

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2076 SD2
RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE.**

Rep. Gregg Takayama, Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Hearing Date: March 16, 2022

Room Number: Videoconference/309

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** N/A.
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) strongly supports the appropriation
- 3 of resources to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office. A robust broadband
- 4 infrastructure is vital to promote telehealth as a means to support healthcare access. Digital
- 5 infrastructure buildout should be prioritized based on core needs such as healthcare and
- 6 education, rather than entertainment or leisure.
- 7 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR
MIKE MCCARTNEY
DIRECTOR
CHUNG I. CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804
Web site: dbedt.hawaii.gov

Telephone: (808) 586-2355
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Statement of
MIKE MCCARTNEY
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of

SB2076, SD2

RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE.

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Clark and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **supports SB2076, SD2** that defines broadband equity and clarifies the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office's duties to promote and support digital equity and broadband deployment.

Over the course of the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted the need for broadband infrastructure and digital equity for all of Hawai'i's residents and community stakeholders. The Broadband Hui (comprised of various community stakeholders) continues to work to close the digital divide in Hawai'i. In addition, the federal government identified the need to fund broadband infrastructure and digital equity programs across the country.

With this once in a generation opportunity, it is important that we address broadband access, affordability, adoption and literacy, and build robust and resilient broadband infrastructure for Hawai'i to achieve digital equity and thrive in the digital economy. The Broadband & Digital Equity Office will continue to provide the focus, coordination and facilitation of programs that enable all Hawai'i residents to seamlessly connect to the digital tools needed to be successful in our modern society.

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.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**

P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

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 HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2076, S.D. 2

**March 16, 2022
2:00 p.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill, which adds a new definition of “broadband equity” to Section 206S-1, HRS; amends the definition of “digital equity” to include achieving broadband equity; clarifies that the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) duties include coordination of federal and State broadband and digital equity grant programs; authorizes the HBDEO to contract for consulting services for professional and technical assistance services; appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds; and establishes an unspecified number of full-time equivalent positions in the HBDEO.

B&F respectfully suggests that this bill is premature. The federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment and State Digital Equity Planning and Capacity Grant programs are still being developed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce, which has not yet issued firm guidance to states.

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 the opportunity to provide written comments.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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

March 16, 2022

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Senate Bill 2076, Senate Draft 2 – Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 2076, Senate Draft 2 Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure.

Broadband access provides persons with disabilities access to programs and services. Please ensure that this bill will protect the public, including people with disabilities, from unreasonable or increased costs.

Broadband access for all should be affordable, especially for underserved communities to foster their economic development, increase of 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 the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
March 16, 2022

The Honorable Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
The Thirty-First Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Takayama and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SB2076 SD2 Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities strongly **SUPPORTS SB2076 SD2**, which defines broadband equity. Clarifies the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office's duties to promote and support digital equity and broadband deployment. Appropriates funds to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office for five FTE position.

For the past two years, COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that there is a digital divide which separates those who can readily access computers and the internet from those who cannot. This gap exists for many different reasons-from socioeconomics to broadband availability-yet even when infrastructure and connectivity issues are resolved, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) will still face obstacles when it comes to utilizing the web due to a digital accessibility chasm between the abled and disabled.

The Council has been a member of the Broadband Hui who have been very supportive of addressing the needs of individuals with Intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to get connected. We will need to continue a coordinated effort in order to assure individuals with disabilities are able to stay connected by receiving the digital tools they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of SB2076 SD2**.

Sincerely,

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

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



**Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
Wednesday, March 16, 2022; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 2076, SENATE DRAFT 2, RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE.

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Clark, 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** Senate Bill No. 2076, Senate Draft 2, RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE.

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.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would clarify the statutory responsibilities of the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office (Office). More specifically, this bill would:

- (1) Define "Broadband equity"; and
- (2) Provide that the Office coordinate federal and state grant programs, including those pertaining to digital equity;
- (3) Allow the Office to procure professional services; and
- (4) Appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2022-2023 for an unspecified number of full-time equivalent administrative positions.

This bill will take effect on July 1, 2020.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 2076, Senate Draft 2
Wednesday, March 16, 2022; 2:00 p.m.
Page 2

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.

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.

To this end, we note that the Administration did not include as part of its supplemental budget request the positions and resources needed for this Office to effectively carry out the duties established under Chapter 206S, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

We also note that Hawaii's Congressional Delegation worked diligently to make billions of dollars available for the State of Hawaii to develop broadband infrastructure. It is our understanding that the Governor has assigned the responsibility of expending these funds to the University of Hawaii. Are the statutory responsibilities of the University of Hawaii too narrow to ensure that these federal funds will be expended to address the needs of rural communities?

This Legislature established the public policy that the strategic decisions on the development of broadband should be assigned to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT). Yet, to carry out this function, only a single person is assigned to administer this very important responsibility?

Furthermore, it is our understanding that the availability of the federal funds is brief. Each year that is spent trying to figure out the agency that will manage these funds, the less time these funds can be used. A "once in a lifetime opportunity" will be lost.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 2076, Senate Draft 2
Wednesday, March 16, 2022; 2:00 p.m.
Page 3

For this reason, the HPCA wholeheartedly supports this bill and urges this Committee to include the resources the Office needs to perform these vital duties.

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.

Statement Before The
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

2:00 PM

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

in consideration of

SB 2076, SD2**RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE.**

Chair TAKAYAMA, Vice Chair CLARK, and Members of the House Higher Education & Technology Committee

Common Cause Hawaii supports SB 2076, SD2, which (1) defines broadband equity, (2) clarifies the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office's duties to promote and support digital equity and broadband deployment, and (3) appropriates funds to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office for five FTE positions.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to reforming government and strengthening democracy - one that works for everyone and not just the special interests.

As technology advances, many of our basic democracy values depend on robust connectivity. Broadband enhances civic engagement, participation in the democratic process, and a responsive government. Yet too many in Hawaii lack access to affordable, high-speed broadband and continue to face significant barriers to get online.

Affordability remains the most significant barrier to broadband adoption while those on the wrong side of the digital divide are disproportionately low-income, people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, and other marginalized communities. Without broadband, these communities live in a democracy where their voices go unheard, and their needs are unmet.

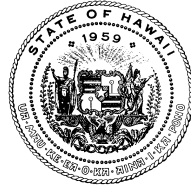
Therefore, Common Cause Hawaii supports SB 2076, SD2, which makes clear that the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office's focus is on broadband equity and "affordable, high-speed, and reliable broadband" (at page 1, lines 5-7) for all residents. Broadband equity is necessary for the good of our representative democracy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2076, SD2. If you have any questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378, Room 256
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

**WRITTEN
TESTIMONY
ONLY**

STATE COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
in SUPPORT of S.B. 2076 S.D. 2
RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE

Wednesday, March 16, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Clark, and Members of the House Higher Education and Technology Committee:

CHAIRPERSON
Richard I. Ries Psy.D., M.S.Ed.

1st VICE CHAIRPERSON
Tara Reed, BSW

2nd VICE CHAIRPERSON
Katherine Aumer, Ph.D.

SECRETARY
Eileen Lau-James, DVM

MEMBERS:

Antonino Beninato

Charlene "Naomi" Crozier

Jon Fujii

Heidi Ilyavi

Christopher Knightsbridge,
MAIR, MACL

Beatrice "Kau'i" Martinez

Kathleen Rhoads Merriam, LCSW,
CSAC

Jennifer Renfro

In alignment with §334-10, HRS, the State Council on Mental Health (SCMH) is a 21-member Council responsible for advising, reviewing and monitoring the provision of mental health services statewide. SCMH members from diverse backgrounds serve as volunteers, collectively representing mental health service recipients, students and youth, parents and family members, providers, and state agencies including the Hawaii Department of Health, Department of Human Services, and the Judiciary.

The majority of SCMH members **SUPPORT** S.B. 2076 S.D. 2 which is intended to help increase digital equity across the State.

Solid broadband infrastructure and digital equity will help increase access to mental health services to a variety of individuals with mental health and co-occurring substance abuse needs.

The mission of the SCMH is to advocate for a Hawaii where all persons affected by mental illness can access treatment and support necessary to live a full life in the community of their choice.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you want to contact us in the future, please e-mail DOH.SCMHChairperson@doh.hawaii.gov.

EX-OFFICIO:

Marian Tsuji,
Deputy Director, Behavioral
Health Administration



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 309
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022 AT 2:00 P.M.

To The Honorable Gregg Takayama,, Chair
The Honorable Linda Clark, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Higher Education & Technology

SUPPORT SB2076 SD2 RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Maui Chamber of Commerce is writing in **support of SB2076 SD2** relating to broadband service infrastructure. Broadband has been a longstanding issue in Hawaii and was exacerbated during this pandemic where students are doing distance learning and more people are working remotely. Broadband is a critical need in unserved areas and is important to state and county economic development. We are pleased to participate with the Broadband Hui and support many initiatives for digital equity. Many exciting projects are emerging from this broad alliance that fosters ideas and collaboration on creating programs that benefit the statewide community, with an emphasis on assisting groups that need it the most. This funding is essential at this time as we look at improving the statewide connectivity and roll out 5G infrastructure. We missed the opportunity to sign on to the Broadband Hui letter, but with this testimony, please include us among the many who strongly support this office and funding.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and we ask that you pass SB2076 SD2.

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.



House Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Date: Mar. 16, 2022

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

RE: **Supporting SB2076 SD2** Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure

Aloha mai e Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Clark and Members of the Committee,

As members of the Broadband Hui, the listed organizations and individuals **SUPPORT SB2076 SD2**, that defines broadband equity and clarifies the Hawai‘i Broadband and Digital Equity Office’s duties to promote and support digital equity and broadband deployment, and appropriates funds to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office for FTE positions.

For more than 20 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.

As we stated at the outset of the pandemic, 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. The truth of this statement has been proven throughout the past two years and is even more urgent as we look toward future recovery -- now with a once-in-a-generation opportunity with robust funding inbound with the American Recovery Act.

The Broadband & Digital Equity Office will continue to provide the focus, coordination and facilitation of programs that enable all Hawai‘i residents to seamlessly connect to the digital tools needed to be successful in our modern society.

For these reasons, we kindly request you **PASS SB2076 SD2**. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

(Please see names on the following page.)

	Name	Organization	Email Address	Zip
1	Barbara Tom	Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center	barbara.yukie@gmail.com	96701
2	Brian Dote	Tapiki LLC	brian@tapiki.com	96797
3	Brian I Hauser	Aloha Independent Living Hawaii	BrianH@AlohaLHawaii.org	96793
4	Cary S Miyashiro	Quad D Solutins	csmiyashiro@gmail.com	96816
5	Christine Matsuda	Pa'akai Communications	christine@paakaicomcommunications.com	96817
6	Christine Sakuda	Transform Hawaii Government	csakuda@transformhawaii.gov	96806
7	Councilmember Keani Rawlins-Fernandez		keani.rawlins@mauicounty.us	96748
8	Crystal Yamasaki	Crystal Clear Communications	crystalclearcomms@gmail.com	96817
9	Daniel C. Smith, Ph.D.	(Individual Support)	smithdan@hawaii.edu	96782
10	David Miyashiro	HawaiiKidsCAN	david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org	96814
11	Deborah Bond-Upson	LearningBond	deborah@learningbond.org	96734
12	Douglass ADAMS	Dept of Research & Development, COH	douglass.adams@hawaiicounty.gov	96720- 4245
13	Herb Lee, Jr.	Pacific American Foundation	herblee@thepaf.org	96734
14	Jacqui Hoover	Hawaii Island Economic Development Board	jhoover@hiedb.org	96743
15	Jacqui Hoover	Hawaii Leeward Planning Conference and Hawaii Island Economic Development Board	jacqui_hlpc@yahoo.com	96743
16	Jeanne Unemori Skog	Skog Rasmussen LLC	jskog@skograsmussen.com	96793
17	Jenifer Sunrise Winter		jwinter@hawaii.edu	96821
18	John L. Reppun	(Windward O`ahu Resident)	jreppun@gmail.com	
19	Jules Ung	Banyan Networks	jung@banyannetworks.com	96817
20	Kaikea Blakemore		KaikeaKBlakemore@gmail.com	96721
21	Kaleo Bennett	Auamo Collaborative	kokua@auamocollaborative.org	96720
22	Katie Hendrickson		katie@code.org	45701
23	Kealii Lopez	AARP Hawaii	klopez@aarps.org	96813
24	Kristilyn Oda		kristioda@gmail.com	96707
25	Krystal Hope		hopeka06@gmail.com	96826
26	Kuualohapauole Lau	Crystal Clear Communications	aloha.crystalclearhi@gmail.com	96813
27	Laura Arcibal	Hawaii State Department of Health	laura.arcibal@doh.hawaii.gov	96813
28	Laura Arcibal		lkmarcibal@gmail.com	96795
29	Lynn Otaguro	O'ahu County Democrats Digital Equity Committee	lmotaguro@yahoo.com	96821
30	Mark Iha	Tangent	mark@tangent.systems	96813
31	N/A	Papa Ola Lōkahi	skamakawiwoole@papaolalokahi.org	96813
32	Nicole A. Velasco		nicole@nicolevelasco.com	96819
33	Peggy Mierzwa	AlohaCare	pmierzwa@alohacare.org	96814
34	Rich Matsuda	W. M. Keck Observatory	rmatsuda@keck.hawaii.edu	96743
35	Riley Saito	Succeed Hawaii, LLC	rileydad80@gmail.com	96740
36	Riley Saito	Succeed Hawaii, LLC	rsaito@succeedhawaii.com	96740
37	Scott Uehara	County of Hawaii	scott.uehara@hawaiicounty.gov	96720
38	Sean Taketa McLaughlin		seantaketa@gmail.com	96814

39	Stacey Aldrich	Hawaii State Public Library System	stacey.aldrich@librarieshawaii.org	96825
40	Summer Keliipio	`A`ali`i Alliance	kernel_overdub_0f@icloud.com	96744
41	Sunyeen Pai		cozhawaii@hawaiiantel.net	96816
42	Susan Tai	Economic Development Alliance of Hawaii, Inc.	susantaikaneko@gmail.com	96814
43	Tharon LeBlanc	Michaels Management	tleblanc@tmo.com	96819
44	Wayne Buente		wbuente@hawaii.edu	96815
45	Wayne Buente		wayne.buente@gmail.com	96822
46	Yuki Lei Sugimura		yukilei.sugimura@mauicounty.us	96790

RYAN KAWAILANI OZAWA

P.O. Box 892727

Mililani, HI 96789-8332

Main: (808) 707-3027

Fax: (808) 427-9227



@hawaii A row of small, square social media icons including Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, and others.

Email: hawaii@hey.com

March 11, 2022

Aloha, Rep. Gregg Takayama, Chair; Rep. Linda Clark, Vice Chair; and members of the Committee on Higher Education & Technology:

I am writing to share **comments** on HB2397 related to broadband.

I agree that equitable and robust access to broadband should remain a priority for our State. Further, I am glad that the Federal government is making significant investments in broadband across the country, including in Hawaii.

However, while this bill acknowledges that the state "must act quickly to take advantage of various federal and private funds available," it proposes yet another layer of bureaucracy – another "authority" with board members – as the solution.

Further, this bill is further blurring the lines between the practical considerations related to broadband, and the more fundamental concept of "digital equity," which I believe represents mission creep.

As noted in comments from key stakeholders in separate testimony, I believe the Legislature should **defer the creation of the Hawaii broadband infrastructure authority**. The federal government and related agencies already provide significant guidance and requirements as to how its funds are to be distributed, and in areas where such direction is pending, attempting to set policy at the state policy is premature.

I separately ask that that the **current definition of "digital equity" be left alone**: "a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in society, democracy, and the economy." Broadband interests are already represented in the preceding clause.

The changes to Section 3, Section 206S-4 HRS subsection (a), parts (5), (8), and (9) are similarly also unnecessary.

Ultimately, the term "digital equity" encompasses much more than this bill and the existing broadband-focused office directly addresses. For simplicity, the overall program office could be renamed to the **Hawaii State Broadband Office** (achieving mission clarity similar to that of the Energy Office).

In the longer term, perhaps the State could assign equity-related issues to an existing or new statewide office focused on broader diversity and equity issues, perhaps in the Judiciary or another department.

Mahalo for your consideration.



Ryan Kawaiiani Ozawa