

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

NADINE Y. ANDO
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

DEAN I HAZAMA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Wednesday, February 14, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 2359 H.D.1, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND
DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE**

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Randy Leong, and I am the Cable Television Administrator of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' Cable Television Division. The Department supports this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to identify and address remaining obstacles to digital equity in the State and to establish the digital equity grant program, to be implemented and administered by the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office under the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), to award grants for digital equity projects that will increase digital literacy and broadband and digital access for rural and socio-economically disadvantaged populations across the State.

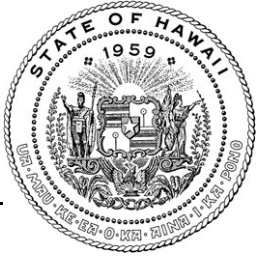
Digital equity is essential to enable all residents of our State to fully participate in today's economy and society. The Department recognizes the benefit of a state-level grant program focused on closing the digital divide for those most in need by funding

Testimony of DCCA
H.B. 2359 H.D. 1

projects to be conceived and implemented by experienced stakeholders to achieve universal access. These projects could help to bridge the State's digital equity gap and allow all residents to benefit from the services and opportunities afforded by digital access no matter where they live or their circumstances.

The Department thus strongly supports this bill but defers to DBEDT and the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office on the specific provisions of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
DIRECTOR

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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Friday, February 14, 2024
2:00PM

State Capitol, Conference Room #329

In consideration of
HB2359 HD1
RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **strongly supports** HB2359 HD1, an Administration bill, that establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

To run in parallel with the various broadband infrastructure projects across the State for the next several years, digital equity programs in communities are essential for the social and economic well-being of the residents in the State. Digital access and digital skills for remote work, school, and social services such as unemployment claims, telehealth, and other essential services are critically important particularly in the rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

This measure will enable the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with rural and underserved communities to identify and address barriers to digital equity and to establish a digital equity grant program so that individuals and communities in the State have the access and the ability to be full participants in the digital economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

February 14, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

House Bill 2359 HD1 – Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 2359 HD1 – Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office.

This bill would establish the digital equity grant program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

Digital equity provides persons with disabilities equal access to digital technology, including broadband. Broadband access for all should be affordable, especially for underserved communities to foster their economic development, increase job opportunities, enhance health care, and broaden educational opportunities. Digital equity will not only ensure that people with disabilities have access to broadband, but it will promote a better quality of life for them as well.

Thank you for considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Bill DeCosta
Ross Kagawa



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
Lyndon M. Yoshioka, Deputy County Clerk

Telephone: (808) 241-4188
Facsimile: (808) 241-6349
Email: cokcouncil@kauai.gov

Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

February 12, 2024

**TESTIMONY OF ADDISON BULOSAN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
HB 2359, HD 1, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND
DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Wednesday, February 14, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 329
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2359, HD 1, Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of HB 2359, HD 1, which would greatly affect the Kaua'i community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2359, HD 1. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ADDISON BULOSAN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:slr



Chamber of Commerce HAWAII

The Voice of Business

**Testimony to the House Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism
Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 2:00PM
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference**

RE: HB2359 HD1 Relating to the Hawaii Broadband Digital Equity Office

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **supports HB2359 HD1**, which establishes the Digital Equity Office and grant program to award and deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

Addressing digital equity through broadband access and digital literacy tools is one of the most important steps to modernizing Hawaii's economy and bringing all our industries into the 21st century. By having digital equity throughout the state, this will allow Hawaii to attract new industries and continue to diversify the economy. Given the economic importance of achieving both broadband and digital equity, the Chamber supports this bill.

This bill aims to increase digital equity throughout our state and provides assurances for all individuals and communities in the state to have the information capacity needed to participate in society and contribute to our economy. This is especially important in light of Hawaii's rapidly growing tech industry. There is a need for our state to have a highly skilled workforce ready to match the workforce demands provided by tech companies looking to invest in our state. With the passage of this bill, our current and future workforce can be equipped with the skills to fulfill these jobs and contribute to the state's success.

As members of the Broadband Hui, the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii supports broadband infrastructure development in rural communities, equitable digital devices and internet connectivity for students and families, increasing access to telehealth, low-cost internet options, and a more equitable digital future overall.

The Chamber is Hawaii's leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing about 2,000+ businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the "Voice of Business" in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state's economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Wednesday, February 14, 2024; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2359, HOUSE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, 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** House Bill No. 2359, House Draft 1, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live 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.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would:

- (1) Identify and address remaining obstacles to digital equity in all areas of the State; and
- (2) Establish the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants and create an environment in which all individuals and communities in the state have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in society, democracy, and the economy.

This bill would also take effect on July 1, 3000.

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 House Bill No. 2359, House Draft 1
Wednesday, February 14, 2024; 2:00 p.m.
Page 2

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.

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.

For these reasons, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

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.



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facebook.com/AARPHawaii

The State Legislature
House Committee On Consumer Protection and Commerce
Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Conference Room 329, 2:00 p.m.

TO: The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director, AARP Hawaii
RE: Support for HB 2359 HD 1 Relating to Hawaii Broadband and Digital

Aloha Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social impact 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. 2359 HD1** 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 2359, HD1.

Written Statement of

Jeannine Souki, Senior Manager – Government & Regulatory Affairs

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION &
COMMERCE**

February 14, 2023, 2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

SUPPORT FOR:

**H.B. 2359 HD1 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL
EQUITY OFFICE**

To: Chair Nakashima, Vice-Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee

Re: **Testimony providing support for HB 2359 HD1**

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit support for HB 2359 HD1 to establish a Digital Equity Grant Program within the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office. If established, this fund would endeavor to leverage the work of community and non-profit groups to provide digital literacy training for individuals to participate in the fast-growing digital world.

Having a high-speed fiber internet connection and services to address the digital equity needs of all households opens up a world of opportunity. Broadband is essential for business and government operations, delivering telemedicine, education, remote work, staying in touch with family and friends, and so much more. Fiber-optic cables carry 10,000 times more bandwidth than traditional copper cables, enabling fast upload speeds and a superior experience with services such as video calls and security cameras. Fiber technology is also more energy-efficient, more durable, and less susceptible to elements such as water and electromagnetic interference. Hawaiian Telcom is the only Hawai'i internet service provider that has invested more than \$1 billion over the last ten years to expand and support its fiber optic network and serve its customers.

In 2023, Hawaiian Telcom awarded \$140,000 to community organizations working to address digital equity and empower communities across the state. In addition, Hawaiian Telcom expanded its fiber-optics network to 65,000 new locations and is on track to build 60,000 new locations in 2024.

Hawaiian Telcom is also bridging digital divide as a participating service provider in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). ACP provides internet service discounts of up to \$30 per month for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for residents on Hawaiian Home Lands. Hawaiian Telcom continues to offer federal Lifeline discounts for internet or telephone services to qualified residents.

Since the FCC launched ACP on December 31, 2021, the depletion of \$14 billion Congress appropriated for this federal program has been swifter than originally anticipated. The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) recently ordered all participating service providers to take steps to wind down their programs because the ACP will run out of funding around April 2024. This wrinkle should give us all pause to consider that while the State will see a temporary infusion of approximately \$14 million toward digital equity services, there is no additional federal funding for continued operations or services beyond the initial investment. Ostensibly, it is in the State's interest to fully commit to investing its digital equity award to support the work of community and non-profit organizations to deliver digital literacy and access services to those in need.

Hawaiian Telcom appreciates the opportunity to testify and offer support for HB 2359 HD1.

February 13, 2024

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair



Working together for Kapolei

Friday February 14, 2024, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Rm. 329 and via Videoconference

RE: HB 2359 HD1 RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama 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 2359 HD1** that establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

This measure would provide the programming needed for future funding opportunities. These opportunities will 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 is 24.4%.

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

Respectfully,

Kiran Polk
Executive Director

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce Hearing

Date: February 14, 2024
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Where: State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Videoconference
RE: **SUPPORT of HB2359 HD1 - Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office**

Aloha mai e Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee,

As members of the Broadband Hui, the listed organizations and individuals **strongly support HB2359 HD1** which would establish a Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects in the State.

Over the past four years during and since COVID, 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.

Through the work of the Broadband Hui members, we have supported broadband infrastructure development in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, provided digital devices for students and families and digital literacy programs for kūpuna, 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.

This measure will enable the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with our communities to identify and plan fund projects to address barriers to digital equity. The digital equity grant program will be set up so there is a mechanism to deploy digital equity projects supported by HBDEO whether funded by the Federal government or other entities.

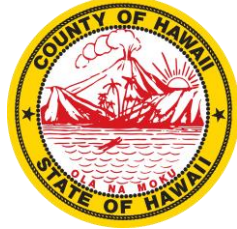
For these reasons, we kindly request you support **HB2359**.
Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

(Please see the organizations and names of individuals on the following pages.)

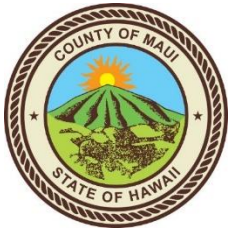


Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting SB3048

Logos of Supporting Organizations



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting SB3048



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting SB3048



MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
VOICE OF BUSINESS



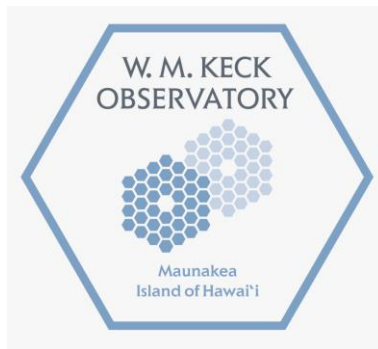
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maui economic
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



MAUI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD



Pa'a k a i
COMMUNICATIONS



'ōhi'a
technology
group



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting SB3048

Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
Lynn Otaguro	O`ahu County Democrats Digital Equity Committee	lmotaguro@yahoo.com	96821
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
Nicholas Winfrey	Maui United Way	nicholas@mauiunitedway.org	96708
David Sun-Miyashiro	HawaiiKidsCAN	david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org	96814
Alexis Ching	Ewalu Industries	alexis@ewaluindustries.org	96740
Deborah Bond-Upson	LearningBond	deborah@learningbond.org	96734
Ka`ala Souza	Digital Ready Hawaii	kaala@digitalreadyhawaii.org	96734
Jeanne Skog	Skog Rasmussen LLC	jskog@skograsmussen.com	96793
Joseph Passantino	Ke`elikolani Middle School	Joseph.passantino@k12.hi.us	96813
Kiran Polk	Kapolei Chamber of Commerce	kiranpolk@gmail.com	96707
Sean Taketa McLaughlin		seantaketa@gmail.com	96817
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 96789
Daniel C. Smith, PhD		dancsmith@rocketmail.com	96782
Crystal Yamasaki	Crystal Clear Communications	crystalclearcomms@gmail.com	96817
Jacqui Hoover	Hawaii Economic Development Board, Inc. Hawaii Leeward Planning Conference	jhoover@hiedb.org	96743
Daron Nishimoto	EO Solutions, LLC	Daron.nishimoto@e-osolutions.com	89119
Lisa Seikai Darcy	Share Your Mana	lisa@shareyourmana.org	96768
Alex Fielding	Privateer Space	af@privateer.com	96753
Michael K. Peacock	Hawaii Vet 2 Vet Inc.	mikepeacock@hawaiivet2vet.com	96813
Marc Sanders	Hana Business Council	marc@hanamaui.com	96713
Edward Sun	Sun Global Broadband	esun1@hawaiiantel.net	96822

Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting SB3048

Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
Rebecca J. `I. Soon	Solutions Pacific	rebecca@sphawaii.com	96817
Doug Simons	Institute for Astronomy, Univ. of Hawaii	dsimons@hawaii.edu	96720
Christine Matsuda	Pa`akai Communications	christine@paakaicomunications.com	96817
Jolie A. Jenkins	County of Maui, Office of the Mayor	Jolie.Jenkins@co.maui.hi.us	96793
Mark Iha	Tangent Inc.	mark@tangent-inc.com	96813
Connie Mitchell	Institute for Human Services	conniem@ihshawaii.org	96817
Ilima Ho-Lastimoso	Ke Kula Nui O Waimānalo	ilima888@gmail.com	96795
Lori Okuda		wcpgirl@gmail.com	96782
Jerry Isdale	Maui Institute of Art and Technology LLC	jerry@mioat.com	96708
Jenifer Sunrise Winter		jwinter@hawaii.edu	96821
Lei Fountain	The Arc in Hawaii	Leif@thearcinhawaii.org	96782
Micah Chao		sungyanc@hawaii.edu	96814
Curtis Kropar	Hawaiian Hope Org	Curtis@hawaiianhope.org	96817
John Desfor,	Hawai'i State Rural Health Association	johnd6@hawaii.edu	96737
Carson Block	Carson Block Consulting	librarylandtech@gmail.com	
Rich Matsuda	W. M. Keck Observatory	rmatsuda@keck.hawaii.edu	96743
Michele Mitsumori,	IT Reuse HI	itreusehi@gmail.com	96720
Debbie Cabebe	Maui Economic Opportunity	debbie.cabebe@meoinc.org	96793
Tony Velasco	City and County of Honolulu IT	tvelasco@honolulu.gov	96813
Pamela Tumpap	Maui Chamber of Business	pamela@mauichamber.com	96793
Kelly Withy, MD, PhD		withy@hawaii.edu	96734
Marc Sanders	Hana Business Council	marc@hanamaui.com	96713
Herb Lee, Jr.	Pacific America Foundation	herblee@thepaf.org	96734
Paola Vidulich	Hawai`i's Volcano Circus	paola@hawaiisvolcanocircus.org	96778
Alex Sene, Jr.		alex.sene.jr@gmail.com	96799
Nainoa Mau	Friends of the Library of Hawai'i	nainoa@flhhawaii.org	97817

Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting SB3048

Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
Leslie Wilkins	Maui Economic Development Board, Inc.	leslie@medb.org	96753
Nam Vu	Hub Coworking Hawaii	nam@hubcoworkinghi.com	96814
Jaclyn Kaina	Kau`i Economic Development Board	jkaina@kedb.com	96766
Jean-Gabriel Cuby	Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope	cuby@cfht.hawaii.edu	96743
Wendy Awai-Dakroub	Ohia Technology Group LLC	wendy@ohiatechnology.com	96822
Nicole Brodie	Purple Mai`a	nicole@purplemaia.org	96701



Charter Communications
Testimony of Rebecca Lieberman, Director of Government Affairs

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Hawaii State Capitol
Wednesday, February 14, 2024

**COMMENTS ON H.B. 2359, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY
OFFICE**

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **comments and proposed amendments on H.B. 2359, H.D. 1**, a bill that would establish the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects.

As the largest broadband provider in the state, Charter supports efforts to promote digital equity and broadband access and we support the intent of this bill. A key aspect of reducing the digital divide is by investing in broadband infrastructure, digital navigators and literacy tools, affordability programs, and access to hardware.

Charter believes that every Hawaii resident should have reliable access to the Internet. We will continue to help bring the benefits of broadband and access to the internet to those who need it most. Hawaii is slated to receive over \$200 million in federal grants for broadband infrastructure in the immediate future (via the Coronavirus Capital Project Fund and Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program), in addition to private investments already being made by the industry. The

Digital Equity Grant Program should prioritize funding projects related to broadband adoption and affordability programs, which are separately supported by federal funding.

Charter requests amending the bill to better define the scope of approved projects and exclude broadband infrastructure projects from the program. This will ensure that broadband adoption efforts and broadband availability efforts are each given the independent attention needed to properly address these very different issues. Infrastructure availability and digital equity are both important, but they are different problems requiring different, independent solutions. Specifically, we suggest the following amendments:

- Page 3, Line 6, insert the following new language:

“Broadband infrastructure” means the same as “broadband infrastructure” defined in §206R-1 .

- Page 6, Line 3 – Page 6, Line 10 shall be amended to read as follows:

-3 Eligible projects. The office may award grants for eligible projects; provided that on the date the application is submitted, the project areas to be served by the project shall include covered populations. The eligible projects may include projects that further develop and promote digital literacy, broadband affordability, digital navigators, access to digital devices, wireless community networks, and other innovative digital inclusion projects. Projects that include the deployment of broadband infrastructure are ineligible.

In 2021 and 2022, Charter extended its network to reach an additional 27,000 homes and small businesses in Hawaii, investing more than \$200 million across the state. Charter is a member of

DBEDT's weekly Broadband Hui to assist in strategic broadband planning and closing the digital divide. Additionally, Charter participated in the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB) and is now participating in the \$14.2 billion federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The EBB, and now the ACP, has helped connect over 59,000 eligible households in Hawaii with high-speed broadband during. Broadband internet access is more important than ever and the ACP offers a tremendous opportunity to help low-income families stay connected, providing eligible households a discount of up to \$30 per month toward broadband service and up to \$75 per month for households on the Hawaiian Home Lands.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide proposed amendments to H.B. 2359, H.D. 1.



MAUI
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
VOICE OF BUSINESS

LATE

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 329
Wednesday, February 14, 2024 AT 2:00 P.M.**

To The Honorable Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

SUPPORT HB2359 RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS HB2359.**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce has participated in the Broadband Hui, when available and greatly appreciates the work they are doing. The Chamber notes that over the past four years during and since COVID, the members of the Broadband Hui have collaborated, each within our own ability, to increase Hawai'i's digital capacity, thereby supporting the continuity of social connections, education, employment, and access to other essential services.

Through the work of the Broadband Hui, we have supported broadband infrastructure development in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, provided digital devices for students and families and digital literacy programs for kupuna, 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.

This measure will enable the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with our communities to identify and address barriers to digital equity. The digital equity grant program will be set up so there is a mechanism to deploy digital equity projects within HBDEO.

For these reasons, we **SUPPORT HB2359.**

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.