



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 124, HD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 24, 2022

Chair Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill No. 124, HD1. This bill requires the chief election officer to develop and distribute a voter information guide for all candidates running for state office, including candidates running for any trustee position of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

We believe an informed electorate is essential for the health of our democracy; however, our office must remain apolitical. As such, to compile a voter information guide, we would ask candidates to submit a statement for inclusion in a voter information guide when they file their nomination paper. We propose that the voter information guide be provided for federal and state candidates.

After the candidate filing deadline, we would translate the statements into the languages covered by the federal Voting Rights Act: Chinese, Ilocano, and Tagalog. The voter information guide must be available 45 days before each election to coincide with ballots sent to uniformed and overseas voters.

A voter information guide could be compiled and disseminated in many different ways. Our cost estimates are based on 320 candidates each providing a 150-word statement. We propose posting the voter information guide on our website and advertising that it is available. Our cost estimate is \$119,690.

	Primary	General	Total
Translations	\$39,690	\$0	\$39,690
Advertising	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$80,000
Total	\$79,690	\$40,000	\$119,690

Another option would be to distribute the voter information guide directly to voters. The costs would include printing and mailing it to approximately 783,000 voters, advertising, and sending a notice in every mail ballot packet. We would also note that in this model, the printed copy would be distributed in English, and a dual-language version would be sent to targeted areas.

	Primary	General	Total
Translations	\$39,690	\$0	\$39,690
Advertising	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$80,000
Printed notice	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$90,000
Printed copy	\$614,250	\$614,250	\$1,228,500
Mailing	\$533,264	\$533,264	\$1,066,528
Total	\$1,272,204	\$1,232,514	\$2,504,718

Additionally, with candidate filing set to begin on March 1, 2022, we ask that this measure take effect for the 2024 Elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill No. 124, HD1.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
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EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 124, H.D. 1

February 24, 2022
11:00 a.m.
Room 308 and Videoconference

RELATING TO ELECTIONS

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on House Bill (H.B.) No. 124, H.D. 1.

H.B. No. 124, H.D. 1, requires the Chief Election Officer to develop and distribute a voter information guide for all candidates running for State office, including candidates running for any trustee position of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The measure also appropriates unspecified general funds in FY 23 to the Office of Elections for this purpose.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and

- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Statement Before The
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Thursday, February 24, 2022
11:00 AM
Via Video Conference and Conference Room 308

in consideration of
HB 124, HD1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS.

Chair LUKE, Vice Chair YAMASHITA, and Members of the House Finance Committee

Common Cause Hawaii supports HB 124, HD1, which requires the chief election officer to develop and distribute a voter information guide for all candidates running for state office, including candidates running for any trustee position of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and appropriates funds.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of our representative democracy through efforts that increase civic engagement, voter turnout, and voter participation in our democratic processes.

A voter information guide would create a more informed voting public and hopefully increase voter participation in our elections. A significant number of states have official voter guides published by the state secretaries of state, which is equivalent to our State Office of Elections. See https://ballotpedia.org/Features_of_official_voter_guides,_compared_by_state#Comparison_of_voter_guides (retrieved Jan. 28, 2022); see also <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/fiscal-impact-statements.aspx> (retrieved Jan. 28, 2022).

For voter information guides to be trusted and useful to the public, they must:

- Be neutral and written in plain language.
- Be readily available to the public. They should not be disseminated by one means only, such as via electronic means, mail, or in the newspaper. As the current pandemic has revealed, many people do not have access to broadband and/or reliable mail delivery. Voter information guides must be made available at banks, grocery stores, community centers, public libraries, government buildings, and other locations where people are likely to gather.
- Be translated into different languages for all of Hawaii's citizens to be able to access. Hawaii is the most diverse state in the nation with a diversity index of 76% according to the 2020 U.S. Census. The April 2016 DBEDT Research and Economic Analysis Division report on Non-English Speaking Population in Hawaii indicates that Non-English speakers at home in Hawaii increased by 44% from 1980 to 2014. See https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/data_reports/Non_English_Speaking_Population_in_Hawaii_April_2016.pdf at Executive Summary pg. i (retrieved Jan. 28, 2022). Ilocano, Tagalog, and Japanese were the top three most common non-English languages spoken at home in Hawaii. *Id.*
- Be accessible to our disability community.
- Include county ballot initiatives and charter amendments and constitutional amendments and not be limited to candidates.

Common Cause Hawaii supports HB 124, HD1, creating voter information guides for a more informed and engaged public for the betterment of our representative democracy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 124, HD1. If you have any questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

