want to put all the blame on your bar.

Enactment of this bill will give extortionists the leverage they need to wrongfully collect money from a bar owner by threatening to file excessive anonymous complaints to the liquor commission directly or manufacturing scenarios that generate complaints from nearby residents.

Requiring the denial of a renewed liquor license, absent any opportunity to demonstrate mitigation or mistake, is over-reaching and may constitute a taking without due process. We urge this committee to consider the silent majority of residents who enjoy having access to local bars and the opportunity to build relationships and community in these social spaces.