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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, April 13, 2022

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of

SCR12, SD1

**URGING THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE TO
PRIORITIZE ACCESS TO BROADBAND SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS
THROUGHOUT THE STATE.**

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Clark and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **supports SCR12, SD1** that urges the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office to prioritize access to broadband services in rural areas throughout the state.

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 the federal government has seen fit to build robust broadband infrastructure and to fund broadband equity and digital equity programs across the country, especially in rural areas.

In order to achieve the goals, set forth by Federal programs like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, it is important that we continue to address broadband access, affordability, adoption and literacy 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 Internet and the digital tools needed to be successful in our modern society.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Statement Before The
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, April 12, 2022

2:00 PM

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

in consideration of

SCR 12, SD1

URGING THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE TO PRIORITIZE ACCESS TO BROADBAND SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

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

Common Cause Hawaii supports SCR 12, SD1, urging the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office to prioritize access to broadband services in rural areas throughout the state.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to reforming government and strengthening democracy - one that works for everyone equally.

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, especially in rural areas, lack access to affordable, high-speed broadband and continue to face significant barriers to get online.

Those on the wrong side of the digital divide are disproportionately low-income, people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, marginalized communities, and people living in rural areas. Without broadband, these communities live in a democracy where their voices go unheard, and their needs are unmet.

Therefore, Common Cause Hawaii supports SCR 12, SD1, which urges (at page 2, lines 11-15) the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office “to prioritize access to broadband services in rural areas throughout the State.” Broadband equity is necessary for the good of our representative democracy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SCR 12, SD1. If you have any questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii



Written Statement of
Jeannine Souki
Sr. Manager – Government & Regulatory Affairs

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

April 13, 2022, 2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309, Videoconference

SUPPORT FOR:

S.C.R. NO. 12 SD1 - URGING THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE TO PRIORITIZE ACCESS TO BROADBAND SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS THROUGHOUT THE STATE

To: Chair Takayama, Vice-Chair Clark, and Members of the Committee

Re: Testimony supporting SCR12 SD1

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 SD1, a resolution that urges the Broadband and Digital Equity Office to prioritize access to broadband services in rural areas throughout the state.

Hawaiian Telcom is committed to enabling Hawaii’s unserved and underserved communities with a variety of integrated communications, including high-speed broadband, data, video, and local and long-distance voice services that keep us connected to the world. We support initiatives to promote digital equity, especially in rural areas that have experienced significant challenges accessing broadband services. This is why our company participated in the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB) and is now participating in the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Hawaiian Telcom just launched a 100 Mbps symmetrical speed broadband offer for \$30, which means there will be no-cost for qualifying ACP customers.

Over the last 10 years, Hawaiian Telcom has leveraged public-private funding opportunities to build access to high-speed Internet, data, and local and long-distance voice services to rural, unserved, and underserved communities by successfully competing for and securing federal funding opportunities to offset the high cost of building middle mile and last mile broadband connections into rural and remote areas. To date, we’ve enabled over 13,000 unserved and underserved locations in Hawai’i with the support of the federal Connect America Fund (CAF) and CAF Phase II Auction programs, the majority of these locations are Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) connections. Hawaiian Telcom will complete 11,000 more FTTP connections in the next five years under the CAF II Auction and Rural Development Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Auction programs.

While there will be a temporary and significant infusion of federal funds for broadband infrastructure thanks to the recent passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) which provides \$65 billion to build broadband infrastructure and provide affordable services nationwide, Hawaiian Telcom supports the state's efforts to maximize this opportunity through public and private partnerships to help close the digital divide, especially in the unserved and underserved areas.

Hawaiian Telcom appreciates the opportunity testify and provide support for SCR12 SD1.

