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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
Thursday, March 24, 2022
10:00 AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
HCR177/ HR177, REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO
EXPLORE, THROUGH ITS DOCKET PROCESS, THE FEASIBILITY OF
RELOCATING ABOVE-GROUND ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES AND
DISTRIBUTION LINES UNDERGROUND IN HIGH-RISK AREAS ON THE ISLAND OF
MAUI**

Chair Lowen and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dean Nishina, and I am the Executive Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Division of Consumer Advocacy. The Department offers comments on this resolution.

The purpose of this resolution is to request the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to explore, through its docket process, the feasibility of relocating above-ground electric transmission lines and distribution lines underground in high-risk areas on the island of Maui.

The Department acknowledges the concerns related to the placement of utility infrastructure and potential impacts on communities and the environment. The Department offers that the Commission is already looking at a variety of issues affecting, and affected by, high-voltage transmission lines, including those on the island

of Maui, in its ongoing Integrated Grid Planning (IGP) proceedings (Docket No. 2018-0165). The Department respectfully suggests that the separate proceedings described in this resolution may not be necessary and requests that the Commission be granted some flexibility in how to most efficiently address underlying issues related to transmission and distribution infrastructure on Maui island. A study of all high-risk areas could require a reallocation of resources from other ongoing proceedings. In addition, to address possible sea level rise concerns, the analysis would most likely require a much broader analysis since placing overhead infrastructure in underground conduits anticipated to be under water may not be the most cost-effective nor reliable plan. Thus, If undergrounding or relocating any high-voltage transmission lines on the island of Maui – because of the factors mentioned in the resolution, but also in light of other factors already being considered in the IGP proceedings – is optimal, then the Department believes that the current planning processes should bear that out.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution.

TESTIMONY OF
JAMES P. GRIFFIN, Ph.D.
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
STATE OF HAWAII

TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

March 24, 2022
10:00 a.m.

Chair Lowen and Members of the Committee:

MEASURE: H.C.R. No. 177 / H.R. 177

TITLE: REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO EXPLORE, THROUGH ITS DOCKET PROCESS, THE FEASIBILITY OF RELOCATING ABOVE-GROUND ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES AND DISTRIBUTION LINES UNDERGROUND IN HIGH-RISK AREAS ON THE ISLAND OF MAUI.

POSITION:

The Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) offers the following comments for consideration.

COMMENTS:

The Commission supports the intent of these resolutions to explore the feasibility of relocating above-ground electric transmission lines and distribution lines underground in high-risk areas on the island of Maui.

The Commission notes that issues such as those discussed in this measure are considered in ongoing Commission proceedings, such as the Integrated Grid Planning docket (Docket No. 2018-0165). Should these resolutions be adopted, the Commission requests that the deadline for the report be amended to twenty days prior to the Regular Session of 2024. This will ensure that sufficient time is provided to complete a study of the items listed in these resolutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE STATE OF HAWAII

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

SCOTT J. GLENN
CHIEF ENERGY OFFICER

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Testimony of
SCOTT J. GLENN, Chief Energy Officer

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Thursday, March 24, 2022

Time 10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

COMMENTS
HCR 177 / HR 177

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO EXPLORE, THROUGH ITS DOCKET PROCESS, THE FEASIBILITY OF RELOCATING ABOVE-GROUND ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES AND DISTRIBUTION LINES UNDERGROUND IN HIGH-RISK AREAS ON THE ISLAND OF MAUI.

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers comments on HCR 177, requesting the public utilities commission to explore, through its docket process, the feasibility of relocating above-ground electric transmission lines and distribution lines underground in high-risk areas on the island of Maui.

The HSEO is guided by its mission to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean transportation to help achieve a resilient clean energy economy. As part of this responsibility the HSEO provides analysis and planning to actively develop and inform relevant policies with the legislature, public utilities commission, state agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

The HSEO also has responsibilities for resiliency and energy security in both the planning and response functions and is ready to support the Public Utilities Commission in studying the feasibility of relocating above-ground electric transmission lines and distribution lines underground in high-risk areas on the island of Maui.

The HSEO defers to the relevant agencies regarding the administrative and fiscal impacts of this resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Hawaiian
Electric**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

HCR 177 / HR177

**REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO EXPLORE, THROUGH ITS
DOCKET PROCESS, THE FEASIBILITY OF RELOCATING ABOVE-GROUND
ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES AND DISTRIBUTION LINES UNDERGROUND IN
HIGH-RISK AREAS ON THE ISLAND OF MAUI.**

Thursday, March 24, 2022
10:00 A.M., Agenda Item # 6
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

Rouen Liu
Permits Engineer, Transmission and Distribution Engineering
Hawaiian Electric Company

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rouen Liu and I am testifying on behalf of Hawaiian Electric Company. Hawaiian Electric supports the intent of HCR 177/HR 177, which is aimed at assessing solutions to improve the resilience of electric infrastructure on Maui. However, we oppose this specific resolution as it mirrors work that is already being done by Hawaiian Electric.

Hawaiian Electric is currently drafting an application to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for our Climate Adaptation Transmission and Distribution (T&D) Resilience Program, which is a multi-year program on Oahu, Maui County, and Hawaii Island consisting of high-impact initiatives to enhance transmission and distribution line system resilience. Some of the major initiatives in the program include hardening of critical transmission and distribution overhead line infrastructure, targeted undergrounding of lines, wildfire prevention & mitigation investments, and vegetation management. The solutions proposed were formed by industry best practices, lessons

learned from other utilities, as well as input from the Resilience Working Group (formed under on-going PUC Docket No. 2018-0165), whose members represent a broad range of state and national agencies, commercial and industrial customers, and non-profit interest groups. Depending on the specific risk and circumstance, undergrounding of transmission and distribution lines is often not the most cost-effective solution to address resilience risks. A portfolio approach to risk prevention and mitigation, such as the approach proposed in Hawaiian Electric's forthcoming application, can provide the best options to improve resilience.

We urge the Committee to allow Hawaiian Electric to proceed with developing its Climate Adaptation T&D Resilience Program to address the resilience concerns raised in this resolution and ask that the measure be deferred.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.