

July 22, 2025

The Office of the County Clerk
Hawai'i County Council
via email to counciltestimony@hawaiiicounty.gov

Re: Opponent testimony to Bill 51

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawai'i County Council,

On behalf of Alley Cat Allies and our supporters in Hawai'i County, I submit this written testimony as an opponent of Bill 51, which is currently under your guidance. Alley Cat Allies urges the Council to reject this bill. If enacted into law, Bill 51 will prohibit feeding stray and feral animals, including community cats, on property owned or otherwise managed by the County.

Alley Cat Allies was founded in 1990 and is the leader of the global movement to protect and improve the lives of cats and kittens. As the leading advocacy organization for cats, we work with lawmakers, shelters, and the public toward humane, nonlethal, effective laws and policies that serve the best interests of cats and the communities in which they live.

Cat feeding bans are ineffective and penalize the people most willing to help cats and their community. Feeding bans do not work, punish both the cats and the compassionate people who care for them, and are not supported by science. To cut off food from cats who are used to receiving regular meals is cruel in itself—but does not mean the cats will simply go away. Cats are territorial, bonded to their surroundings, and will not disappear simply because caring individuals can no longer legally feed them. Instead, these cats will roam further to find other food sources that are a byproduct of human habitation and activity. As a result, cats will become more visible in the community, which can lead to increased conflict in the community.

Feeding bans are also very difficult to enforce since they are complaint-driven. They are punitive and tend to direct resources towards administrative tasks like enforcement and away from incentive-based programs that encourage sterilization. Ultimately, ineffective ordinances and policies, like feeding bans, are a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Additionally, feeding bans interfere with Trap-Neuter-Return ("TNR") programs because organized feeding is a necessary part of the process. If caregivers are prohibited from feeding, trapping cats is far more difficult, which ultimately leads to fewer spays and neuters taking place. As a result, this proposed law is counterproductive to Hawai'i County's goal of addressing the community cat population. Alley Cat Allies urges Hawai'i County to embrace a humane and effective approach that improves both cats' lives and the community—and TNR is that approach.

Through TNR, community cats are humanely trapped; brought to a veterinary clinic to be spayed or neutered, eartipped (the universal sign that a cat has been spayed or neutered through a TNR program), and vaccinated; and then are returned to their original outdoor homes. TNR is proven to stabilize community cat populations by stopping the cycle of reproduction; improve the cats'

health and public health through vaccinations; and benefit animal control agencies and shelters by reducing cat intake and calls of concern.

Today, communities across the country have adopted TNR ordinances or policies, and thousands more worldwide are conducting grassroots, volunteer-led programs. Recognizing the reality that TNR programs do not always fit squarely within the four corners of existing legal structures, the American Bar Association, the largest association of legal professionals in the United States, took a position in 2017 urging state and local governments to interpret current laws and policies in a way that facilitates TNR. Therefore, it is critical that laws, policies, and interpretations are in place to permit TNR.

Advocates and organizations in Hawai'i County have already been practicing TNR to the benefit of cats and the community. This is the county's chance to improve its policy to engage and support the resources already available—and ultimately address community concerns and save cats' lives.

I encourage the County Council to **reject Bill 51** and instead adopt an ordinance supporting TNR.

Sincerely,



DanaMarie Pannella
Director of Law and Policy
Alley Cat Allies