

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 254-24

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 12 , 2024

RE: H.B. No. 2739  
H.D. 1

Honorable Scott K. Saiki  
Speaker, House of Representatives  
Thirty-Second State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2024  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Human Services, to which was referred H.B. No. 2739 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to establish within the Department of Human Services a Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program that would provide Hawaii residents with energy assistance and information to increase their homes' energy efficiency.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs; Hawaii Green Infrastructure Authority; Public Utilities Commission; Hawaiian Electric; Blue Planet Foundation; Hawai'i Energy; and Renew Rebuild Hawaii. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Human Services and Department of Budget and Finance.

Your Committee finds that Hawaii's electric rates are among the highest in the nation, at close to three times the national average. These high costs are exacerbated by Hawaii's high cost of living. A 2022 report commissioned by the Aloha United Way stated that almost half of all families in Hawaii are struggling to make ends meet, even though they are employed. Your Committee also finds that Hawaii receives federal funding to assist low-income households pay for their electricity via the Low Income

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Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). However, LIHEAP offers limited financial assistance and does not meet the needs of Hawaii residents.

Your Committee further finds that during the Regular Session of 2022, the Legislature adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 242, S.D. 1, that requested the creation of a Hawaii Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program working group. This measure integrates and puts forth the recommendations from the working group through the establishment of the Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program, which will complement the existing federal LIHEAP and reach more low-income households in the State.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the appropriations to unspecified amounts; and
- (2) Changing its effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion.

Your Committee respectfully requests your Committee on Finance, should it deliberate on this measure, to consider an appropriation amount of \$500,000 to establish one full-time equivalent position (1.0 FTE) and two temporary full-time equivalent positions (2.0 FTE) and to contract for services for the purposes of implementing the Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program and \$10,000,000 to be deposited into and out of the Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program Special Fund.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Human Services that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 2739, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 2739, H.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Finance.



Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Human Services,

*Lisa Marten*

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LISA MARTEN, Chair



