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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
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IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 21.1064

March 15, 2021

To: The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair,
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Higher Education and Technology

Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 309, via Videoconference

From: Jovanie Domingo Dela Cruz, Executive Director
Office of Community Services, an attached agency of the
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

**Re: S.B. No. 850, S.D.2, RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
RURAL COMMUNITIES**

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

This measure would create a task force jointly convened by the Department of Transportation and the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities throughout the State. The bill would require the task force to apply for federal grants for broadband access, and to include in its report its findings and an accounting of funds received from the CARES Act, the Emergency Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020, and grants disbursed by the State for broadband infrastructure for rural communities.

II. CURRENT LAW

There is currently no State-level legislation known to OCS that is relevant to promotion of broadband development.

III. COMMENTS ON THE SENATE BILL

Hawaii's remote communities are adversely affected economically and socially by poor access to telecommunications infrastructure, in particular the comparative lack of broadband.

The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair,
The Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Higher Education and Technology
March 15, 2021
Page 2

For Hawaii's more remote and underserved areas, better broadband service would improve economic development, education, healthcare, public safety, and emergency services.

The Office of Community Services (OCS) was established in 1985 by the Legislature to serve economically disadvantaged communities, precisely the types of communities that SB 850 seeks to serve. OCS regularly serves such communities through our administration of federal programs such as the Community Services Block Grants (CSBGs), the Weatherization Assistance Program, and multiple federal food programs, such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, and Commodity Supplemental Food Program, as well as other State and Federal programs.

While SB 850 does not propose any role for OCS, OCS stands ready to assist if called upon, and OCS is strongly supportive of this bill and its goals.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/17/2021

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 Via Videoconference

Committee: House Higher Education &
Technology

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 0850, SD2 RELATING TO BROADBAND
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Purpose of Bill: Creates a task force jointly convened by the department of transportation and department of business, economic development, and tourism to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities. Requires the task force to apply for federal moneys for broadband access. Requires the departments' report to include the findings of the task force and an accounting of amounts received from the CARES Act and Emergency Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020 and grants disbursed by the State for broadband infrastructure for rural communities. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 850, SD2, which creates a task force to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities.

Equitable access to the internet and technology resources has been a long-standing issue. The need for equitable access to internet connectivity became more evident with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required people of the state of Hawaii to work and learn remotely. Many organizations, including the Department, had to quickly shift to provide services, supports, and information via online means. The Department continues to face challenges providing necessary services and supports in areas of the state that have little or no connectivity due to remoteness or the lack of internet service and broadband infrastructure. A task force to focus on bringing broadband infrastructure to these areas is an important step in providing equitable

access and lessening the “digital divide.”

The Department appreciates the importance of equitable access that this measure addresses and would welcome opportunities to work with the task force to provide an educational perspective, especially in the area of K-12 education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.



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, March 17, 2021

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of

SB850 SD2

RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

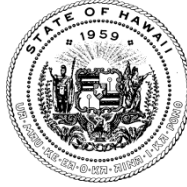
Chair Takayama, Vice Chair DeCoite and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **supports** SB850 SD2, which creates a task force jointly convened by the Department of Transportation and the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities.

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

It is important that we build the foundation for Hawaii to thrive in the digital economy and to eliminate digital inequity. The establishment of the Broadband & Digital Equity Office will provide the focus, coordination and facilitation of programs that enable all Hawaii residents to seamlessly connect to the digital resources needed to be successful in our modern society.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



TESTIMONY BY:

JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

Deputy Directors
LYNN A.S. ARAKI-REGAN
DEREK J. CHOW
ROSS M. HIGASHI
EDWIN H. SNIFFEN

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

March 17, 2021
2:00 P.M.
State Capitol, Teleconference

S.B. 850, S.D. 2
RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

House Committee on Higher Education & Technology

The Department of Transportation (DOT) **supports with recommended amendments** to S.B. 850, S.D. 2.

The task force could assist with carrying on the implementation initiative when the administration changes. However, the broadband implementation is currently underway, moving very quickly under direct oversight from Governor's office and the Department of Accounting General Services Comptroller.

The DOT is concerned that the formation of this body during this critical time could confuse roles, and complicate and slow the rollout of sorely needed services. The DOT request that the date of the bill be deferred to June 2022.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Michael P. Victorino
Mayor



Sananda K. Baz
Managing Director

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
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March 16, 2021

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL P. VICTORINO
MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY
Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309

SB850, RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair
Honorable Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments in **support** of **SB850**.

SB850 creates a task force to provide equitable broadband access for rural communities utilizing federal funding. Broadband access brings opportunities for direct access to education and health care for rural residents who are otherwise forced to travel long distances for college courses and medical treatment. In addition farmers gain real-time access to vital information such as crop prices or weather forecasts, and marketing opportunities through high-speed networks. “Mom and pop” shops, or home-based businesses, can expand their market and reach across the nation to bigger markets.

For those reasons, I urge you to pass **SB850**.

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR

MICHAEL D. FORMBY
MANAGING DIRECTOR
DANETTE MARUYAMA
DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR

March 15, 2021

The House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Gregg Takayama, Vice-Chair Lynn DeCoite, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Technology:

SUBJECT: SB850 SD2, Relating to Broadband Infrastructure for Rural Communities

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB850.

SB850 SD2 establishes and convenes a broadband equity task force to expand digital inclusion, promote digital equity and apply for and secure available federal funds. The City and County of Honolulu is committed to work with the State of Hawaii on the provision of digital services through infrastructure deployment, greater connectivity to our remote and underserved communities, application preparation and submission for federal funds and participation on the state broadband equity task force.

The City and County of Honolulu sees a direct nexus between connectivity, improved educational and distance-learning opportunities, jobs and employment prospects and general economic recovery and economic development for families and communities across Oahu.

As such, we **strongly urge passage of SB850 SD2** and we look forward to participating in this important initiative.

SB850 SD2

RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Ho‘ona‘auao Kulanui a me ka ‘Enehana

House Committee on Higher Education & Technology

Malaki 17, 2021

2:00 p.m.

Lumi 309

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB850 SD2**, which would create a task force jointly convened by the Department of Transportation and Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to provide equitable broadband access for historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities, and to seek out and apply for federal moneys to realize such access.

OHA appreciates that this measure will help to address the broadband needs of Native Hawaiian rural communities who have been historically marginalized and underserved. OHA notes that Native Hawaiians are highly represented in our rural communities: based on 2010 Census data, Native Hawaiians comprised the overwhelming majority of those living in Waimānalo, O‘ahu (81.3%); Kualapu‘u, Moloka‘i (71.9%); Nānākuli, O‘ahu (71.5%); ‘Ualapu‘e, Moloka‘i (70.6%); Maunaloa, Moloka‘i (67.3%) and Hāna, Maui (65.9%).¹ Meanwhile, the Federal Communications Commission’s 2018 Broadband Deployment Report indicated significant gaps in broadband access between Hawai‘i’s urban and rural areas, with only 63.1% of our rural population having access to the standard 25 Mbps download/3Mbps upload for fixed broadband access, compared to 98.5% of our urban population.² **Accordingly, by establishing a task force to provide equitable broadband access for our rural communities, this measure would begin to address a significant disparity in broadband access likely impacting a disproportionate number of Native Hawaiians across the state.**

OHA recognizes that rural Native Hawaiian communities’ lack of access to reliable and affordable broadband creates barriers to many necessary programs and services including in the areas of healthcare, education, and emergency response. Lack of broadband access further hinders economic development, leaving rural residents technologically and economically isolated and competitively disadvantaged. As the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the demand for reliable, affordable internet connectivity with work, education, civic engagement, and healthcare services being shifted online, the urgency of addressing the inequality in broadband access has become even more clear to our community.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB850 SD2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

¹ Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Native Hawaiian Data Book, <http://www.ohadatabook.com/> (last accessed March 15, 2021).

² FCC, 2018 BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT REPORT, APPENDIX F2, available at <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2018-broadband-deployment-report>.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education & Technology
Wednesday, March 17, 2021; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Via Videoconference**

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 0850, SENATE DRAFT 2, RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

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** Senate Bill No. 0850, Senate Draft 2, RELATING TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would require the Departments of Transportation and Business, Economic Development and Tourism to jointly establish the Broadband Equity Task Force to apply for available federal funding and secure broadband access sites throughout unserved and underserved areas.

This bill would take effect on July 1, 2050, to facilitate continued discussion.

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.

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 0850, Senate Draft 2
Wednesday, March 17, 2021; 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.

The Governor's suspension of statutes 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.

SB-850-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2021 3:57:09 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/17/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kristen Koba-Burd	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill in an effort to provide equitable broadband access to historically marginalized, unserved, and underserved rural communities.

SB-850-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2021 9:15:09 AM

Testimony for HET on 3/17/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Will Caron	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha committee members,

Please support this bill. Rural and underserved communities need broadband access in order to fully participate in both our democracy and our economy, both of which are becoming increasingly digital in nature.

Mahalo!