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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO REMOTE TESTIMONY IN LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that as an island state,  
2 Hawaii's geography poses particular challenges for residents of  
3 the counties of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui to actively participate  
4 in the legislative process by testifying in person during  
5 committee hearings. Although legislative committees accept  
6 written testimony via electronic means, presenting in-person,  
7 face-to-face testimony before the legislature is costly and  
8 time-consuming for neighbor island residents and others who  
9 reside far from the state capitol.

10           Neighbor island residents who physically attend legislative  
11 committee hearings to testify on measures and actively engage in  
12 the legislative process incur significant air travel and other  
13 transportation costs, and in some instances, lodging costs. For  
14 these individuals, providing testimony to the legislature in  
15 person often means taking time off from work.

16           The legislature recognizes the necessity of expanding  
17 opportunities for neighbor island residents and other



1 individuals to enable them to actively participate in the  
2 legislative process and weigh in on issues. The legislature  
3 also recognizes that face-to-face public testimony can have a  
4 significant impact on legislators and the media and that  
5 enabling the public to provide live, real-time remote testimony  
6 will improve citizen participation in and public access to the  
7 legislative process.

8       The legislature further finds that as technology evolves,  
9 other state governments have implemented remote committee  
10 hearings to bridge the distance between testifiers and  
11 legislative committees. In 1978, Alaska established a  
12 teleconference network and began holding remote hearings for  
13 residents. In 2014, more than four thousand citizens of Alaska  
14 participated remotely in five thousand hours of legislative  
15 teleconferences. In Nevada, only approximately two per cent of  
16 the state's population lives in the capital city of Carson City,  
17 while seventy-six per cent live in the Las Vegas metropolitan  
18 area, some four hundred miles away. The Nevada Legislature  
19 began videoconference hearings between the two cities in 1991.  
20 Between 1997 and 2014 the Nevada Legislature videoconferenced  
21 3,294 hearings.



1 The purpose of this Act is to:

2 (1) Establish the remote legislative access program within  
3 the legislature's public access program, to be  
4 supervised by the joint legislative access committee;  
5 and

6 (2) Require each house of the legislature to establish  
7 procedures and necessary information infrastructure  
8 for the public to present oral testimony at  
9 legislative committee hearings through remote  
10 testimony.

11 SECTION 2. Chapter 21G, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
12 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
13 and to read as follows:

14 "§21G- Remote legislative access program. (a) There  
15 is established in the state capitol a remote legislative access  
16 program that shall become part of the legislature's public  
17 access program.

18 (b) The remote legislative access program shall be  
19 supervised by the joint legislative access committee established  
20 pursuant to section 21D-6. When establishing the remote  
21 legislative access program, the committee shall:



- 1        (1) Seek advice and recommendations from experts having  
2                    knowledge in remote communications, including the  
3                    chief information officer of the office of enterprise  
4                    technology services;
- 5        (2) Seek advice and recommendations from the disability  
6                    and communication access board and the county council  
7                    of each respective county in implementing the program;  
8                    and
- 9        (3) Consider successful remote communications access  
10                   programs of other states.
- 11        (c) In administering this program, the joint legislative  
12 access committee shall also consider different methods of  
13 communication, including teleconferencing and videoconferencing,  
14 and different technologies that are capable of accommodating  
15 individuals having visual or hearing impairments, to administer  
16 the program.
- 17        (d) Each house of the legislature shall establish, by  
18 rule, procedures that enable:
- 19        (1) The legislature to receive remote testimony at  
20                    legislative committee hearings; and



1       (2) The public to present oral testimony at legislative  
2           committee hearings through remote testimony.

3       (e) As used in this section, "remote testimony" means the  
4       use of video conferencing or other technology that facilitates  
5       interaction between the public and members of the legislature  
6       and enables the public to submit oral testimony remotely via the  
7       Internet or other telecommunications technology during  
8       legislative hearings and proceedings."

9           SECTION 3. Section 21D-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
10 amended to read as follows:

11       "~~§~~**21D-6 Joint legislative access committee.**~~§~~ There  
12 is established the joint legislative access committee which  
13 shall be composed of members of the legislature. The president  
14 of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives  
15 shall each appoint a co-chair and two members or more to the  
16 committee, one of whom shall be a member of the minority party.

17       The committee shall:

18       (1) Oversee the staff and operations of the legislative  
19           broadcast project, and recommend policies for the  
20           project, which shall be adopted by concurrent  
21           resolution; ~~and~~



1        (2)    Oversee the staff and operations of the remote  
2                legislative access program, and recommend policies for  
3                the program, which shall be adopted in accordance with  
4                section 21G-        ; and

5        [~~2~~] (3)    Review the operations of the public access room,  
6                legislative internet project, remote legislative  
7                access program, and other public access projects of  
8                the legislature and recommend policies for these  
9                projects to the president of the senate and the  
10                speaker of the house of representatives."

11        SECTION 4.    There is appropriated out of the general  
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                or so  
13 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 to  
14 carry out the purposes of this Act.

15        The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
16 accounting and general services for the purposes of this Act.

17        SECTION 5.    Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
18 and stricken.    New statutory material is underscored.

19        SECTION 6.    This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



**Report Title:**

Remote Testimony; Remote Legislative Access Program;  
Legislature; Committee Hearings; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes the remote legislative access program, to be supervised by the joint legislative access committee. Specific requirements that the joint legislative access committee must consider when developing the program. Requires each house of the Legislature to establish, by rule, procedures for the public to present oral testimony at legislative committee hearings through remote testimony. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

