

Written Testimony Presented to the  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
March 28, 2008 at 9:30 am  
by  
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HB 2473, HD2, SD1      Relating to Technology

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui and Members of the Committee:

As a member of the Hawaii Broadband Task Force, I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 2473, HD2, SD1. This bill would provide funding for the Task Force to complete its work and provide a final report with recommendations to the 2009 Legislature as required under the law that established the Task Force.

Through Act 2 of the First Special Session of Hawaii last year, the Legislature created the Hawaii Broadband Task Force with the primary purposes of: 1) removing barriers to broadband access, including gaining wider access to public rights-of-way; 2) identifying opportunities for increased broadband development and adoption, including very high speed broadband services; and 3) enabling the creation and development of new advanced communication technologies in Hawaii. I was honored to be appointed to the task force by the Senate President and House Speaker, and even more honored to be elected by the members as Chair.

Although the task force has only been convened since October, we have already provided an initial interim report to the Legislature as required by Act 2. In that report we have outlined our vision for broadband in Hawaii, as follows:

*Hawaii understands that advanced broadband services are an essential infrastructure for an innovation economy and a knowledge society in the twenty-first century. As a result of proactive policy initiatives, Hawaii residents and businesses throughout the State have access to advanced broadband services of the caliber and at the pricing available in the leading developed nations of the world.*

Our initial report is available on our web site at [www.hbtf.org](http://www.hbtf.org). It reflects the work of the task force in the very short time it had been in existence in 2007.

It is already clear to the task force that broadband offers immense opportunities for social, economic, and educational advancement. It is also clear that Hawaii has tremendous capability and potential, as demonstrated by the wide range of activities underway and described in our initial report, including some that may soon outgrow Hawaii's current broadband capabilities.

Our initial findings suggest that Hawaii has some significant gaps in availability, which will be identified in greater detail in our final report if we are able to complete our work as planned. Although a number of States are ahead of us in beginning to develop their broadband strategies, Hawaii does not particularly lag them and the Task Force plans to learn from their work as well as our own deliberations.

Of greater concern is the fact that the U.S. as a whole is already lagging and falling further behind other advanced nations. Unlike the U.S., much of the world has explicitly identified broadband as a high priority infrastructure and developed national policies that promote deployment and use of advanced capabilities and services to enable their communities to thrive in the 21st century. In addition, the task force has noted that Hawaii faces disadvantages relative to other states as a result of our island geography.

Over the next year the task force would like to be able to collect quantitative data on the availability of broadband services in Hawaii and the actual uptake and use. We believe this will be an important component in developing sound recommendations in our Final Report to the 2009 Legislature, in accordance with Act 2.

Thank you for your support of the Hawaii Broadband Task Force, and for this opportunity provide testimony in favor of supporting our final year of work for you