

**Testimony before the
Senate Committee on**

Ways and Means

S.B. 1217 -- Relating to Education

**Friday, February 25, 2011
9:00 a.m., Conference Room 211**

**By Robbie Alm
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Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc.**

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee,

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of Hawaiian Electric Company and its subsidiary utility, Maui Electric Company.

We support S.B. 1217, which establishes a virtual learning network and e-school pilot project for Lanai High and Elementary School. During community meetings on the proposed wind farm project and in discussions during the community's visioning process residents raised concerns about the quality of education and educational opportunities available on Lanai. One of the issues that has been raised by educators that this bill will address is the availability of courses required for graduation, most of which must be taught by teachers that are qualified in accordance with federal guidelines. According to educators from small, rural schools the present Weighted Student Formula method of allocating funds does not provide sufficient funding to support the staffing of these "Highly Qualified" teachers. The creation of an enhanced distance learning pilot project for Lanai will enable the Department of Education to address this concern by offering the requisite courses online and it could also provide other virtual learning opportunities for students.

This bill is among several bills that have been introduced this legislative session which address some concerns and desires raised by residents during community discussions on the wind farm project. If the wind farm is built on Lanai and the power sent to Oahu, it seems only fair to provide the island with the resources necessary to meet critical community needs. We strongly urge the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.