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

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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, February 26, 2021
9:30 a.m.
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
S.B. 850, S.D. 1, RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE
FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ji Sook “Lisa” Kim, and I am the Cable Administrator of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs’ (Department) Cable Television Division. The Department offers comments on this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) create a task force jointly convened by the Department of Transportation and Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to provide equitable broadband access; (2) require the task force to apply for federal moneys for broadband access; and (3) require the departments to report on the findings of the task force and provide an accounting of any amounts received.

The global pandemic, triggering stay-at-home and social distancing orders, has underscored the critical need for universal broadband access for distance learning, telework and job training, telehealth and social services, and social and civic engagement. In response, the federal government is making more funding available for

broadband infrastructure, equipment, and internet services, and the Administration is focused on creating a healthy statewide broadband network and enhancing digital equity for residents.

The Department recognizes the value of seeking input from and coordination among the various broadband stakeholders comprising the proposed task force, particularly to benefit from current federal funding opportunities, but defers to the agencies more directly impacted regarding the specifics of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

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To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Cheryl Kakazu Park, Director

Date: February 26, 2021, 9:30 a.m.
Via Videoconference

Re: Testimony on S.B. No. 850, S.D. 1
Relating to Broadband Infrastructure for Rural Communities

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would create a Broadband Equity Task Force. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) previously testified regarding a Sunshine Law exemption in the bill as introduced. The Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism removed that exemption from the S.D. 1 version of the bill, and OIP has no further concerns regarding this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/26/2021

Time: 09:30 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 0850, SD1 RELATING TO BROADBAND
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Purpose of Bill: Creates a task force jointly convened by the department of transportation and department of business, economic development, and tourism to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities. Requires the task force to apply for federal moneys for broadband access. Requires the departments' report to include the findings of the task force and an accounting of amounts received from the CARES Act and Emergency Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020 and grants disbursed by the State for broadband infrastructure for rural communities. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 850, SD1, which creates a task force to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities.

Equitable access to the internet and technology resources has been a long-standing issue. The need for equitable access to internet connectivity became more evident with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required people of the state of Hawaii to work and learn remotely. Many organizations, including the Department, had to quickly shift to provide services, supports, and information via online means. The Department continues to face challenges providing necessary services and supports in areas of the state that have little or no connectivity due to remoteness or the lack of internet service and broadband infrastructure. A task force to focus on bringing broadband infrastructure to these areas is an important step in providing equitable access and lessening the "digital divide."

The Department appreciates the importance of equitable access that this measure addresses and would welcome opportunities to work with the task force to provide an educational perspective, especially in the area of K-12 education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

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Statement of
MIKE MCCARTNEY
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Friday, February 26, 2021
9:30 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 221

In consideration of

SB850 SD1

RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) provides comments on SB850 SD1, which creates a task force jointly convened by the Department of Transportation and the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities.

- DBEDT recognizes the critical need for the Broadband and Digital Equity Office, articulated in SB947 SD1, where much of this coordinating work will take place.
- It is also recognized that Federal funding for broadband infrastructure is focused on rural communities.
- The function of the task force will be duplicative since the departments receiving grants will oversee the deployment of broadband infrastructure in the unserved and underserved areas.
- The task force would not be an acceptable authority to apply for or receive money from the federal government for grant programs since the granting agencies are directing their programs to specific state departments, counties and/or providers of fixed broadband services.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony.

SB850 SD1

RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki‘ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai

Pepeluali 26, 2021

9:30 a.m.

Lumi 211

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB850 SD1**, which would create a task force jointly convened by the Department of Transportation and Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities, and to seek out and apply for federal moneys to realize such access.

OHA appreciates that this measure will help to address the broadband needs of Native Hawaiian rural communities who have been historically marginalized and underserved. OHA notes that Native Hawaiians are highly represented in our rural communities: based on 2010 Census data, Native Hawaiians comprised the overwhelming majority of those living in Waimānalo, O‘ahu (81.3%); Kualapu‘u, Moloka‘i (71.9%); Nānākuli, O‘ahu (71.5%); ‘Ualapu‘e, Moloka‘i (70.6%); Maunaloa, Moloka‘i (67.3%) and Hāna, Maui (65.9%).¹ Meanwhile, the Federal Communications Commission’s 2018 Broadband Deployment Report indicated significant gaps in broadband access between Hawai‘i’s urban and rural areas, with only 63.1% of our rural population having access to the standard 25 Mbps download/3Mbps upload for fixed broadband access, compared to 98.5% of our urban population.² **Accordingly, by establishing a task force to provide equitable broadband access for our rural communities, this measure would begin to address a significant disparity in broadband access likely impacting a disproportionate number of Native Hawaiians across the state.**

OHA recognizes that rural Native Hawaiian communities’ lack of access to reliable and affordable broadband creates barriers to many necessary programs and services including in the areas of healthcare, education, and emergency response. Lack of broadband access further hinders economic development, leaving rural residents technologically and economically isolated and competitively disadvantaged. As the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the demand for reliable, affordable internet connectivity with work, education, civic engagement, and healthcare services being shifted online, the urgency of addressing the inequality in broadband access has become even more clear to our community.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB850 SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

¹ Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Native Hawaiian Data Book, <http://www.ohadatabook.com/> (last accessed Feb. 24, 2021).

² FCC, 2018 BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT REPORT, APPENDIX F2, available at <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2018-broadband-deployment-report>.



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Friday, February 26, 2021; 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 211
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 0850, SENATE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill No. 0850, Senate Draft 1, RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would require the Departments of Transportation and Business, Economic Development and Tourism to jointly establish the Broadband Equity Task Force to apply for available federal funding and secure broadband access sites throughout unserved and underserved areas.

This bill would take effect on July 1, 2021.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii Federally-Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

Hawaii has long been at the forefront of integrating newer technologies into daily life. One example of this is Hawaii's Telehealth Law which has served as a model across the United States. Yet, it was only after COVID struck our islands that this law became fully integrated into daily life.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 0850, Senate Draft 1
Friday, February 26, 2021; 9:30 a.m.
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Today, it is common practice to ZOOM or SKYPE with your health practitioner instead of physically going to the provider's office for a visit. When COVID first hit our islands, many health providers had to limit the number of patients that could be serviced in-person because of a scarcity of Personal Protective Equipment, restrictions in the gatherings of groups, and the need for changes to the physical arrangement of examination rooms and other diagnostic facilities.

For people with adequate broadband access, telehealth was a lifeline for the provision of essential primary health care services. Yet, health care facilities in rural areas experienced the same problems when COVID hit. They too had to limit the number of patients they could see. But because these communities lacked adequate broadband access, they were effectively cut off from primary care. Many were forced to bear their maladies until it became necessary to go to the emergency room.

The Governor's suspension of statutes that prohibits the use of standard telephonic service in telehealth has temporarily eased this inequity. For those without adequate broadband, at least for now, they are able to obtain basic primary care services over landline telephones. But that is neither adequate, tenable, nor fair to the thousands of citizens who lack broadband access.

Because of this, the HPCA views the lack of broadband access in rural areas as an issue of social equity. In this day and age, everyone should have equal access to health care. Telehealth was envisioned as the means of leveling the field between urban and rural areas. The lack of broadband ensures that urban and rural communities remain unequal.

As a member of the Broadband Hui, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.

LATE

SB-850-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2021 4:51:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Will Caron	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support this bill! Rural and underserved communities need broadband access in order to fully participate in both our democracy and our economy, both of which are becoming increasingly digital in nature. Mahalo!

LATE

SB-850-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2021 10:10:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Evan Rivera	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha mai kā• kou!

My name is Evan Rivera. And I am a freshman at Kamehameha Schools Kapā• lama and I support the bill SB850. In section 1 it says, “many rural, agricultural, and lower-income communities throughout the State lack access to reliable and affordable broadband, which creates barriers to educational equity, sustainable agriculture, and economic development, leaving residents technologically and economically isolated and competitively disadvantaged.” Hopefully with this bill passed it can help many students with schools, economy, and agriculture.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all of us, in particular schools. With online school being the safest way for students to get an education it affects students who don't have a lot of access. According to the United States Census, people who are ages under 18 in Hawaii are estimated to be 301,548. Students without an internet subscription are estimated to be 10,814, that's a percentage 3.6%. As this is around the state of Hawaii and it's still a small percentage, it still shows that areas don't have many equitable access to broadband. Many students are missing out on school and the chance to get the education that they need. Every student should have the opportunity to go to school safely and get the education that they need to learn.

Economy is very important in Hawaii because it helps grow local businesses. The number one factor of economic growth is attracting the tourists. Getting tourists' attention to places is by spreading the word. Today, people use social media by tagging stores or using hashtags to spread information. However, using social media requires internet access. There are many rural communities where tourists would go more if word was spread. For example, in the rural community Haleiwa, there is a place that sells açai bowls and has gorgeous beaches. If they have broadband access they could get more tourists attracted to come if word was spread which helps the economy.

Agriculture gives us food to nourish us and give us energy. With internet access, technology can help farmers. Without access to the internet, farmers can have a hard time knowing if their crops are growing. According to intelligent fiber the tools farmers use like yield mapping, guidance system, and soil mapping helps farmers with data on how much water and fertilize are used for their crops. Without the internet, farmers are unable to provide accurate data. Because technology is growing farmers are too, without internet access farmers won't know how much water and fertilizer they added or need for the crops to grow. To add on, having access to the internet farmers can check the weather to see if it is going to rain, be sunny, or cloudy.

In conclusion, I am supporting this bill because the access to broadband can help students to learn efficiently and get to school safely, increase local businesses by attracting tourists if word is spread out, and help agriculture to grow and get to local stores in a satisfactory way. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Mahalo nui loa!

Have a nice day!