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TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2013

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2013
2:30 P.M.

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY T. ONO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF
CONSUMER ADVOCACY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER
AFFAIRS, TO THE HONORABLE ANGUS L. K. MCKELVEY, CHAIR,
AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 812 - RELATING TO THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

DESCRIPTION:

This measure proposes to insert new position titles within existing statutes describing the civil service status of Public Utilities Commission ("PUC") staff and repeals existing position staff descriptions for the Commission under Act 177, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007.

POSITION:

The Division of Consumer Advocacy strongly supports H.B. No. 812.

COMMENTS:

H.B. No. 812 allows greater flexibility to the PUC to hire professional staff. The PUC's staff plays an important role in moving and concluding all public utility dockets,

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including those relating to the State of Hawaii's energy future. Given these circumstances, the Consumer Advocate strongly supports this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

TESTIMONY OF HERMINA MORITA
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

FEBRUARY 6, 2013
2:30 p.m.

MEASURE: H.B. No. 812

TITLE: Relating to the Public Utilities Commission

Chair McKelvey and Members of the Committee:

DESCRIPTION:

This measure amends Section 269-3, Hawaii Revised Statutes (“HRS”), and Act 177, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007, (“Act 177”) relating to staffing and recruitment by the Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”).

POSITION:

The Commission strongly supports H.B. No. 812 as it is critical to the Commission’s efforts to build its capacity to be proactive and effective in responding to its duties in a rapidly changing regulatory environment. The following comments are offered for the Committee’s consideration.

COMMENTS:

H.B. No. 812 would provide the Commission with needed flexibility to recruit and hire staff with the right skill sets to effectively carryout the Commission’s regulatory duties, particularly in the area of energy regulation. The 2007 Legislature passed Act 177 authorizing the reorganization of the Commission in response to the findings of a 2004 legislative audit and a subsequent study by the Hawaii Energy Policy Forum. The provisions of Act 177 mandate specific position descriptions for Commission staff based on the Commission’s needs during that period, which makes recruitment of personnel to satisfy the Commission’s current regulatory needs very difficult. This bill would support the Commission’s efforts to identify key positions and rewrite position descriptions to build up staffing required to carry out its many current and future duties by eliminating the restrictions of Act 177.

After being assigned additional space within the Kekuaaoa Building in July 2012, the Commission is working on its office expansion and renovation plan with the assistance of the Department of Accounting and General Services, the Department of Budget and Finance, and the Office of the Attorney General. This assignment finally gives the Commission the space needed to house its additional staffing requirements. As the Commission's office expansion plan moves forward, H.B. No. 812 will serve to support the Commission in designing and filling the kinds of positions needed to modernize and transform the agency to meet the needs of a rapidly changing regulatory environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.