



**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I**  
**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**  
**KA 'OIHANA PILI KĀLEPA**  
335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310  
P.O. BOX 541  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
Phone Number: (808) 586-2850  
Fax Number: (808) 586-2856  
cca.hawaii.gov

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

**NADINE Y. ANDO**  
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**DEAN I HAZAMA**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

**Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Before the**  
**House Committee on Finance**  
**Friday, February 23, 2024**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:**  
**H.B. 2359 H.D.2, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND**  
**DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Randy Leong, and I am the Cable Television Administrator of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' Cable Television Division. The Department supports this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to identify and address remaining obstacles to digital equity in the State and to establish the digital equity grant program, to be implemented and administered by the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office under the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), to award grants for digital equity projects that will increase digital literacy and broadband and digital access for rural and socio-economically disadvantaged populations across the State.

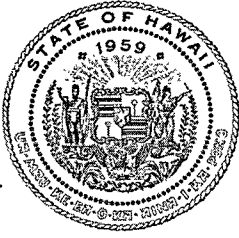
Digital equity is essential to enable all residents of our State to fully participate in today's economy and society. The Department recognizes the benefit of a state-level grant program focused on closing the digital divide for those most in need by funding

Testimony of DCCA  
H.B. 2359 H.D. 2

projects to be conceived and implemented by experienced stakeholders to achieve universal access. These projects could help to bridge the State's digital equity gap and allow all residents to benefit from the services and opportunities afforded by digital access no matter where they live or their circumstances.

The Department thus strongly supports this bill but defers to DBEDT and the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office on the specific provisions of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI  
A HO'OMĀKA'IKAI

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT GOVERNOR

**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
DIRECTOR

**DANE K. WICKER**  
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](http://dbedt.hawaii.gov)

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

Statement of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
Director  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Friday, February 23, 2024  
10:00AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room #308

In consideration of  
**HB2359 HD2**  
**RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **strongly supports** HB2359 HD2, an Administration bill, that establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

To run in parallel with the various broadband infrastructure projects across the State for the next several years, digital equity programs in communities are essential for the social and economic well-being of the residents in the State. Digital access and digital skills for remote work, school, and social services such as unemployment claims, telehealth, and other essential services are critically important particularly in the rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

This measure will enable the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with rural and underserved communities to identify and address barriers to digital equity and to establish a digital equity grant program so that individuals and communities in the State have the access and the ability to be full participants in the digital economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

---

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

February 23, 2024

### TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

House Bill 2359 HD2 – Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 2359 HD2 – Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office.

This bill would establish the digital equity grant program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

Digital equity provides persons with disabilities equal access to digital technology, including broadband. Broadband access for all should be affordable, especially for underserved communities to foster their economic development, increase 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 considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director



## HB2359 HD2

RELATING TO RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE  
House Committee on Finance

February 23, 2024

10:00 a.m.

Conference Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) will recommend to the Board of Trustees (BOT) that they **SUPPORT HB2359 HD2**, which would establish the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State. **This measure is a good step toward providing Hawai‘i’s people with equal access to the resources and opportunities afforded by the digital age.** OHA signed on to the Digital Equity Declaration<sup>1</sup> which declared that digital inequity is one of the most pressing issues facing Hawai‘i.

Data provided from the 2019 American Community Survey highlighted the significant disparities in digital access across Hawai‘i, particularly among underserved populations such as Native Hawaiians,<sup>2</sup> individuals with lower incomes, and seniors. With approximately 55,000 households lacking internet subscriptions and over 44,000 households having no internet access at all, it is evident that digital inequity remains a pervasive challenge in our state. The data underscores the disproportionate impact of digital inequity on Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities, with higher percentages of households lacking internet subscriptions and computer access compared to the overall population. These disparities perpetuate existing socio-economic inequalities and hinder opportunities for educational advancement, economic prosperity, health care access, cultural access and civic engagement among Hawaiians.

The establishment of the Digital Equity Grant Program represents a crucial step towards addressing these disparities and empowering Native Hawaiian communities to overcome barriers to digital access and participation. By awarding grants to eligible

<sup>1</sup> Broadband Hui, Digital Equity Declaration, at <https://www.broadbandhui.org/> (Last accessed 02/21/24)

<sup>2</sup> 8.7% of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (NHPIs) are without an internet subscription compared to 4.6% for Hawai‘i’s total population and 8.2% of NHPIs have no computer in their household compared to 4% for Hawai‘i’s total population. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2019), at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs> last accessed 02/21/24

projects that promote digital literacy, broadband affordability, access to digital devices, and other innovative digital inclusion initiatives, this program will help bridge the digital divide and ensure that Native Hawaiians have equal opportunities by facilitating the expansion of broadband infrastructure, increasing access to internet-capable devices, and providing essential digital skills training to underserved communities across the state. Furthermore, the inclusion of specific criteria for covered populations, such as individuals living in rural areas, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and homeless individuals, demonstrates a commitment to addressing the diverse needs of Hawai'i's communities. By prioritizing projects that serve these populations, the Digital Equity Grant Program will help reduce disparities and promote equity in digital access and participation.

OHA urges the committee to **PASS HB2359 HD2**, establishing the Digital Equity Grant Program thereby taking decisive action to address digital inequity in Hawaii. By investing in digital inclusion initiatives, we can create a more equitable and inclusive society where all Native Hawaiians have the resources and support they need to thrive in the digital age.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.



1001 Bishop Street | Suite 625 | Honolulu, HI 96813-2830  
1-866-295-7282 | Fax: 808-536-2882  
aarp.org/hi | [aarphi@aarp.org](mailto:aarphi@aarp.org) | [twitter.com/AARPHawaii](https://twitter.com/AARPHawaii)  
[facebook.com/AARPHawaii](https://facebook.com/AARPHawaii)

**The State Legislature  
House Committee On Finance  
Friday, February 23, 2024  
Conference Room 308, 10:00 a.m.**

TO: The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director, AARP Hawaii  
RE: Support for HB 2359 HD 2 Relating to Hawaii Broadband and Digital

Aloha Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social impact organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and nearly 140,000 in Hawaii. We advocate at the state and federal level for the issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including telehealth. **AARP supports H.B. 2359 HD2** which establishes the digital equity grant program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

The pandemic has underscored vast disparities in high-speed internet access and has also underscored the importance of high-speed internet access to older adults. Achieving digital equity is especially important for older adults: reliable, affordable high-speed internet access is critical to the well-being of adults (e.g., telehealth, connection to family and friends, civic engagement, distance learning, remote work, etc.) AARP recognizes the value and significant benefits of digital technology that can improve the lives of kupuna. While more and more of our members, especially those aged 50-59, are using their mobile devices and tablets to access information about their health, we still need to reach those over the age 65 whose technology adoption rate is only 64%. Achieving digital equity requires addressing disparities in access and adoption. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B 2359, HD2.



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Friday, February 23, 2024; 10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308  
Via Videoconference**

**RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2359, HOUSE DRAFT 2, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.**

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, 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** House Bill No. 2359, House Draft 2, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live 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:

- (1) Identify and address remaining obstacles to digital equity in all areas of the State; and
- (2) Establish the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants (not related to the deployment of infrastructure) and create an environment in which all individuals and communities in the state have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in society, democracy, and the economy.

This bill would also take effect on July 1, 3000.

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 House Bill No. 2359, House Draft 2**  
**Friday, February 23, 2024; 10:00 a.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.

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.

**For these reasons, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this measure.**

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](mailto:eabe@hawaiiipca.net).

## House Committee on Finance Hearing

Date: February 23, 2024  
Time: 10:00 a.m.  
Where: State Capitol, Conference Room 329 & Videoconference  
RE: **SUPPORT of HB2359 HD2 - Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office**

Aloha mai e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

As members of the Broadband Hui, the listed organizations and individuals **strongly support HB2359 HD2** which would establish a Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects in the State.

Over the past four years during and since COVID, 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, healthcare and access to other essential services.

Through the work of the Broadband Hui members, we have supported broadband infrastructure development in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, provided digital devices for students and families and digital literacy programs for kūpuna, 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.

This measure will enable the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with our communities to identify and plan fund projects to address barriers to digital equity. The digital equity grant program will be set up so there will be rules ready to deploy digital equity projects supported by HBDEO whether funded by the Federal government or other entities.

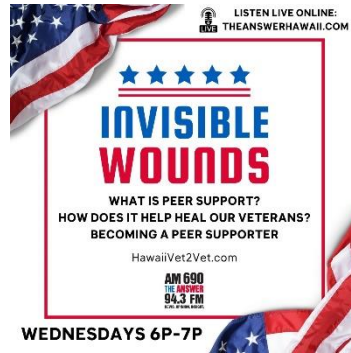
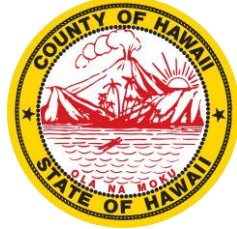
For these reasons, we kindly request you support **HB2359 HD2**.  
Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

*(Please see the organizations and names of individuals on the following pages.)*

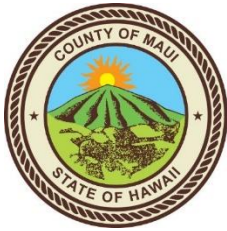


# Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 HD2

## Logos of Supporting Organizations



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 HD2



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 HD2



**MAUI**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
VOICE OF BUSINESS



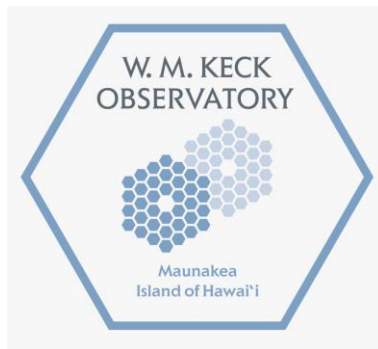
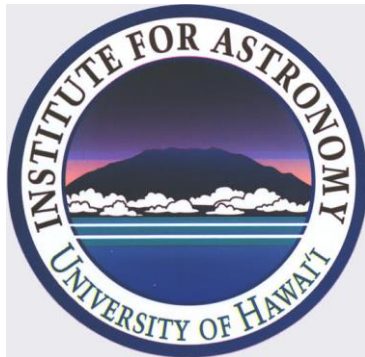
FRIENDS OF THE  
LIBRARY  
OF HAWAI'I



**maui economic**  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



**MAUI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD**



**Pa'a k a i**  
COMMUNICATIONS



**'ōhi'a**  
technology  
group



**Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 HD2**



<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Zip code</b>
Lynn Otaguro	O`ahu County Democrats Digital Equity Committee	lmotaguro@yahoo.com	96821
Douglass S Adams	County of Hawaii Dept of Research & Development	douglass.adams@hawaiicounty.gov	96720
Jill Takasaki Canfield	Hawaii Literacy	jill.takasaki.canfield@hawaiiliteracy.org	96817
Nicholas Winfrey	Maui United Way	nicholas@mauiunitedway.org	96708
David Sun-Miyashiro	HawaiiKidsCAN	david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org	96814
Alexis Ching	Ewalu Industries	alexis@ewaluindustries.org	96740
Deborah Bond-Upson	LearningBond	deborah@learningbond.org	96734
Ka`ala Souza	Digital Ready Hawaii	kaala@digitalreadyhawaii.org	96734
Jeanne Skog	Skog Rasmussen LLC	jskog@skograsmussen.com	96793
Joseph Passantino	Ke'elikolani Middle School	Joseph.passantino@k12.hi.us	96813
Kiran Polk	Kapolei Chamber of Commerce	kiranpolk@gmail.com	96707
Sean Taketa McLaughlin		seantaketa@gmail.com	96817
Kuulei Arce	MOLOKAI RURAL HEALTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION	22kuulei@gmail.com	96729
Linda Clark		clarkl004@gmail.com	96713
Jenny Miller	EducationSuperHighway	jenny.miller@educationsuperhighway.org	80303
Todd Robertson	Hyperspective Studios, Inc.	todd@hyperspective.com	96813 96789
Daniel C. Smith, PhD		dancsmith@rocketmail.com	96782
Crystal Yamasaki	Crystal Clear Communications	crystalclearcomms@gmail.com	96817
Jacqui Hoover	Hawaii Economic Development Board, Inc.	jhoover@hiedb.org	96743

## Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 HD2

Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
	Hawaii Leeward Planning Conference		
Daron Nishimoto	EO Solutions, LLC	Daron.nishimoto@e-osolutions.com	89119
Lisa Seikai Darcy	Share Your Mana	lisa@shareyourmana.org	96768
Alex Fielding	Privateer Space	af@privateer.com	96753
Michael K. Peacock	Hawaii Vet 2 Vet Inc.	mikepeacock@hawaiivet2vet.com	96813
Marc Sanders	Hana Business Council	marc@hanamaui.com	96713
Edward Sun	Sun Global Broadband	esun1@hawaiiantel.net	96822
Rebecca J. `I. Soon	Solutions Pacific	rebecca@sphawaii.com	96817
Doug Simons	Institute for Astronomy, Univ. of Hawaii	dsimons@hawaii.edu	96720
Christine Matsuda	Pa`akai Communications	christine@paakaicomunications.com	96817
Jolie A. Jenkins	County of Maui, Office of the Mayor	Jolie.Jenkins@co.maui.hi.us	96793
Mark Iha	Tangent Inc.	mark@tangent-inc.com	96813
Connie Mitchell	Institute for Human Services	conniem@ihshawaii.org	96817
Ilima Ho-Lastimososa	Ke Kula Nui O Waimānalo	ilima888@gmail.com	96795
Lori Okuda		wcpgirl@gmail.com	96782
Jerry Isdale	Maui Institute of Art and Technology LLC	jerry@mioat.com	96708
Jenifer Sunrise Winter		jwinter@hawaii.edu	96821
Lei Fountain	The Arc in Hawaii	Leif@thearcinhawaii.org	96782
Micah Chao		sungyanc@hawaii.edu	96814
Curtis Kropar	Hawaiian Hope Org	Curtis@hawaiianhope.org	96817
John Desfor,	Hawai'i State Rural Health Association	johnd6@hawaii.edu	96737
Carson Block	Carson Block Consulting	librarylandtech@gmail.com	
Rich Matsuda	W. M. Keck Observatory	rmatsuda@keck.hawaii.edu	96743
Michele Mitsumori,	IT Reuse HI	itreusehi@gmail.com	96720
Debbie Cabebe	Maui Economic Opportunity	debbie.cabebe@meoinc.org	96793
Tony Velasco	City and County of Honolulu IT	tvelasco@honolulu.gov	96813
Pamela Tumpap	Maui Chamber of Business	pamela@mauichamber.com	96793
Kelly Withy, MD, PhD		withy@hawaii.edu	96734

## Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 HD2

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Zip code</b>
Herb Lee, Jr.	Pacific America Foundation	herblee@thepaf.org	96734
Paola Vidulich	Hawai`i's Volcano Circus	paola@hawaiiivolcanocircus.org	96778
Alex Sene, Jr.		alex.sene.jr@gmail.com	96799
Nainoa Mau	Friends of the Library of Hawai`i	nainoa@flhhawaii.org	97817
Leslie Wilkins	Maui Economic Development Board, Inc.	leslie@medb.org	96753
Nam Vu	Hub Coworking Hawaii	nam@hubcoworkinghi.com	96814
Jaclyn Kaina	Kau`i Economic Development Board	jkaina@kedb.com	96766
Jean-Gabriel Cuby	Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope	cuby@cfht.hawaii.edu	96743
Wendy Awai-Dakroub	Ohia Technology Group LLC	wendy@ohiatechnology.com	96822
Nicole Brodie	Purple Mai'a	nicole@purplemaia.org	96701
Brad Kaleo Bennett	`Auamo Collaborative	kaleobennett@gmail.com	96720
Lisa Rantz	Hilo Medical Center Foundation	lrantz@hhsc.org	96720
Cary Miyashiro	Quad D Solutions LLC	csmiyashiro@gmail.com	96816





# Chamber of Commerce HAWAII

*The Voice of Business*

## **Testimony to the House Committee on Finance Friday, February 23, 2024 at 10AM Conference Room 308**

### **RE: HB2359 HD2 Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office**

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **supports HB2359 HD2**, which establishes the Digital Equity Office and grant program to award and deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

Addressing digital equity through broadband access and digital literacy tools is one of the most important steps to modernizing Hawaii's economy and bringing all our industries into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By having digital equity throughout the state, this will allow Hawaii to attract new industries and continue to diversify the economy. Given the economic importance of achieving both broadband and digital equity, the Chamber supports this bill.

This bill aims to increase digital equity throughout our state and provides assurances for all individuals and communities in the state to have the information capacity needed to participate in society and contribute to our economy. This is especially important considering Hawaii's rapidly growing tech industry. There is a need for our state to have a highly skilled workforce ready to match the workforce demands provided by tech companies looking to invest in our state. With the passage of this bill, our current and future workforce can be equipped with the skills to fulfill these jobs and contribute to the state's success.

As members of the Broadband Hui, the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii supports broadband infrastructure development in rural communities, equitable digital devices and internet connectivity for students and families, increasing access to telehealth, low-cost internet options, and a more equitable digital future overall.

The Chamber is Hawaii's leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing about 2,000+ businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the "Voice of Business" in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state's economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

On behalf of The Chamber, thank you for this opportunity to testify.



# MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM 308  
Friday, February 23, 2024 AT 10:00 A.M.**

To The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Finance

**SUPPORT HB2359 HD2 RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY  
OFFICE**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce **SUPPORTS HB2359 HD2.**

The Maui Chamber of Commerce has participated in the Broadband Hui, when available and greatly appreciates the work they are doing. The Chamber notes that over the past four years during and since COVID, the members of the Broadband Hui have collaborated, each within our own ability, to increase Hawai'i's digital capacity, thereby supporting the continuity of social connections, education, employment, and access to other essential services.

Through the work of the Broadband Hui, we have supported broadband infrastructure development in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, provided digital devices for students and families and digital literacy programs for kupuna, 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.

This measure will enable the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with our communities to identify and address barriers to digital equity. The digital equity grant program will be set up so there is a mechanism to deploy digital equity projects within HBDEO.

For these reasons, we **SUPPORT HB2359 HD2.**

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.

February 23, 2024

House Committee on Finance  
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair



*Working together for Kapolei*

Friday February 23, 2024, 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Rm. 308 and via Videoconference

**RE: HB 2359 HD2 RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE**

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the Committee:

My name is Kiran Polk, and I am the Executive Director of the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce. The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce is an advocate for businesses in the Kapolei region which includes Waipahu to Ka'ena Point. The Chamber works on behalf of its members and the entire business community to improve the regional and State economic climate and help Kapolei businesses thrive. We are a member-driven, member-supported organization representing the interests of all types of business: small, medium or large, for profit or non-profit businesses or sole proprietorship. The Kapolei Chamber is also a member of the Broadband Hui.

The Kapolei Chamber of Commerce is in **support of HB 2359 HD2 with comments**. This measure establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

One of the Strategies of the **final Hawai'i Digital Equity Plan published on February 21, 2024** is to "Strengthen community response capabilities and community resilience through broadband." [Strategy #5]

**We have concerns that with the added exclusion of 'broadband infrastructure' in the HD2 that some of the needed solutions aligned with this Strategy outlined in the final Digital Equity Plan may not be considered in future funding opportunities and needs to be clarified.** In the wake of the Maui wildfire tragedy, a priority in West O'ahu is to strengthen our community response, and this includes the needed emergency and secondary communication networks in times of disaster. It should be noted that this measure does not have funding appropriations and its primary purpose is to create a Digital Equity Grant Program and framework for future funding opportunities to deploy digital equity projects.

We also recognize that this measure would provide the programming needed for future funding opportunities. These opportunities will support and adopt the goals set forth in the State's Digital Equity Declaration. The Digital Equity Grant Program will help to ensure digital literacy and equitable access to the internet to help eliminate the "digital divide" and help our underserved communities including those in West O'ahu. We also need to increase digital capacity in West O'ahu for our small businesses to spur on economic growth and bridge some of the gaps existing today including access and capacity issues with online learning, pursuit of employment opportunities, and access to essential services online.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony and **comments**.

Respectfully,

Kiran Polk  
Executive Director