

## BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
630 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET  
HONOLULU, HI 96843



March 17, 2016

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Manager and Chief Engineer

ELLEN E. KITAMURA, P.E.  
Deputy Manager and Chief Engineer

The Honorable David W. Rae, Chair  
and Members  
2015 – 2016 Charter Commission  
City and County of Honolulu  
Honolulu Hale  
530 South King Street, Room 501  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Rae and Members:

Subject: Proposed Charter Amendment No. 6

The Board of Water Supply (BWS) respectfully opposes proposed Charter Amendment No. 6 which recommends that the City Council have greater oversight of the BWS in order to save taxpayers money. Furthermore, the proposed amendment erroneously suggests that the BWS is neither proactive nor efficient in addressing water main breaks. We oppose this measure for the following reasons:

- Contrary to the asserted claims, the BWS is proactively addressing water main breaks, prioritizing repair and replacement projects island-wide, and preparing a Water Master Plan and 30-year Capital Improvements Plan;
- Because the BWS is proactive, the rate of water main breaks on Oahu is substantially better than the national average for similarly sized systems, based on data from the American Water Works Association. In addition, the rate of BWS' water main breaks has been on a steady downward trend for the past decade;
- The BWS' dedicated leak-detection team uses acoustic technology to pinpoint small cracks or holes so they can be repaired before they grow into breaks. In 2014 and 2015, our leak-detection team found 245 and 489 leaks, respectively;
- The BWS actively coordinates with the City Department of Design and Construction, who is responsible for street paving, to minimize disturbance to recently paved streets from required water system activities. Unfortunately, it is

The Honorable David W. Rae, Chair  
and Members  
March 17, 2016  
Page 2

not always possible to avoid these situations and the BWS understands the frustrations it can cause;

- The proposed amendment recommends repairing or replacing longer sections of pipelines on a planned basis to avoid having to tear up and repave streets for individual emergency responses. The Water Master Plan will enable the BWS to do this more efficiently, while retaining a primary focus on water system reliability and affordability. Because water main replacement is so expensive, street repaving is only one of the many factors to be considered in this equation;
- The BWS is financially self-sufficient, receiving no tax revenue to maintain water services and systems; and
- The BWS understands that individual water main breaks can be highly visible and inconvenient to the public and does everything possible to minimize impacts to residents and businesses near any break.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

Very truly yours,

  
ERNEST Y.W. LAU, P.E.  
Manager and Chief Engineer