



DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

SHAN S. TSUTSUI
LT. GOVERNOR

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310

P.O. Box 541

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Phone Number: 586-2850

Fax Number: 586-2856

www.hawaii.gov/dcca

CATHERINE P. AWAKUNI COLÓN
DIRECTOR

JO ANN M. UCHIDA TAKEUCHI
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2016

MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2016
2:00 P.M.

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY T. ONO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF
CONSUMER ADVOCACY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER
AFFAIRS, TO THE HONORABLE JILL N. TOKUDA, CHAIR,
AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1851, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO THE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

DESCRIPTION:

This measure proposes to allow a commissioner to attend by teleconference or videoconference a public hearing of the Public Utilities Commission ("Commission"), except for a contested case hearing, including allowing a commissioner who resides on an island other than Oahu to attend a public hearing of the Commission held on Oahu and a commissioner residing on the island of Oahu to attend a public hearing of the Commission held on an island other than Oahu. Enables a member of the Commission who is a resident of a county other than the City and County of Honolulu to receive per diem compensation. Enables a person's island of residence to be used as a criterion when determining the person's qualification to serve as a Commissioner.

POSITION:

The Division of Consumer Advocacy ("Consumer Advocate") supports the intent of this bill.

COMMENTS:

The Commission is responsible for protecting the interests of consumers and regulated utilities on all islands. The decisions of the Commission, especially in the energy field, will have a profound effect upon this state for years to come. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to have the most qualified individuals, irrespective of where they reside, serve as commissioners on the Commission. The Consumer Advocate recognizes that a commissioner who resides on a neighbor island could provide an important perspective to the decision-making process of the Commission. An individual's island of residence should be one criteria to determine that individual's qualification to serve as a commissioner. To make it a requirement that one commissioner reside on a neighbor island could eliminate from consideration other more qualified individuals based on this residency requirement. The Consumer Advocate therefore supports the current language in this measure, which follows SB 2776, S.D. 1, in making the neighbor island residency requirement a factor to be considered in selecting all commissioners.

The Consumer Advocate would also point out that where an individual previously lived and grew up may be equally important to that individual's perspective as to where that individual currently resides. In other words, someone who grew up on the neighbor islands, but who currently resides on Oahu, may have a closer affinity to the neighbor islands than someone who recently moved there.

In order to encourage neighbor island residents to serve on the Commission, neighbor island commissioners should not be financially disadvantaged compared to their Oahu counterparts. The Consumer Advocate therefore supports the provision in this legislation that requires a per diem compensation to neighbor island commissioners.

The Consumer Advocate further supports the provision in this legislation that allows for teleconference or videoconference participation by commissioners to attend public hearings. The Consumer Advocate suggests that the decision to allow teleconference or videoconference participation be left to the discretion of the Chair of the Commission, because there may be certain instances where teleconference or videoconference is impractical or inappropriate.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: tabraham08@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1851 on Apr 4, 2016 14:00PM*
Date: Monday, April 04, 2016 10:49:54 AM

HB1851

Submitted on: 4/4/2016

Testimony for WAM on Apr 4, 2016 14:00PM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Troy Abraham	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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