



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKĀ'I

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

CHRIS J. SADAYASU
DIRECTOR

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Statement of
CHRIS J. SADAYASU
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Wednesday, February 22, 2023
2:30 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

In consideration of
HB 1408, HD2
RELATING TO DIGITAL EQUITY.

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **supports HB1408, HD2** that establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

Over the course of the last three years, the COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted the need for digital equity for all of Hawai'i's residents. In the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (2022) the federal government recognized the importance of digital equity and created several programs including the Digital Equity Planning Grant and the Digital Equity Capacity Grant program. There is a one-year period for the development of the statewide digital equity plan at which point the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will issue their notice of funding opportunity for the capacity grants.

The digital equity grant program created by HB 1408, HD2 will not only help to fund and build capacity in Hawai'i's communities, both urban and rural, sooner than the federal programs but it can also be applied specifically to the needs of the smaller frontline organizations, be more flexible and meet the local priorities in addressing issues of digital adoption, affordability, navigation, literacy, access to devices, emergency response, translation services, etc.

We support this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in our Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 22, 2023

The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Yamashita and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1408 HD2 RELATING TO BROADBAND.

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB1408 HD2**, which establishes the digital equity grant program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State. Appropriates funds. Effective 6/30/3000.

Technology has become vital for our Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD) population to live independently. However, broadband access is key for most new technologies relying on Wi-Fi. Individuals with I/DD who are dependent on others to assist them with their mobility can reach a greater level of independence if they have reliable access to internet services. Internet access allows individuals from their homes to independently access telehealth services, virtual meetings, legislative hearings, and other state programs that require computer access.

Through the work of the Broadband Hui, we have supported broadband infrastructure development in rural communities, provided digital devices for students and families, supported the accessibility of telehealth, provided information on low-cost internet options. Funding remains a high need to continue to provide individuals we serve with affordable internet access. We are hopeful that digital equity will come with the passing of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB1408 HD2**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAI‘I

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 22, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.

By

Garret T. Yoshimi, Vice President for Information Technology/Chief Information Officer
University of Hawai'i System

HB 1408 HD2 – RELATING TO DIGITAL EQUITY

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i, representing the State's broadband interests, supports the intent of HB 1408 HD2.

The proposed state digital equity grant program along with state funding support would provide needed funding opportunities to support digital equity efforts that would directly benefit communities with the greatest needs. Based on the proposed timing, this program would provide funding opportunities in advance of the anticipated National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) State Digital Equity Capacity Grant program, and could be used to accelerate the delivery of digital equity and literacy benefits to our communities.

We would recommend that the efforts be fully coordinated with other statewide digital equity efforts, including the state's digital equity plan, the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Five-Year Plan, and work funded under the Tribal Broadband Connectivity program with DHHL (all three efforts funded by NTIA).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1408 HD2.



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**The State Legislature
The House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 22, 2023
Conference Room 308, 2:30 p.m.**

TO: The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair
RE: Support for H.B. 1408, HD 2 Relating to Digital Equity

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committees:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 140,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including telehealth. **AARP supports H.B. 1408 HD2** which establishes the digital equity grant program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

The pandemic has underscored vast disparities in high-speed internet access and has also underscored the importance of high-speed internet access to older adults. Achieving digital equity is especially important for older adults: reliable, affordable high-speed internet access is critical to the well-being of adults (e.g., telehealth, connection to family and friends, civic engagement, distance learning, remote work, etc.) AARP recognizes the value and significant benefits of digital technology that can improve the lives of kupuna. While more and more of our members, especially those aged 50-59, are using their mobile devices and tablets to access information about their health, we still need to reach those over the age 65 whose technology adoption rate is only 64%. Achieving digital equity requires addressing disparities in access and adoption. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B 1408, HD2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keali'i S. Lopez".

Keali'i S. López
State Director

House Committee on Finance

Date: February 22, 2023
Time: 2:30 p.m.
Where: State Capitol, Conference Room 308
RE: Supporting HB 1408 HD2 Relating to Digital Equity

Aloha mai e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

As members of the Broadband Hui, the listed organizations and individuals SUPPORT HB 1408 HD2, which establishes the Digital Equity Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects.

Over the past two years, our organizations have collaborated, each within their own ability, to increase Hawai'i's digital capacity, thereby supporting the continuity of social connections, education, employment, and access to other essential services throughout the pandemic.

Through the work of the Broadband Hui, we have supported broadband infrastructure development in rural communities, provided digital devices for students and families, supported the accessibility of telehealth, provided information on low-cost internet options, and adopted a Digital Equity Declaration to set a vision and goals for a more equitable digital future.

One of the components critical to the progress of digital equity for our community is that of funding capacity sooner than the federal programs which this bill aims to address. **Work to continue to address these needs are now. This funding will be targeted to support Hawaii's local, community non-profits to maintain its momentum on digital equity until federal funding becomes available.**

For these reasons, we kindly request you support HB1408. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. (Please see names on the following page.)

Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB1408 HD1

Logos of Supporting Organizations



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB1408 HD1

Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
Ken Farm		farmk@hawaii.edu	96817
Lynn Otaguro	O`ahu County Democrats Digital Equity Committee	lmotaguro@yahoo.com	96821
Angelina Mercado	Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence	amercado@hscadv.org	98614
DOUGLASS S ADAMS	County of Hawaii Dept of Research & Development	douglass.adams@hawaiicounty.gov	96720
Jill Takasaki Canfield	Hawaii Literacy	jill.takasaki.canfield@hawaiiliteracy.org	96817
Kaleo Bennett	'Auamo Collaborative	kokua@auamocollaborative.org	96720
Mayson Asano Jr		molokaishaka@yahoo.com	96748
Nicholas Winfrey	Maui United Way	nicholas@mauiunitedway.org	96708
Peter Dames	Servco Pacific Inc	peter.dames@servco.com	96814
WANDA ANAE-ONISHI		wanaeonishi@gmail.com	96797
Riley Saito	Succeed Hawaii, LLC	rsaito@succeedhawaii.com	96740
David Sun-Miyashiro	HawaiiKidsCAN	david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org	96814
Jaclyn Kaina	Kauai Economic Development Board	jkaina@kedb.com	96766
Matt Stevens	Hawai'i Workforce Funders Collaborative	matt@hawaiiwork.org	96755
Herb Lee, Jr.	Pacific American Foundation	herblee@thepaf.org	96734
Alexis Ching		alexis@ewaluindustries.org	96740
Nathan Prescott	County of Kauai - Office of Economic Development	nprescott@kauai.gov	96766
Rachel Solemsaas	Hawai'i Community College	rsolems@hawaii.edu	96720
Mary Oneha	Waimanalo Health Center	moneha@waimanalohealth.org	96795
LORNA STRAND		LORNA.STRAND@GMAIL.COM	96701
David Earles	Junior Achievement of Hawaii	david@jahawaii.org	96815
Deborah Bond-Upson	LearningBond	deborah@learningbond.org	96734
Wayne Buente		wayne.buente@gmail.com	96826
Ka'ala Souza	Digital Ready Hawaii	kaala@digitalreadyhawaii.org	96734
Jeanne Skog	Skog Rasmussen LLC	jskog@skograsmussen.com	96793
Georgette Stevens	'Ōlelo Community Media	gstevens@olelo.org	96819
Joseph Passantino	Ke'elikolani Middle School	Joseph.passantino@k12.hi.us	96813
Jay April, President & CEO	Akaku Maui County Community Media	jay@akaku.org	96732
Jeanne Skog	Economic Development Alliance of Hawaii	jskog2435@gmail.com	96708
Kiran Polk	Kapolei Chamber of Commerce	kiranpolk@gmail.com	96707

Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB1408 HD1

Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
Keilee Simms		keilees@keyproject.org	96744
Judith Mikami	Molokai Rural Health Community Association	jmikami44@gmail.com	96748
Gregory DiBenedetto		gregdib@yahoo.com	96778
Dr. Adrienne Dillard, Ph.D., MSW, LSW	Kula no na Po'e Hawaii o Papakolea, Kewalo, Kalawahine	kula.papakolea@gmail.com	96813
Sean Taketa McLaughlin		seantaketa@gmail.com	96817
Joseph Lapilio	Waianae Economic Development Council	j.lapilio@thewedc.com	96792
Alexandra Slous	Perspective Media	ali@createwithperspective.com	96734
Mahealani Keo	Nurture Cultivate Inc	mahealani.keo@ncihawaii.org	96717
Kuulei Arce	MOLOKAI RURAL HEALTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION	22kuulei@gmail.com	96729
Linda Clark		clarkl004@gmail.com	96713
Jenny Miller	EducationSuperHighway	jenny.miller@educationsuperhighway.org	80303
Todd Robertson	Hyperspective Studios, Inc.	todd@hyperspective.com	96813
Brian Dote	Tapiki LLC	brian@tapiki.com	96797
Daniel C. Smith, PhD		dancsmith@rocketmail.com	96782
Ian Kitajima	PICHTR	ian.kitajima@pichtr.org	96814



February 21, 2023

Committee on Higher Education and Technology
RE: HB 1408 Relating to Digital Equity/Wednesday

Dear Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawaii Literacy, I would like to take this opportunity to support HB1408 in establishing the Digital Equity Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects.

The pandemic highlighted the gulf between people who can leverage technology and those who can't. It underscored the reality that not everyone has access to devices and services or is equipped with the necessary digital literacy skills. In today's world, literacy skills and technology go hand and hand.

Research shows digital inequalities are strongly linked to broader social and economic disadvantages. Digital literacies and Internet connectivity have been called the "super social determinants of health" because they address all other social determinants of health. Applications for employment, housing, and other assistance programs, each of which influences an individual's health, are increasingly, and sometimes exclusively, accessible online. People with no, low, or limited digital skills are more than three times more likely to live on low incomes or have limited schooling and qualifications, to lack the confidence and motivation to learn new skills and apply them in their lives.

There is an additional barrier to digital inclusion for adults with no or low English language skills (1 in 6 adults in our state), given the growing need to access and navigate the internet in the English language. And, the disparity of access to technology and the opportunity to develop digital skills also affect children. 50% of children from low-income communities start first grade up to two years behind their peers. Without intervention, this gap progresses between second and sixth grade and accounts for upwards of 80% of the achievement difference. Your support of this bill would provide needed opportunities to quickly expand and support digital inclusion efforts that would directly benefit communities with the greatest needs. 21% of all eligible households in Hawaii are enrolled in ACP compared to 29% nationally. For these 142,479 ACP-eligible households not enrolled, digital equity is more than just access and connectivity. It is the difference between obtaining a quality education, seeing your doctor, and gaining employment and jobs.

The proposed state digital equity funding is a critical step in our march toward digital equity. The internet doesn't get you far if you don't also have access to the laptop, language-inclusive and culturally accessible training, and an understanding of how and why that connection can turn into a portal of possibilities. With this funding, there is a real opportunity to help digitally connect, train, and empower thousands of struggling adults and families with the internet access and digital literacy skills they need to survive and thrive in the 21st Century.

For the past 50 years, Hawaii Literacy has worked with communities disproportionately affected by high illiteracy and poverty and helped improve their reading, writing, school, and life skills, and build the foundation for a better life. We help connect people to resources they need -- whether books, a tutor, technology and digital literacy skills -- so they can empower themselves to succeed, ending generational cycles of poverty and under-education and helping our communities to thrive.

Access to digital literacy programs is more important than ever. We strongly urge you to support HB1408 and fund digital inclusion projects during this critical time. Digital equity in Hawaii will remain just a vision unless we devote the time, resources, and energy to helping those left out of the pipeline get online and connected. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jill Takasaki Canfield, Executive Director

Board of Directors

Doug Shimokawa, President Kara Kitazaki-Chun, Vice President
Aaron K. Masuoka, Co-Treasurer Jamie Asato, Co-Treasurer Jill Takasaki Canfield, Secretary
Jamie Cheng Lyssa Fujie Jason Fujita Brandon Kurisu Mitchell Ka'aiali'i Kevin Katsura Sean K. Knox Bryan Luke
Jason Masaki R. Scott Simon G.Todd Withy James A. Wong
Hawaii Literacy 245 N. Kukui Street, Suite 202 Honolulu, HI 96817
phone: (808) 537-6706 web: hawaii-literacy.org social: @HawaiiLiteracy

February 21, 2023

Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 22, 2023, 2:30 p.m.
Conference Rm. 308 and via Videoconference



Working together for Kapolei

RE: HB 1408 HD2 RELATING TO DIGITAL EQUITY

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the Committee:

My name is Kiran Polk, and I am the Executive Director of the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce. The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce is an advocate for businesses in the Kapolei region which includes Waipahu to Ka'ena Point. The Chamber works on behalf of its members and the entire business community to improve the regional and State economic climate and help Kapolei businesses thrive. We are a member-driven, member-supported organization representing the interests of all types of business: small, medium or large, for profit or non-profit businesses or sole proprietorship.

The Kapolei Chamber is also a member of the Broadband Hui.

The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce is in strong support of HB 1408 HD2, relating to Digital Equity which establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects.

This funding would support and adopt the goals set forth in the State's Digital Equity Declaration. The Digital Equity Grant Program will help to ensure digital literacy and equitable access to internet to help eliminate the "digital divide" and help our underserved communities including those in West O'ahu.

We also need to increase digital capacity in West O'ahu for our small businesses to spur on economic growth and bridge some of the gaps existing today including access and capacity issues with online learning, pursuit of employment opportunities, and access to essential services online.

The need for digital equity is apparent even in the City and County of Honolulu and is not only applicable to rural areas of our state. West O'ahu's growing population of almost 200,000 includes the Wai'anae Coast, 'Ewa, and Waipahu. In Kapolei and 'Ewa alone households are expected to exceed 56,000 by the year 2035 and over the next 30 years the population in Kapolei and 'Ewa will increase by 40 percent and housing by 52 percent. The Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population in East Honolulu is 3.4% and 39.7% in Wai'anae. The number of persons living in poverty in Wai'anae the is 24.4%.

The funding provided in this grant is needed now and will support community-based organizations and non-profits to do the work needing to be done to provide digital equity until federal funding becomes available.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony and comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Polk".

Kiran Polk
Executive Director

1001 Kamokila Boulevard, Campbell Building Suite 250, Kapolei, Hawaii 96707

HB-1408-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 12:57:43 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor

HB-1408-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 2:11:41 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

OPPOSE: Digital "Equity" Why should tax payers fund this? During COVID pandemic, when school sessions were on line, (not in person), children lost the ability to socialize with other children, let alone teachers. Said interaction helps a child develop to become an engaging adult.

HB-1408-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 10:00:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Otaguro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill will support the ongoing efforts to increase digital equity in our state. Please pass this bill.

HB-1408-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 2:24:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2023 2:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaala Souza	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am in full support of any government support for digital equity efforts in Hawaii. In the 1800s King Kamehameha III, *Kauikeaouli*, said "He aupuni palapala ko'u," intending that the Hawaii would be a place of literacy. He backed up the proclamation with support by creating incentives for teachers, constructing schools, paying for paper and other supplies, and generally creating a culture of learning the palapala and leading by example.

The problem of digital illiteracy and the divide it creates requires a similiarly supported effort from everyone in the state.

Digital Equity involves three main pieces:

1. Devices: People need to have access to computers, specifically in desktop and laptop form factors. Refurbised computers cost between \$70 and \$150 each

2. Broadband Internet: People need access to actual broadband speeds. this is an economic development issue.

3. Skills: People need skills to be able to leverage the devices and broadband access to work, live and connect. those at the lower level of skill (<1) need in person classes. Those with higher skillsets can utilize online resources to learn what they need to learn.

Our state, at a minimum, has 30% of it's workforce unable to pass a basic computer assessment. That's 200,000 residents NOT including kupuna - it's just the workforce.

Hawaii has an opportunity to once again be a leader in literacy -- this time it's digital.