

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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**WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY  
ONLY**

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB913  
RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.**

REP. GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Hearing Date: February 3, 2021

Room Number: N/A

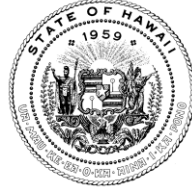
1 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports the establishment of the  
2 Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office within the Department of Business, Economic  
3 Development, and Tourism.

4 Telehealth has been a strategic priority for the Department of Health for the past several years,  
5 and its relevance has only become more pronounced with the pandemic stay-at-home orders.  
6 Rural residents in particular, but also those in low socio-economic urban areas and the elderly,  
7 have no means to access the internet. A coordinated state strategy to identify and solve inequity  
8 will enhance all sectors, not just health.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

10 **Offered Amendments:** N/A.

11



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN  
LT. GOVERNOR

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

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CATHERINE P. AWAKUNI COLÓN  
DIRECTOR

JO ANN M. UCHIDA TAKEUCHI  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology  
Wednesday, February 3, 2021  
2:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:  
H.B. 913, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND  
AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

Chair Takayama 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 administration bill.

The purpose of this bill is to establish the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

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 digital equity.

The Department thus supports the approach taken by this measure to create a broadband office authorized to develop the State's broadband strategy and policies and focused on: coordinating efforts among public and private broadband stakeholders; facilitating and securing funding and investment for broadband infrastructure, services, and programs; and promoting other initiatives such as technology-driven diversification of our economy and digital equity for all residents. The Department also recognizes the strong correlation between broadband access and economic development and the efforts that the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism has already initiated to direct the State's broadband and digital equity strategy and to bring together public and private stakeholders to collaborate on shaping that strategy and public-private efforts to effect digital equity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



## DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

MIKE MCCARTNEY  
DIRECTOR

CHUNG I. CHANG  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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Statement of  
**MIKE MCCARTNEY**  
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY**

Wednesday, February 3, 2021  
2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of  
**HB913**  
**RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.**

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair DeCoite and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** HB913 that establishes the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office within DBEDT.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted the need for broadband infrastructure and digital equity across all of Hawaii's residents especially those in rural communities and socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances.

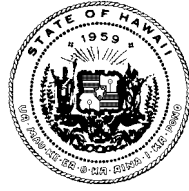
It is important that we build the foundation for Hawaii to thrive in the digital economy and to eliminate digital inequity, that is; to provide affordable, high quality broadband for all, to ensure everyone is digitally literate, and to enable all Hawaii residents to seamlessly connect to the digital resources needed to be successful in our modern society.

The Broadband and Digital Equity Office offers an important point of coordination and facilitation across state agencies, Federal funding sources, community partners and the private sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 2, 2021

TO: The Honorable Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education and Technology

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 913 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 3, 2021, 2:00 p.m.  
Via videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration measure.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to establish the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

Over the past ten months, DHS has collaborated with the Broadband Hui, a group of public and private sector entities, to increase Hawaii's digital capacity that will support the continuity of social connections, education, employment, and access to other essential services throughout the pandemic and beyond. 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<sup>1</sup> to set a vision and goals for a more equitable digital future.

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<sup>1</sup> See, <https://www.broadbandhui.org/>

Looking to that future, much work remains ahead. It will take an ongoing commitment and collaboration from public and private partners to deliver on the goals set forth to address Hawaii's digital inequities and to leverage the opportunities enabled by improved digital access. The creation of a dedicated state office to promote and facilitate these collective efforts will help ensure implementation of the vision and goals articulated in the Digital Equity Declaration are realized.

We recognize this measure may require a financial investment at a time the State is facing a budget deficit. There are federal and other resources available, and a dedicated office is a worthwhile investment to prioritize and address digital inequity through broadband access, digital literacy, and digitally-enabled societal systems and is a great opportunity to drive economic and social recovery, diversification, and resilience.

The purpose of this bill aligns with `Ohana Nui, the Department's integrated and multi-generational service delivery approach to reduce the incidence of intergenerational poverty, dependence on public benefits, and improve each individual's and family's social and economic well-being and potential.

DHS defers to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, regarding administrative issues and the necessary appropriation, if any

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education & Technology  
Wednesday, February 3, 2021; 2:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309  
Via Videoconference**

**RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 0913, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.**

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair DeCoite, 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. 0913, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would establish the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, to aggressively increase broadband affordability, penetration, and competitive availability in the State.

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.

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.



**Testimony on House Bill No. 0913**

**Wednesday, February 3, 2021; 2:00 p.m.**

**Page 2**

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 a statute 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](mailto:eabe@hawaiiipca.net).

February 3, 2021

Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
Representative Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology  
Conference Room 309  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Testimony in support of HB913, Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair DeCoite, and Committee Members:

My name is Christine Sakuda and I serve as the executive director of Transform Hawai'i Government (THG), a coalition of organizations and individuals who advocate for an accessible, accountable and responsive state government that leverages technology to help citizens, communities, and businesses throughout Hawai'i to thrive. We provide a consistent and persistent voice to keep modernization a top priority of state government.

THG strongly supports House Bill 913, Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office, which establishes the office within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

As the co-host of the Broadband Hui, a growing group of public and private stakeholders who have committed to support broadband infrastructure and digital equity throughout the state, THG believes that broadband is a key investment in Hawai'i's future. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it abundantly clear that inequities exist in residents' access to broadband and digital devices. This impacts education and health outcomes along with economic opportunity for many, particularly for some of our most low-income and/or rural community members.

While we understand and share the concern around the state's unprecedented budget shortfall, we believe that now is the time to commit resources to develop a long-term vision, goals, and objectives to fast forward the economic and social recovery in a way that creates new opportunities well beyond the challenges we face today. Just some of the potential outcomes of this proposed office would be new educational opportunities for our keiki, creating sustainable job industries and training Hawai'i's workforce to fill those jobs, and increased access to healthcare through the growing field of telehealth.

We urge you to pass House Bill 913 and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support.

Respectfully submitted,



Christine Sakuda  
Executive Director  
Transform Hawai'i Government  
email: [csakuda@TransformHawaiiGov.org](mailto:csakuda@TransformHawaiiGov.org) | phone: (808) 321-2811



## House Committee on Higher Education and Technology

Date: February 3, 2021

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Via Videoconference

RE: **HB 913, Relating to the Hawai‘i Broadband and Digital Equity Office**

Aloha mai e Chair Takayama, Vice Chair DeCoite, and members of the Committee.

The listed organizations and individuals **SUPPORT HB 913**, which establishes the Hawai‘i Broadband and Digital Equity Office within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism.

Over the past ten months, 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.

Looking to that future, much work remains ahead. It will take an ongoing commitment and collaboration from public and private partners to deliver on the goals set forth to address Hawai‘i’s digital inequities and to leverage the opportunities enabled by improved digital access. The creation of a dedicated state office to promote and facilitate these collective efforts will help ensure the progress of the Broadband Hui continues and that the vision and goals articulated in the Digital Equity Declaration are realized.

We recognize this measure may require a financial investment at a time the State is facing a budget deficit. We believe, however, that addressing digital inequity through broadband access, digital literacy, and digitally-enabled societal systems is one of our greatest opportunities for economic and social recovery, diversification, and resilience.

For these reasons, we kindly request you **PASS HB 913**. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

(Please see names on the following two pages.)

	Name	Organization	Email Address	Zip
1	David Miyashiro	HawaiiKidsCAN	david.miyashiro@hawaiikids.org	96734
2	Jacqui Hoover	Hawaii Island Economic Development Board / Hawaii Leeward Planning	jhoover@hiedb.org	96743
3	Eugene Chang		eugene.chang@ieee.org	96817
4	Lynn Otaguro		lmotaguro@yahoo.com	96821
5	Rock Your Cause	Rock Your Cause	rise@rockyourcause.org	96826
6	Jenifer Sunrise Winter		jswinter@hawaii.edu	96821
7	Mayrose Munar	Kaunalewa	mayrose@kaunalewa.org	96752
8	Keoni Williams	O'ahu County Democrats Digital Equity Committee	williamskeoni@gmail.com	96822
9	Brad Kaleo Bennett	Auamo Collaborative	kaleobennett@gmail.com	96720
10	Dennis Teranishi		dennis.teranishi@pichtr.org	96816
11	Mary Therese Perez Hattori		maryhattori@gmail.com	96821
12	Deborah Bond-Upson	Learning Bond	deborah@learningbond.org	96734
13	Nathan Kam		nathangkam@gmail.com	96782
14	Linda Puppolo	Maui County Workforce Development Board	lpmindeze@gmail.com	96784
15	Ian Kitajima	Oceanit	ikitajima@oceanit.com	96797
16	Curtis Kropar	Hawaiian Hope Org	Curtis@HawaiianHope.org	96817
17	Neal Miyake		neosponge@gmail.com	96818
18	Katie Hendrickson	Code.org	katie@code.org	45701
19	Wayne Buente		wbuente@hawaii.edu	96815
20	Susan Tai		susantaikaneko@gmail.com	96814
21	Mark Iha	Tangent Systems	mark@tangent.systems	96813
22	Sultan White	Office of Economic Revitalization	sultan.white@honolulu.gov	96826
23	Lorna Takehara Strand		lorna.strand@gmail.com	96701
24	Stacey Aldrich	Hawaii State Public Library System	stacey.aldrich@librarieshawaii.org	96825
25	Tony Velasco (City and County of Honolulu/DIT)		tvelasco@honolulu.gov	96813
26	Kamehameha Schools	Kamehameha Schools	bocampbe@ksbe.edu	96813
27	Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD	John A Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai'i at Manoa	lbuencon@hawaii.edu	96813
28	Jeanne Skog	Economic Development Alliance of Hawai'i	jskog2435@gmail.com	96813
29	Tharon LeBlanc	Michaels Management	tleblanc@tmo.com	96819
30	Jeanne Skog		jskog2435@gmail.com	96708
31	Daniel C. Smith		smithdan@hawaii.edu	96782
32	Crystal Yamasaki	Crystal Clear Communications	crystalclearcomms@gmail.com	96817

33	Liza Rodewald	Instant Teams	<a href="mailto:liza@instantteams.com">liza@instantteams.com</a>	96706
34	Dr. Philip J. Bossert	Hawaii Association of Independent Schools	<a href="mailto:pbossert@hais.us">pbossert@hais.us</a>	96817
35	Jared Gruett	Hawaii Dialogix Telecom, LLC	<a href="mailto:jgruett@hawaiidt.com">jgruett@hawaiidt.com</a>	96819

LATE

**HB-913**

Submitted on: 2/2/2021 4:51:30 PM

Testimony for HET on 2/3/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
MarshaRose Joyner	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Marsha Rose Joyner

O`ahu County Democrats Digital Equity Committee.

Marshajoyner1938@gmail.com

House Committee on Higher Education and Technology

Date: February 3, 2021

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Via Videoconference RE: HB 913,

Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair DeCoite,

Members of the Committee

**SUPPORT HB 913 with amendments**, which establishes the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office.

As we visit most of Hawaii, we have come to believe that everyone is connected.

No matter where we or how live, the 21st century requires that you need access to today's method of communications. However *today thousands of Hawaii residents lack the broadband access which they need to meaningfully participate in the digital age.*

*There are gaps in our population which most people do not see. The digital isolation crisis among seniors. Stressing the importance of digital health tools and social connectedness amid the coronavirus pandemic, The seniors who live alone or do not have grandchildren to assist them using the computer to order food for takeout or*

*connect with telehealth for health-related services, especially in rural long distances. As we know the future belongs to the connected. There are computers for the blind. Cellphones for the hard of hearing.*

*I believe the future belongs to the connected. No matter who you are or where you live in Hawaii, you need access to modern communications to have a fair shot at 21st century success. But today millions of Hawaii residents lack the broadband access that they need to meaningfully participate in the digital age. The report – [Aging Connected: Exposing the Hidden Connectivity Crisis for Older Adults](#) – commissioned new research by two leading academics on the digital technology gap: John Horrigan from The Technology Policy Institute and Erin York Cornwell from Cornell University.*

Should the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office, create a workforce with necessary skills for training seniors and disable people so they will become active members of the community.

America's older population is facing a public health crisis as the digital divide restricts their ability to stay healthy, meaningfully engaged, and financially secure amid the pandemic and beyond," said Thomas Kamber, executive director of Older Adults Technology Services. "This new research shows that America is failing to close the digital gap for older adults, who more than ever need the tools to be connected and engaged online. Through our nationwide Aging Connected initiative, OATS looks forward to working with nonprofit organizations, corporate partners, and government policymakers to close the technology gap and expand affordable, quality broadband opportunities for America's seniors."

**HB-913**

Submitted on: 2/1/2021 11:13:16 AM

Testimony for HET on 2/3/2021 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Lynn Otaguro	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

February 1, 2021

**Testimony in support of HB 913, Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office**

Honorable Chair Takayama and members of the Committee:

Over the past year, I have seen the potential, the importance, and the need for broadband and digital equity in our state. For this reason, I support HB 913, and the establishment of the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office within the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT).

When COVID-19 shut down our schools, I was teaching first grade. My school surveyed our families and we learned that a number needed computers and internet access. While our school gathered resources to make sure that those most in need of a chromebook received one, my grade level got together and planned lessons to post on YouTube, with the idea that if they lacked a computer, our students would likely be able to access the lessons on smart phones. Over that last quarter, we learned how to meet online with our students. However, even when chromebooks were provided to those in need, it was still difficult for some students to join sessions, as we struggled to show their families how to use the technology. Over time, it also became apparent that families who had not indicated a need earlier, would have benefitted from a chromebook as different family members required a computer at the same time.

In July, 2020, I retired. Since then, I learned to use online resources to study contact tracing, help a campaign in North Carolina, testify at Board of Education and City Council meetings, text and call people in other states to encourage them to vote, and gather with family. I met with people from other parts of the country and made friends from other islands. I watched my husband help his father meet with a doctor online and obtain a COVID-19 vaccination appointment.

As this pandemic has shown, broadband access has become a necessity, essential to obtain many basic services and to participate in community life. Because my family and I are fortunate enough to have working computers and adequate internet, we have been able to continue to work, learn, get medical help, and participate and engage with our



community. But this is not true for others in our state, like some of my students and their families, and it must be fixed.

As a member of the Digital Equity Committee of the Oahu County Democrats, I have attended Broadband Hui meetings hosted by Burt Lum of DBEDT and read the Hui's Digital Equity Declaration, <https://www.broadbandhui.org/>, that provides a vision for addressing the digital needs in our communities. I have been inspired by the work being done to provide digital equity and broadband access across our state.

It is essential that the work for digital equity continues and grows, and for that, we will need the support that will come with the establishment of a Broadband and Digital Equity Office. Please support this effort and this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynn Otaguro

O'ahu County Democrats

Digital Equity Committee

Oahu, Hawaii