



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 28, 2024

The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Dela Cruz, Senator Rhoads, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB2359 HD2 RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

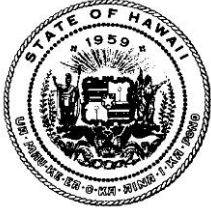
The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB2359 HD2 SD1**, which establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

The intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) population relies significantly on access to digital technology to remain engaged members of the community. We recognize the importance of this measure in allocating funding and supporting the development of vital broadband infrastructure for underserved communities across the state. Hawaii's I/DD population resides in these communities, and improved broadband equity is essential to enhancing their access to and affordability of digital resources. The I/DD population, being more reliant on telehealth services, stands to benefit greatly from increased access to high-speed internet and improved broadband equity. Telehealth utilization is particularly high within our community, and the improved access provided by this measure will support the health needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB2359 HD2 SD1**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



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

March 28, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON WAYS AND MEANS AND ON JUDICIARY

House Bill 2359 HD2 SD1– Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 2359 HD2 SD1 – 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 SD1

RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senate Committee on Judiciary

March 28, 2024

9:45 a.m.

Conference Room 211

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) will recommend to the Board of Trustees (BOT) that they **SUPPORT HB2359 HD2 SD1**, 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 Declaration¹ 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,² 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

¹ Broadband Hui, Digital Equity Declaration, at <https://www.broadbandhui.org/> (Last accessed 022124)

² 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 022124



HB2359 HD2 SD1

RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE

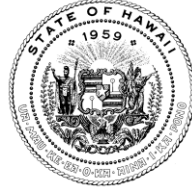
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senate Committee on Judiciary

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 SD1**, establishing the Digital Equity Grant Program thereby taking decisive action to address digital inequity in Hawai'i. 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.



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
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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
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
and the
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Thursday, March 28, 2024
9:45 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference

On the following measure:
**H.B. 2359 H.D. 2 S.D. 1, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND
DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE**

Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

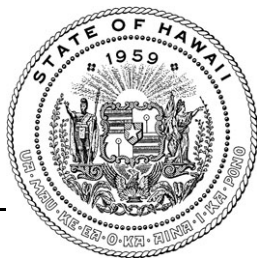
My name is Randy Leong, and I am the Cable Television Administrator of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' Cable Television Division. The Department supports this bill.

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 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 supports this bill but defers to DBEDT and the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office on the specific provisions of the bill, including amendments made to the bill by previous committees.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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

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

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

Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS AND
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

Thursday, March 28, 2024
9:45AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

In consideration of
HB2359 SD1
RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and members of the Committees. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) **strongly supports** the original HB2359 as offered by the Administration, that establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

DBEDT appreciates the discussions and the amendments presented to the legislature by various stakeholders throughout the legislative session. However, the original version of the measure has been vetted and aligns to the necessary digital equity work of the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO). The current amendments are contradictory and do not align with the State Digital Equity Plan, a navigational tool for setting policies, building capacity, identifying community needs, formulating action plans, and achieving desired outcomes through various digital equity programs throughout 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.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Bill DeCosta
Ross Kagawa



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa, County Clerk
Lyndon M. Yoshioka, Deputy County Clerk

Telephone: (808) 241-4188
Facsimile: (808) 241-6349
Email: cokcouncil@kauai.gov

Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

March 27, 2024

**TESTIMONY OF ADDISON BULOSAN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
HB 2359, HD 2, SD 1, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND
DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE
AND
HB 1838, HD 2, SD 1, RELATING TO ZONING
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Thursday, March 28, 2024
9:45 a.m.
Conference Room 211
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 2359, HD 2, SD 1, Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office and HB 1838, HD 2, SD 1, Relating to Zoning. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of HB 2359, HD 2, SD 1 and HB 1838, HD 2, SD 1, which would greatly affect the Kaua'i community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2359, HD 2, SD 1 and HB 1838, HD 2, SD 1. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ADDISON BULOSAN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:ss



**Testimony to the Senate Joint Committee on Ways and Means and Judiciary
Thursday, March 28, 2024; 9:45 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 211
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2359, HOUSE DRAFT 2, SENATE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.

Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, 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, Senate Draft 1, 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 establish the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants (not related to the deployment of infrastructure nor wireless community networks) 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 January 1, 2060.

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.

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.



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facebook.com/AARPHawaii

**The State Legislature
Senate Committee On Ways and Means
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Thursday, March 28, 2024
Conference Room 211, 9:45 a.m.**

TO: The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
FROM: Keali'i S. López, State Director, AARP Hawaii
RE: Support for HB 2359 HD2, SD1 Relating to Hawaii Broadband and Digital

Aloha Chairs Dela Cruz, Rhoads and Members of the Committees:

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, SD1** 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, SD1.

March 27, 2024



Working together for Kapolei

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday March 28, 2024, 9:45 a.m.
Conference Rm. 211 and via Videoconference

RE: HB 2359 HD2 SD1 RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE

Dear Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, 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 of Commerce is in **strongly support HB 2359, requesting amendments**. This measure establishes the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects to covered populations in the State.

We respectfully request that the following amendments be made to revert the measure back to the language concurrent with the HD1 as follows:

- 1) Delete the definition of "Broadband Infrastructure".
- 2) Delete the language specifying that projects that include the deployment of broadband infrastructure are ineligible for a grant under the Digital Equity Grant Program.
- 3) Specify that "wireless community networks" are eligible projects for the Digital Equity Grant Program.

The original version of HB 2359 would enable the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with our communities to identify, plan and 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.

The amendments made in the HD2 and SD1 made broadband infrastructure 'ineligible' and removed 'wireless community networks' as an eligible project. These small amounts of broadband infrastructure including modest wireless community networks, may be needed to support digital equity and inclusion projects contemplated by the digital equity capacity grant program. Therefore, we ask the Committees to reinstate this language.

We have concerns that with the added exclusion of ‘broadband infrastructure’ in the HD2 that there may be funding opportunities that may not be eligible in this grant program, and we respectfully request that HB 2359 HD2 be restored to the HD1 version.

Two specific examples of funding opportunities that would be impacted if ‘broadband infrastructure’ is excluded:

- 1) **Broadband Infrastructure for Community Response during an Emergency: 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].** 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. Because the Hawai‘i Digital Equity Plan has outlined this Strategy, there should be an opportunity to fund broadband infrastructure projects aligned with this Strategy.
- 2) **Broadband Infrastructure needs for Digital Equity and Equitable Access:** The Digital Equity Grant Program will help to ensure digital literacy through classes and equitable access to the internet for our underserved communities, our kupuna, etc. The classes held and equipment provided will collectively 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. Should a broadband infrastructure need arise ‘inside the curb’ for one of these classes, the absence of ‘broadband infrastructure’ in this measure could preclude the needed infrastructure projects from being funded.

As mentioned above, we are in strong support of this measure.

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.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony.

Respectfully,

Kiran Polk
Executive Director

Senate Committees on Ways and Means and Judiciary

To: Chairs Donovan Dela Cruz and Karl Rhoads
Vice Chairs Sharon Moriwaki and Mike Gabbard

Date: Thursday, March 28, 2024
Time: 9:45 a.m.
Where: State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

RE: **SUPPORT of HB2359 HD2 SD1 WITH AMMENDMENTS**

Aloha mai e Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees,

As members of the Broadband Hui, the listed organizations and individuals **strongly support HB2359 HD2 SD1, Relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office with amendments.** The measure would establish a Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects in the State funded primarily by the digital inclusion component of the federal Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, which was established through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

We respectfully request that the following amendments be made to revert the measure back to the language concurrent with the HD1 as follows:

- 1) Delete the definition of "Broadband Infrastructure".
- 2) Delete the language specifying that projects that include the deployment of broadband infrastructure are ineligible for a grant under the Digital Equity Grant Program.
- 3) Specify (restore) that "wireless community networks" are eligible projects for the Digital Equity Grant Program.

The original version of HB 2359 would enable the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office (HBDEO) to work with our communities to identify, plan and 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.

The amendments made in the HD2 and SD1 made broadband infrastructure 'ineligible' and removed 'wireless community networks' as an eligible project. These small amounts of broadband infrastructure including modest wireless community networks, may be needed to support digital equity and inclusion projects contemplated by the digital equity capacity grant program. Therefore, we ask the Committees to reinstate this language.

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. We know that some broadband infrastructure may be needed for these digital equity projects.

Through the work of the Broadband Hui members, we have supported broadband infrastructure development and digital equity projects in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities,

Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments

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.

Efforts are ongoing including, and not limited to, through the Digital Equity Coalitions in each County to position groups and communities to respond to federal and other funding sources like these.

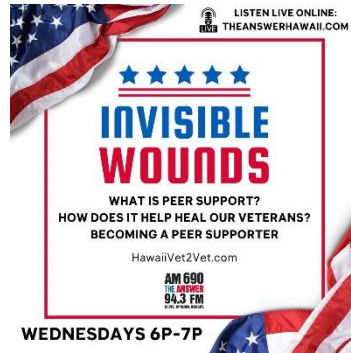
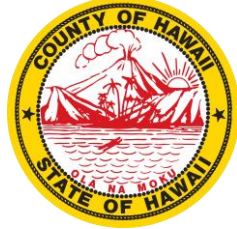
Please consider amending HB2359 to its original version. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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

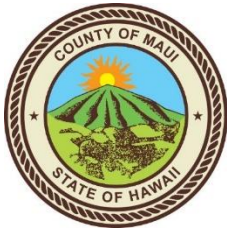


Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments

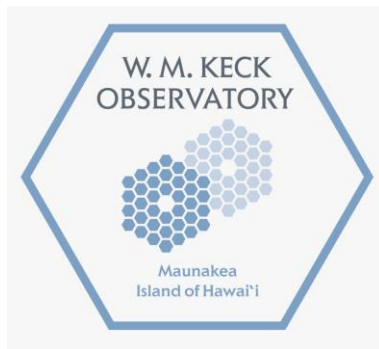
Logos of Supporting Organizations



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments



Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments



Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
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

Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments

Name	Organization	Email	Zip code
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. Hawaii Leeward Planning Conference	jhoover@hiedb.org	96743
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-Lastimoso	Ke Kula Nui O Waimānalo	ilima888@gmail.com	96795
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Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments

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Hawaii Broadband Hui Members & Organizations Supporting HB2359 SD1 with amendments

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Charter Communications
Testimony of Rebecca Lieberman, Director of Government Affairs

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS &
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARITY

Hawaii State Capitol
Thursday, March 28, 2024

SUPPORT FOR H.B. 2359, H.D. 2, S.D. 1 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE

Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committees.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support H.B. 2359, H.D. 2, S.D 1, as written**. This bill would establish the Digital Equity Grant Program to award grants to applicants to deploy digital equity projects.

As the largest broadband provider in the state, Charter supports efforts to promote digital equity and broadband access. A key aspect of reducing the digital divide is by investing in broadband infrastructure, digital navigators and literacy tools, affordability programs, and access to hardware.

Charter believes that every Hawaii resident should have reliable access to the Internet. We will continue to help bring the benefits of broadband and access to the internet to those who need it most. Hawaii is slated to receive over \$200 million in federal grants for broadband infrastructure in the immediate future (via the Coronavirus Capital Project Fund and Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program), in addition to private investments already being made by the industry.

The Digital Equity Grant Program should prioritize funding projects related to broadband adoption and affordability programs, which are separately supported by federal funding. **We support the amendments made to this bill by previous committees, specifically excluding broadband infrastructure projects from the grant program, because it will allow this grant program to focus exclusively on digital equity projects.** This will ensure that broadband adoption efforts and broadband availability efforts are each given the independent attention needed to properly address these very different issues. Additionally, as written, the bill does not preclude the use of funds for wifi routers, broadband access points, or high-speed internet service at community anchor institutions. It merely guarantees that money goes to digital literacy and other adoption and affordability projects instead of infrastructure deployment.

Infrastructure availability and digital equity are both important, but they are different problems requiring different, independent solutions. **For these reasons, we strongly support H.B. 2359, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, pass unamended.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Thursday, March 28, 2024

RE: HB2359 HD2 SD1 Relating to the Hawaii Broadband Digital Equity Office

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Gabbard, and
Members of the Committees:

As leaders of the Hawai‘i Library Association, representing a significant number of members across public, school, and academic libraries, we are in **strong support of HB2359 HD2 SD1** – Relating to the Hawai‘i Broadband and Digital Equity Office. This bill holds significance in establishing a system for receiving and allocating federal funds to advance digital literacy.

We are pleased to see that this bill acknowledges the critical role digital literacy plays alongside broadband infrastructure. This understanding underscores the importance of ensuring that citizens of all ages are equipped to navigate the digital landscape safely, guarding against misinformation, phishing scams, and other online threats.

Public, school, and academic libraries serve as crucial resources in addressing the digital divide by offering training and support for informed and responsible internet usage. The passage of this bill holds promise in empowering our members to further address this pressing issue and enhance their efforts in promoting digital literacy throughout our communities. By equipping individuals with the skills to navigate the digital landscape safely, we enable them to catalyze economic growth, enrich education, promote civic engagement, enhance access to essential services, and bolster community resilience, ensuring a more inclusive and prosperous future for all residents of Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Respectfully,

The Board of the Hawai‘i Library Association



**WAIANAЕ COAST
COMPREHENSIVE
HEALTH CENTER**

March 27, 2024

Thursday March 28, 2024, 9:45 a.m.
Conference Rm. 211 and via Videoconference

Subject: Testimony Regarding Support of HB2359 HD2 SD1 HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE WITH AMMENDMENTS

Aloha Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Gabbard, and members of the Committee,

Mahalo for allowing us to provide this testimony today. The Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center serves the West Oahu community, and we are deeply committed to ensuring all residents have access to the resources they need to thrive. This includes robust digital equity, a crucial lifeline for safety, education, and well-being, especially during times of crisis.

We strongly support HB2359 HD2 SD1, relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office with amendments., which aims to establish a robust Digital Equity Grant Program. However, the amendments made in HD2 and SD1, making 'broadband infrastructure deployment' ineligible and subsequently removing "wireless community networks" for grant funding weakens the bill's intent and its potential impact on disaster preparedness. Our preferred outcome would be to revert to the original version of HB 2359 to ensure the grant program can support vital community-driven solutions.

Recent Events Highlight Importance of Proactive Preparedness

Recent events like the Lahaina wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the critical need for proactive disaster preparedness, particularly regarding reliable communication infrastructure. The devastating consequences of communication blackouts, as seen in Lahaina, demand a proactive approach.

Hawai'i Digital Equity Plan and Disaster Resilience

The Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Plan (page 115, Strategy 5) provides a compelling directive describing Strategy 5 in the DE Plan: "In the aftermath of the Kīlauea eruption and recent wildfires in Lahaina, the importance of integrating broadband planning into emergency management has become glaringly evident." The plan calls for prioritizing investments in digital equity to aid in emergency situations. Additionally, Strategy 5 directly aligns with broader state goals outlined in the Hawai'i Broadband Strategic Plan 2020. Specifically, Goal 3: Enable Hawai'i to Thrive through a Digital Economy highlights the need to "Improve delivery of government services through robust broadband capabilities." In the context of disaster preparedness, this plan highlights the issues of access and scale during a statewide disaster event, further supporting the need for community Wi-Fi solutions.

Following these strategies through inclusive grant eligibility criteria can provide and enhance critical lifelines. Such infrastructure is a necessity, as the absence of robust communication could mean the difference between safety and peril during a disaster.

Addressing BEAD Fund Limitations (Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment) and Adaptability

While some may argue that BEAD funds could be used for emergency communications, it is important to note a key limitation. BEAD funds cannot support solutions relying on unlicensed Wi-Fi, which offer quick deployment, scalability, mobility, and lower costs. The original version of HB2359 addresses that limitation and ensures that Hawai'i can leverage all available technologies for maximum adaptability.



**WAIANAЕ COAST
COMPREHENSIVE
HEALTH CENTER**

Community-Driven Solutions for Resilience

Furthermore, this amendment supports a uniquely resilient approach by fostering community-driven networks. These networks offer additional capacity and capability, with community members involved in developing, monitoring, and maintaining the infrastructure. This ensures that local expertise is readily available during a disaster, reducing dependency on external specialists who may face challenges accessing affected communities like Wai‘anae, with its limited access due to a single road in and out.

Importance from a Preparedness Perspective

This is fundamentally important from a disaster preparedness perspective, as stated by leaders in Hawai‘i’s disaster management divisions, reflecting lessons learned from the Lahaina tragedy. During a recent 2023 Healthcare Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS) Conference, Frank Pace, Director of the Hawai‘i Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Administrator James Barros of HI-EMA emphasized the importance of a resilient communication infrastructure.

Director Pace highlighted the role of communication during disasters, describing the communication blackout experienced in Lahaina's first 72 hours. He stressed the need for proactive crisis response solutions and testing of communication systems to avoid such blackouts in the future. Administrator Barros echoed this concern, emphasizing the need for "redundancy in our communication systems."

These firsthand accounts from our own Hawai‘i disaster response leaders clearly illustrate the vital need for proactive investments in communication infrastructure for communities. Excluding "broadband infrastructure" deployment, specifically excluding ‘wireless community networks’ undermines this goal and leaves Hawai‘i communities vulnerable and ill-prepared to respond to future crises.

Recommendations

We respectfully request that the following amendments be made to revert the measure back to the language concurrent with the HD1 as follows:

- 1) Delete the definition of “Broadband Infrastructure”.
- 2) Delete the language specifying that projects that include the deployment of broadband infrastructure are ineligible for a grant under the Digital Equity Grant Program.
- 3) Specify that “wireless community networks” are eligible projects for the Digital Equity Grant Program.

Mahalo nui loa for considering our testimony.

Michele Chrissy Kuahine
Director of Clinical and Patient Informatics
MKuahine@wcchc.com



Written Statement of

Jeannine Souki, Senior Manager – Government & Regulatory Affairs

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON WAYS AND MEANS AND JUDICIARY

March 28, 2024, 9:45 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

SUPPORT FOR:

H.B. 2359 HD2 SD1 – RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE

To: Chairs Donovan Dela Cruz and Karl Rhoads, Vice-Chairs Sharon Moriwaki and Mike Gabbard, and Members of the Committees

Re: Testimony providing support for HB 2359 HD2 SD1

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

Thank you for this opportunity to submit support for HB 2359 HD2 SD1, which would establish a Digital Equity Grant Program within the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office. This proposed fund would endeavor to leverage the work of community and non-profit groups to provide digital literacy training for individuals to participate in the fast-growing digital world.

Having a high-speed fiber internet connection and services to address the digital equity needs of all households opens up a world of opportunity. Broadband is essential for business and government operations, delivering telemedicine, education, remote work, staying in touch with family and friends, and so much more. Fiber-optic cables carry 10,000 times more bandwidth than traditional copper cables, enabling fast upload speeds and a superior experience with services such as video calls and security cameras. Fiber technology is also more energy-efficient, more durable, and less susceptible to elements such as water and electromagnetic interference. Hawaiian Telcom is the only Hawai'i internet service provider that has invested more than \$1 billion over the last ten years to expand and support its fiber optic network and serve its customers.

In 2023, Hawaiian Telcom awarded \$140,000 to community organizations working to address digital equity and empower communities across the state. In addition, Hawaiian Telcom expanded its fiber-optics network to 65,000 new locations and is on track to build 60,000 new locations in 2024.

Hawaiian Telcom bridges the digital divide as a participating service provider in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) is winding down. Hawaiian Telcom continues to offer federal Lifeline discounts for internet or telephone services to qualified residents in areas where Fiioptics service is available.

Since the FCC launched ACP on December 31, 2021, the depletion of \$14 billion Congress appropriated for this federal program has been swifter than initially anticipated. This has resulted in the FCC's recent order to all participating service providers to hasten a wind-down of their programs because federal funding is running out in April/May 2024. This wrinkle should give us pause to consider that while the State will see a temporary infusion of approximately \$14 million toward digital equity services, ostensibly no additional federal funding may be available for continued operations or services beyond the initial investment. Therefore, it is important to invest and leverage the state's digital equity award to support the work of community and non-profit organizations in delivering digital literacy and access services to those in need.

Hawaiian Telcom appreciates the opportunity to testify and offer support for HB 2359 HD2 SD1.



Chamber of Commerce HAWAII

The Voice of Business

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senator Rhoads, Chair
Senator Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 9:45AM
Conference Room 211 & Video Conference

RE: HB2359 HD2 SD1 Relating to the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Joint Committee:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **supports HB2359 HD2 SD1**, 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 21st 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.

LATE

HB-2359-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/27/2024 1:22:18 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/28/2024 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John C Jack Lewin MD	Testifying for Hawaii State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA)	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Chair Donovan Del Cruz and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki, and

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Chair Karl Rhoads and Vice Chair Mike Gabbard, and

Honorable Members:

Regarding: **2359 HB RELATING TO THE HAWAII BROADBAND AND DIGITAL EQUITY OFFICE.**

Testimony of John C (Jack) Lewin MD, Administrator, State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA)

Position: SUPPORT, with Amendments

We strongly support HB2359 HD2 SD1, relating to the Hawai'i Broadband and Digital Equity Office, which aims to establish a robust Digital Equity Grant Program. However, the amendments made in HD2 and SD1, making 'broadband infrastructure deployment' ineligible and subsequently removing 'wireless community networks' for grant funding weakens the bill's intent and its potential impact on disaster preparedness. Our preferred outcome would be to revert to the original version of HB2359 to ensure the grant program can support vital community-driven solutions.

The Maui wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the critical need for proactive disaster preparedness, particularly regarding reliable communication infrastructure. The devastating consequences of communication blackouts, as seen in Lahaina, demand a proactive approach.

But this bill could also foster and protect better communication options in rural and underserved communities with community-driven ability to repair and maintain broadband

The original version of the bill afforded better opportunities and means to improve community based solutions, particularly for improving, maintaining, and assuring availability of broadband services for health care delivery systems suited for rural areas, neighbor islands, and low income, low-service populations. We therefore support the following amendments consistent with the HD1 version of the bill:

1. Delete the definition of “Broadband Infrastructure”.
2. Delete the language specifying that projects that include the deployment of broadband infrastructure are ineligible for a grant under the Digital Equity Grant Program.
3. Specify that “wireless community networks” are eligible projects for the Digital Equity Grant Program.

Mahlo for the opportunity to testify.

--John C (Jack) Lewin MD

Administrator, SHPDA



MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

LATE

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON JUDICIARY and WAYS AND MEANS
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 211
Thursday, March 28, 2024 AT 9:45 A.M.**

To The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Judiciary
To The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the committee on Ways and Means

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.

The original version of 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.

We are concerned that even though HB 2359 recognizes the value of "community wireless networks", it excludes "broadband infrastructure" as HD2 and SD1 both block funding for the deployment of such networks, contradicting its intent. We respectfully request that the following amendments be made to revert the measure back to the language that was removed from HD1 as follows:

- 1) Delete the definition of "Broadband Infrastructure".
- 2) Delete the language specifying that projects that include the deployment of broadband infrastructure are ineligible for a grant under the Digital Equity Grant Program.
- 3) Specify (restore) that "wireless community networks" are eligible projects for the Digital Equity Grant Program.

For these reasons, we **SUPPORT HB2359 HD2** *with our suggested amendments.*

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.