

JAN 17 2020

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO UNDERGROUND UTILITY LINES.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the power grid and  
2 communication systems become ever more critical to modern life,  
3 and that grid resiliency and system reliability are essential  
4 for public health, safety, and general welfare. Utility poles,  
5 commonly known as telephone poles for the days when wired  
6 telephones and fax machines were state-of-the-art  
7 communications, are vulnerable to damage from wind, fire, flood,  
8 termites, and other hazards. Hawaii's natural beauty is  
9 adversely impacted by the ongoing installation and replacement  
10 of utility poles, with each generation taller and more intrusive  
11 than the earlier generation.

12           The legislature further finds that underground utilities  
13 have been required in all new residential and commercial  
14 developments for decades. These types of utilities provide a  
15 better living environment, improve the visual aesthetic of  
16 natural beauty, are less vulnerable to service interruptions,  
17 and less expensive to maintain over time. Grid resiliency and



1 communication reliability are paramount for the increasing  
2 interconnectivity of modern life.

3       The legislature believes now is the appropriate time to  
4 begin complete underground conversion of utility lines, with the  
5 full understanding that some areas may not be appropriate due to  
6 cost or geological variables. However, other areas would  
7 greatly benefit from enhanced reliability and cost performance.  
8 Such an initiative is achievable. The city of San Diego has  
9 developed the utilities undergrounding program, operational  
10 since 2003, with the goal of relocating approximately fifteen  
11 miles of overhead utility lines throughout the city each year.

12       The purpose of this Act is to establish a working group to  
13 develop a comprehensive statewide plan for undergrounding  
14 utility lines. This Act shall be known as the 2050 service  
15 utilities undergrounding program for expanded resilience.

16       SECTION 2. (a) There is established, within the office of  
17 the governor for administrative purposes, a working group to  
18 develop a comprehensive statewide plan for undergrounding  
19 utility lines and studying the feasibility and relevant cost  
20 factors of implementing the plan while taking into account



1 system reliability and the life cycle costs of overhead to  
2 determine the State's optimal utility network by 2050.

3 (b) The working group members shall be appointed by the  
4 governor, in consultation with the department of land and  
5 natural resources, and shall include:

6 (1) The director of commerce and consumer affairs, or the  
7 director's designee;

8 (2) A commissioner from the public utilities commission,  
9 or the commissioner's designee; and

10 (3) Representatives from utilities, non-profit, and  
11 community groups.

12 (c) Members of working group shall receive no compensation  
13 for their service on the working group but shall be reimbursed  
14 for reasonable expenses incurred, including travel expenses,  
15 related to their service on the working group.

16 (d) The working group shall convene no later than ninety  
17 days after the effective date of this Act and shall meet on a  
18 regular basis.

19 (e) The working group shall report its findings and  
20 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the



1 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
2 the regular session of 2023.

3 (f) The office of the governor and the department of land  
4 and natural resources shall provide administrative support upon  
5 request from the working group.

6 (g) The working group shall be dissolved on December 31,  
7 2022.

8 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$50,000 or so much  
10 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for the  
11 working group to carry out studies that may need to be performed  
12 as part of its comprehensive plan.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
14 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;  
16 provided that section 3 shall take effect on July 1, 2020.

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INTRODUCED BY: *Gil Riviere*

*Joe Chung* *Rosa E. Blum*

*[Signature]*  
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# S.B. NO. 2595

**Report Title:**

Working Group; Underground Utility Lines; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes a working group to develop a comprehensive statewide plan for undergrounding utility lines. Appropriates funds.

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

