

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

House Committee on Finance

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

With Comments

House Bill No. 2700, HD2, Relating to Wildfires

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Office of the Governor offers the following comments on H.B. No. 2700, HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

H.B. No. 2700, HD2 establishes the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State and would appropriate funding.

The Maui wildfire resulted in unbearable loss of lives, homes, infrastructure, and businesses. This tragic event is a wake-up call that due to climate changes, the risk of catastrophic wildfires, along with other natural disasters in Hawaii has increased.

The Office of the Governor sees this proposal as one of a few important pieces of legislation that needs to be explored as our state figures out how to stabilize our electric utility and our energy future. The bill proposes to establish a fund that the state, the electric utility, telecom companies and private landowners may contribute to a relief fund that would then potentially cover future claims arising out of a catastrophic future wildfire.

While the Office of the Governor is open to this concept, we do not feel like there is sufficient detail in this proposal, and do not currently see a full comprehensive package from the electric utility on how to resolve past claims before we believe it would be prudent for the state to commit to an approach on future claims.

Therefore, we cannot support this bill currently. However, we do not oppose this bill moving forward so that we may continue our discussions with the electric utility and other key affected stakeholders.

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



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

NADINE Y. ANDO
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA
SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

DEAN I HAZAMA
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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the
House Committee on Finance
Monday, February 26, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308

On the following measure:
H.B. 2700, H.D.2, RELATING TO WILDFIRES.

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

My name is Nadine Ando, and I am the Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs ("Department") The Department offers comments on this bill.

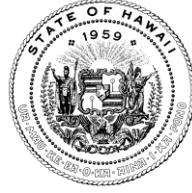
The purpose of this bill is to establish the Hawaii Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State and appropriates funds.

The Department appreciates the amendments in the current version of this bill, the H.D.2, includes the following amendments that: (1) deletes language that would have required future legislatures to consider certain information to determine whether adjustments to the Wildfire Relief Fund should be implemented; (2) requires that there be different contribution amounts by investor-owned utilities and non-investor owned utilities, taking into account the differences in revenues and assets between the ownership models; (3) permanently exempts the Wildfire Relief Fund Administrator

from civil service laws; and (4) makes technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The purpose of the wildfire relief fund is to process eligible claims for property damage resulting from future catastrophic wildfires. Notably, however, the current proposal does not address the means or the mechanisms to compensate for claims of property damage arising out of the recent devastating Maui wildfires. The Department believes that a more comprehensive proposal from key stakeholders such as the electric utility is needed to better assess the feasibility and effectiveness of any proposed measure relating to property damage compensation and risk exposure.

The Department remains committed to contributing constructively to the development of legislation that ensures the safety and well-being of our communities and is grateful for the opportunity to offer comments on this bill.



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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the
House Committee on Finance
Monday, February 26, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 308

On the following measure:
H.B. 2700, H.D. 2, RELATING TO WILDFIRES

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

My name is Michael Angelo, and I am the Executive Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (Department) Division of Consumer Advocacy. The Department offers comments on this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to establish the Hawaii Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State and appropriate funds.

The Maui wildfire resulted in tragic losses of life, personal injuries, and property damage. The pain of that tragedy will be felt for generations. We must take decisive action to eliminate the possibility of such tragic outcomes from recurring by focusing on mitigating the risks from natural hazards.

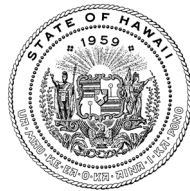
This bill proposes establishing a fund that the State, electric utilities, public utilities that contribute to the risk of occurrence or severity of a catastrophic wildfire, other government entities, and private landowners may participate in. The money within the

fund would then potentially cover future claims related to property damage arising out of a future catastrophic wildfire.

The Department appreciates that this bill seeks to address the stability of the State's public utilities. The Department greatly appreciates that the amendments made by the prior House Committees which, among other things, provide language that would prevent utility ratepayers from having to shoulder the burden of paying costs to cover property claims arising from future catastrophic wildfires. Specifically, the HD2 version prohibits a participating public utility from recovering contributions and reimbursements, respectively, from their ratepayers. The Department believes that these provisions must be included within the bill if this bill is passed and enacted.

The Department also notes amendments that, in effect, allow non-investor owned utilities, such as member-owned cooperatives, to participate in the proposed program. The Department believes that those amendments are needed because non-investor owned utilities may suffer damages from or possibly contribute to the cause of a catastrophic wildfire. The Department appreciates the adoption of our recommendation to amend the proposed § -8(d)(3) to require different contribution amounts from the investor-owned and non-investor owned utilities that account for differences in revenues and assets between the different ownership models.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
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ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 2700, H.D. 2

February 26, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Room 308 and Videoconference

RELATING TO WILDFIRES

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 2700, H.D. 2: 1) establishes the Wildfire Relief Fund (WRF) within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) and outside of the State treasury to hold contributions from participating entities and fund compensation payments for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires; 2) establishes the WRF Corporation within DCCA to administer the WRF and specifies that it is not subject to the Insurance Code; 3) authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to order public utilities to reimburse the WRF for compensation payments if it determines the public utility engaged in imprudent conduct; and 4) appropriates an unspecified amount in FY 25 to seed the new fund and to establish one full-time equivalent exempt administrator position to support the WRF Corporation.

B&F understands the intent of this measure as it establishes a broad framework to: 1) commission an actuarial study of the capitalization amount of the proposed WRF necessary to manage claims arising from catastrophic wildfires; 2) collect contributions from governmental entities and utilities; and 3) make payments to eligible claimants. B&F is willing to work with its sister departments and agencies and the Legislature to advance the purposes of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 S. Hotel Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

TESTIMONY OF
LEODOLOFF R. ASUNCION, JR.
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
STATE OF HAWAII

TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

February 26, 2024
2:00 p.m.

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

MEASURE: H.B. No. 2700, H.D. 2
TITLE: RELATING TO WILDFIRES.

DESCRIPTION: Establishes the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

POSITION:

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") offers the following comments for consideration.

COMMENTS:

The Commission appreciates the intent of this measure to mitigate the effects of a catastrophic wildfire in Hawaii by establishing a wildfire relief fund and corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in Hawaii.

In H.B. 2700, H.D. 2, the Commission observes that the burden to pay for capitalization and participation in the fund has shifted from a Commission determination as to whether costs should be recovered from ratepayers or shareholders, to solely shareholder responsibility. The Commission agrees that it is important to carefully consider what costs are appropriate for ratepayers to bear and does not want to unjustly recover costs from ratepayers. Just and reasonable rates, prudence of incurred costs, and affordability are driving factors in every decision that the Commission makes. This proposed wildfire fund, however, is a form of insurance for electric utilities that own systems that are extremely

costly to insure on the private market. Similar insurance is sometimes recovered in utility rates following a Commission determination that it provides a benefit to ratepayers. In California, the similar wildfire fund includes contributions from both electric utility ratepayers and shareholders in a sophisticated landscape that has been developed over more than a decade.

The Commission believes that it is critical to have a financially viable utility to serve customers and that it may be appropriate to recover costs from both ratepayers and shareholders for participation in the fund. Therefore, the Commission offers the following amendment for consideration:

Page 22, lines 10-13:

(k) Utility contribution. A public utility's contributions to the wildfire relief fund, including initial and supplemental contributions, ~~shall not~~ may be recovered from its customers in rates and from its shareholders in amounts to be determined by the Commission.

Further, the Commission observes that it is hard to determine whether the limitations on reimbursement provided in section - 9 (d) are appropriate without first understanding the relative contributions to capitalization by different entities. Additionally, the Commission questions whether assessing "only acts that may have caused the ignition", is appropriate, or whether it may also be appropriate to assess whether a public utility contributed to the extent of a wildfire as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-2700-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 3:33:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shane Sinenci	Maui County Councilmember	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Supportive.

TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

126 Queen Street, Suite 305

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

SUBJECT: MISCELLANEOUS, Hawai‘i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation; Public Utilities Commission; Catastrophic Wildfire

BILL NUMBER: HB 2700 HD 2

INTRODUCED BY: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Establishes the Hawai‘i wildfire relief fund and corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State.

SYNOPSIS: Amends the HRS by adding a new chapter. The new chapter would establish the Wildfire Relief Fund and an associated quasi-government Wildfire Relief Fund Corporation. The entity is charged with administering a voluntary program for wildfire victims to apply for a payment from the fund in exchange for releasing from liability the entities that had contributed to the fund.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 3000.

STAFF COMMENTS: Our comments are contained in our publication of November 30, 2023, entitled “The Lahaina Recovery Fund,” reprinted below.

The Lahaina Recovery Fund

One of the more innovative items announced by the Governor’s office when it comes to disaster relief measures is the creation of a Lahaina Recovery Fund.

In a press release announcing the measure, the Governor’s Office said that the concept was similar to the 9/11 Fund created in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center. The idea is that the government, Hawaiian Electric, Kamehameha Schools, and others who might be facing lawsuits would pay into the fund. Claimants who want a distribution from the fund agree not to sue the fund contributors.

It was a controversial enough plan that the Star-Advertiser conducted an informal “Big Q” online poll to see if its readers thought the fund was a good idea. (As of this writing, supporters were a little more than twice the number of detractors.)

Typical of the opposition was this post on X: “So in other words, what our state government deems is the value of your loss is all you will receive because you sign your rights away to sue for more?!? DON’T DO IT #LAHAINA!”

In a previous column, we urged the government to create this type of fund. The primary advantages are (1) claimants get money in months, not years; (2) claimants typically won’t have to contend with attorneys’ fees, which could otherwise be a huge amount like a third of the

recovery; and (3) people can get on with their lives instead of worrying about discovery, depositions, trial, and possible appeals.

The fund being proposed has a voluntary participation element, like many class actions. If someone thinks that they can get a better result by suing, they are certainly free to do so. And even for folks who sue, it's tough to get past the idea that the payment will "be a payment of the State's choosing." After all, if there is a settlement of any kind (90% of litigated court cases are settled), the government will have to sign off on the payment because it would be a defendant in the litigation.

Those who want to be purists about it would need to settle in for the long haul. Take-no-prisoners litigation would need at least a couple of years to get to trial. Many more years could be added to that if appeals follow. Those purists will be waiting a long time for their money.

So, how much is each participant going to get if they opt into the fund? The exact amount isn't known at this point. This is because negotiations are still ongoing with the potential defendants who would be putting money into the fund, and folks don't yet have a clear idea of how many people would be participating. This is not unusual even for mass tort litigation and other class actions. The Governor says that the amount per participant will be north of \$1 million. Obviously, this is not a case where the government is trying to get people to sign off for a pittance like 20 bucks in some preloaded gift card. This is serious money and should be considered by the claimants seriously.

People who are thinking about being a possible claimant of the fund need to thoughtfully consider the dollar amount, whether the claimant could do better if he or she filed a lawsuit, and the cost of that lawsuit. Attorneys don't come cheap, and a "contingency fee" where the attorney is paid only if there is a recovery may cost a third (or more) of the total recovery. Add to that the uncertainty of when, or if, litigation recovery will be paid. The recovery fund, in contrast, will be ready to pay out in months, not years.

Maui claimants can be the adults in the room. They can and should make their own choices about their own future. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to a Lahaina claim. We congratulate the Governor's office for putting this option on the table.

Digested: 2/24/2024



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, PRESIDENT
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
FEBRUARY 26, 2024
HB 2700 HD2 RELATING TO WILDFIRES.**

Good afternoon, Chair Yamashita, and members of the House Committee on Finance. I am Tina Yamaki, President of the Retail Merchants of Hawaii and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii was founded in 1901, RMH is a statewide, not for profit trade organization committed to the growth and development of the retail industry in Hawaii. Our membership includes small mom & pop stores, large box stores, resellers, luxury retail, department stores, shopping malls, local, national, and international retailers, chains, and everyone in between.

We support the intent of HB 2700 HD2. This measure establishes the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State; appropriates funds; and is effective 7/1/3000.

The recent Maui Wildfires had a devastating effect on the community. We hope this never happens again in our state. Families, businesses, and the community were heavily affected. This measure is a solution in the event that we are faced with another catastrophic wildfire.

Should our state face another devastating wildfire (that could be caused by a multitude of unknown factors), this wildfire relief fund would help to ensure that resources would be available for potential victims. It would also provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage, no matter the cause of the wildfire.

Furthermore, this bill would help to reduce the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future wildfires as well as protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners, and utilities that contribute to the fund. This is a step in the right direction to begin having these conversations. While we hope this never happens again, we should start to plan for not only prevention and response but also the aftermath.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.



Chamber of Commerce HAWAII

The Voice of Business

**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Monday, February 26, 2024 at 2:00PM
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference**

RE: HB2700 HD2 RELATING TO WILDFIRES

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

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **generally supports HB2700 HD2**, which would establish the Hawaii Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation involving governmental entities, public utilities, and private landowners to provide compensation to cover claims for property damages resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State and appropriate funds.

The Chamber appreciates the amendments made in the current version of the bill, including addressing the distinction between investor-owned utilities and non-investor-owned utilities stakeholders in contribution amounts and considering the variations inherent in each ownership model. While we are in general support of this measure, we urge the committee to work with other stakeholders to address the valid concerns they may have. It is crucial that any legislative action taken does not inadvertently create negative impacts on the neighbor islands and their residents. By engaging in constructive dialogue and seeking collaborative solutions, we can achieve a balanced approach that benefits all parties involved.

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.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this measure.



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February 26, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 2700, HD2
RELATING TO WILDFIRES

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

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

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 2700, HD2, which establishes the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State.

This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawai'i families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners, and utilities that contribute to the fund by reining in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



Testimony Before the House Committee on Finance

By David Bissell
President and Chief Executive Officer
Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative
4463 Pahe'e Street, Suite 1, Līhu'e, Hawai'i, 96766-2000

Monday, February 26, 2024; 2:00 pm
Conference Room #308 & Videoconference

House Bill No. 2700 HD2 - RELATING WILDFIRES

To the Honorable Chair Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Lisa Kitagawa and Members of the Committee:

Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) is a not-for-profit utility providing electrical service to more than 34,000 commercial and residential members.

KIUC offers comments on this measure.

KIUC shares the legislature's concern regarding the risks posed by catastrophic wildfires and the potential impact to the health, safety and financial security of residents and businesses throughout the state. KIUC agrees that it is in the best interest of the state to minimize the impact of potential litigation following catastrophic events, and ensure residents have access to compensation for property damage resulting from wildfires.

The establishment of a Wildfire Relief Fund could have significant financial impacts, both positive and negative, on residents, businesses, utilities, government agencies and other stakeholders. KIUC believes the needs and circumstances of each of these stakeholders is diverse and should be considered prior to acting on this legislation. Without access to background on studies or other information used to develop this complex proposal, we have concerns about the bill's potential negative impact to KIUC. In order to support the establishment of a Wildfire Relief Fund, KIUC would need much more information on costs and potential benefits of participating, both initially and ongoing.

The preamble to HB 2700 states that the measure is designed in part to "...ensure that the threat of wildfires does not make investment in Hawaii's public utilities so financially risky that it becomes too costly or impossible for them to raise capital to implement vital plans, including plans to mitigate wildfire risk, and to provide safe, reliable, and affordable service to the people of the State."

While this is undoubtedly a consideration for an investor-owned utility such as Hawaiian Electric (HECO), a cooperative such as KIUC does not bear anywhere near the same amount of investment risk. Because KIUC has no shareholders and is therefore considered to be part of the public power universe of electric utilities, KIUC would have access to funding assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the event

of a wildfire, and it is likely that FEMA would cover 75% of KIUC's rebuild costs following a major catastrophic event. Additionally, as a cooperative, KIUC has access to low-cost capital through the U.S.D.A. Rural Utilities Service (RUS), which would likely be a lower interest rate source of debt capital than even AAA-rated securitized bonds. If RUS debt is unavailable, KIUC would seek capital from one of our cooperative lenders, such as the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation or CoBank.

KIUC has concerns that, as a utility representing just 5% of the state's population, the costs associated with establishing and maintaining the fund could have a disproportionate financial impact on our members without a commensurate return. While KIUC appreciates that HD2 allows for different contribution amounts between investor-owned and non-investor owned utilities, we still believe that participation from cooperative utilities be made optional based on the costs and benefits of participation.

Thank you for your consideration.



**Hawaiian
Electric**

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

HB 2700, HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Jason Benn

Senior Vice President Chief Information Officer

Hawaiian Electric

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

My name is Jason Benn, Senior Vice President & Chief Information Officer for Hawaiian Electric and I am testifying **in strong support of HB 2700, HD2, Relating to Wildfires, and requesting amendments as proposed in the attached.** HB 2700, HD2 would create a statewide wildfire relief fund to compensate property owners, insurers, and government entities for property damage resulting from future catastrophic wildfires, regardless of who or what caused them. As we so painfully learned on August 8, 2023, the impacts of climate change, combined with the changing uses of land in Hawaii, are creating a whole-of-society problem. HB 2700, HD2 is part of that whole-of-society solution.

This measure does not contemplate a financial bailout for the company related to the Maui wildfires. This measure is forward-looking, about working to prevent something terrible like this from ever happening again and to provide additional financial protection for everyone in the unlikely event of a future catastrophic wildfire. This legislation will

also help strengthen the financial standing of Hawaiian Electric, enabling it to continue serving the energy needs of Hawaii as it has done since 1891.

We emphasize that HB 2700, HD2 does not apply to claims arising from the August 8 event. Rather, it is intended to help protect the people of Hawaii and our economy by providing compensation for property damage should another catastrophic wildfire occur in the future. In short, if passed HB 2700, HD2 would:

- Provide expedited compensation to property owners for uninsured losses—with no up-front out of pocket costs, and without the need for time-consuming, costly, and uncertain litigation.
- Provide compensation to state and local governments for losses, including the costs of fire suppression and damage to infrastructure.
- Reimburse property insurers a percentage of their payments to their policyholders. Again, this would be accomplished through an expedited, low-cost, non-litigation process.

Other noteworthy features of HB 2700, HD2 include:

- The fund would pay regardless of the cause. If a fire is caused by arson, fireworks, trash fires or natural events, or where a fire cannot be legally attributed to a financially capable party, property owners have no recourse to recover their uninsured losses. This bill seeks to address that, while also eliminating costly and lengthy litigation.
- Contributors to the Fund would be the State, electric utilities, large landowners, and counties, if those entities voluntarily choose to participate.
- Beneficiaries who chose to participate, such as property owners and property insurers, would not be able to sue those who contribute to the Fund. Contributors, for their part, would provide funds available to compensate beneficiaries no matter the cause of a catastrophic fire—pooling their resources to provide a financial backstop regardless of fault. At the same time, the bill includes a process to hold contributors accountable if they are found to have caused or contributed to the spread of fire, by means of a reimbursement to the fund.
- All property owners that do not opt out of the program via their annual property tax assessment would be participants. That feature makes it possible for the Fund to cover all catastrophic wildfires regardless of fault.

- The Fund can be flexibly capitalized, through a combination of cash contributions up front and over time, plus other, non-cash support such as a guarantee, insurance, and other financial products. That is, the Fund is designed to have the *capacity* to compensate beneficiaries for losses, but it does not need to have all of the *cash* on-hand at all times.

The Fund not only provides compensation to property owners and insurers; it also helps the State and individuals avoid the costs and burdens of litigation, as well as the financial instability that can result from litigation due to catastrophic wildfires. The State has a strong interest in avoiding that outcome. Electric utilities, for example, invest hundreds of millions of dollars every year in our State to help achieve its energy policy objectives. These include renewable energy, decarbonization, resilience and the availability of safe, reliable, and secure service to our customers, including other critical infrastructure providers, such as hospitals and the Department of Defense.

Furthermore, the scope of a catastrophic wildfire is the result of a number of factors, including climate change and land management practices, that are not the fault of any single entity. The Fund equitably shares the burden of these factors that can lead to a catastrophic wildfire, promoting the public's interest in ensuring that our critical infrastructure providers, including electric utilities, remain able to raise the capital needed to invest in our State.

In order to continue to be able to make these large upfront investments, the utility must eliminate the financial uncertainty of future wildfire risks and regain access to capital. We believe this bill and investments Hawaiian Electric and others will make to mitigate wildfire risk, will help do so.

We appreciate the care the previous committees took on the bill, and we support most of their amendments. However, we request three amendments be considered;

two amendments that were adopted in HD1 not be accepted and instead revert to the original language of the bill, details of which are included in the attached. The third amendment is being proposed to address State Farm Insurance's concern – details of which are attached.

First, under the original language in HB 2700, a public utility's contributions to this Fund are recoverable in rates. HD1 changes that, prohibiting any rate recovery of Hawaiian Electric's contribution to the Fund. Respectfully, the original proposal is consistent with current law and fair. Historically, Hawaiian Electric has always recovered the costs of liability insurance from its customers in its regulated rates. Commercial insurance for large losses resulting from catastrophic wildfires isn't available, but if it were, it would be far more expensive than the Fund. We believe therefore it is reasonable to allow for customer contributions to Hawaiian Electric's portion of the Fund.

The provision in HD1 that would require shareholder funding of the contribution to the Fund also wrongly prejudices Hawaiian Electric as culpable for a future catastrophic wildfire, before any investigation has been conducted, and even if the contribution is used to pay for damages from fires that the utility had no role in. We feel that is unfair. Our proposal provides for the Public Utilities Commission ("PUC" or "Commission") to investigate the utility's conduct and, if it finds that the utility's imprudence caused or contributed to a future catastrophic wildfire, then the PUC will order it to reimburse the fund up to a cap. That way, the utility will be held accountable if, but only if, the PUC finds that it acts wrongly.

Second, the original version of HB 2700 stated that, in a PUC review, the utility's conduct will be presumed. HD1 eliminates this presumption. We request that this Committee restore the presumption. First, to clarify, this presumption has nothing to do with civil liability or lawsuits; it is strictly limited to a PUC review. Second, the presumption harmonizes the Wildfire Relief Fund with other laws establishing a PUC-approved wildfire mitigation plan. The presumption reflects that the PUC has evaluated and approved wildfire mitigation plans based on principles of reasonableness and prudence. At the same time, the presumption isn't absolute; if a serious doubt is raised about the utility's prudence, the presumption falls away. Our proposal mirrors the California statute, as well as the approach taken by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Third, to address concerns by State Farm Insurance we are proposing to clarify property owner claims in Section 13, toll the statute of limitations for property owners or insurers in the event of a fund depletion in Section 16 and clarify that property owners cannot waive insurer claims in Section 18(a)(2)(c). The proposed amendments are meant to address State Farm's concern that property damage claims are fairly administered even with the existence of the fund.

In summary, HB 2700, HD2 provides a low-cost and rapid process to compensate property owners and insurance companies and avoids the uncertainty of litigation that can financially destabilize utilities, large landowners, and government entities. Solving the impacts of climate change on our State must be addressed collectively and collaboratively.

On behalf of the 2,600 employees, 5,200 retirees and the generations of Hawaiian Electric employees who have faithfully served our community for 132 years, mahalo for allowing me to testify in strong support of this important bill. Please pass HB 2700, HD2.

Proposed Amendments to HB 2700, HD2

§ -8 Wildfire relief fund; funding.

(k) Utility contribution. A public utility's contributions to the wildfire relief fund, including initial and supplemental contributions, shall ~~not~~ be recovered from its customers in rates, unless the public utilities commission directs otherwise pursuant to section -9.

§ -9 Replenishment of the wildfire relief fund; determination

of prudence. (a) If the administrator, or an agency of the State with responsibility for determining the causes of wildfires, informs the public utilities commission that a catastrophic wildfire may have been ignited by the facilities of a public utility that is a contributor, the public utilities commission shall initiate a proceeding to review the public utility's conduct leading to the catastrophic wildfire and make findings. The public utilities commission may, even without formal notice from the administrator or the agency, initiate this proceeding of its own accord.

(b) The public utilities commission shall evaluate the prudence of the conduct of the public utility in connection with a catastrophic wildfire as follows.

(1) If the investor-utility has a wildfire risk mitigation plan that was approved by the public utilities commission, the investor-utility's conduct will be deemed to have been prudent, unless a party to the proceeding creates a serious doubt as to the prudence of the investor-owned utility's conduct; or

(2) If the investor-utility does not have a wildfire risk mitigation plan that was approved by the public utilities commission, or if the public utilities commission determines that the presumption is overcome, the public

utilities commission shall determine whether the public utility acted prudently, considering only acts that may have caused the ignition and evaluating the public utility's actions in the context of the public utility's overall systems, processes, and programs, such that an error by a public utility employee would not be a basis for a finding of imprudence, unless that error resulted from any imprudent system, process, or program.

(c) In evaluating prudence under this section, the public utilities commission shall determine whether the actions of the public utility were consistent with actions that a reasonable public utility would have undertaken in good faith under similar circumstances, at the relevant point in time, and based on the information available to the public utility at the relevant point in time.

Reasonable conduct shall not be limited to the optimum practice, method, or act to the exclusion of others, but rather

shall encompass a spectrum of possible practices, methods, or acts consistent with utility system needs, the interest of ratepayers, and the requirements of governmental agencies of competent jurisdiction.

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Amendments to Address State Farm Concerns

§ -13 **Claims by property owners.** (a) To be eligible for compensation from the wildfire relief fund for recovery of uninsured damage to property from a catastrophic wildfire, a property owner shall not have opted out from participation in the wildfire relief fund before the occurrence of the catastrophic wildfire.

(b) County tax assessors shall include, with each real property tax assessment sent to a property owner in the State, a prominent notice regarding participation in the wildfire relief fund. The notice shall be in a form prescribed by the administrator and shall clearly explain the property owner's right to opt out of participation in the wildfire relief fund by submitting a request to opt out to the administrator within a specific time. A property owner who does not submit a timely request to opt out shall be deemed to participate in the wildfire relief fund as of the deadline for submitting a request to opt out.

(c) Any costs of administering the process described in subsection (b) shall be reimbursed by the wildfire relief fund.

(d) In order to opt out of participation in the wildfire relief fund with regard to property either in areas within the State that have been assigned extreme, high, and moderate wildfire risk classes by _____, a property owner shall submit documentation of insurance coverage for the property along with the property owner's request to opt out of the

wildfire relief fund, and the administrator shall approve the documentation as adequate evidence of insurance for the applicable property.

(e) Following a catastrophic wildfire, to make a claim for compensation from the wildfire relief fund for uninsured damage to real or personal property from the wildfire, a property owner shall submit to the administrator documentation establishing:

- (1) That the catastrophic wildfire damaged the owner's property;
- (2) The extent of the losses to the owner's property caused by that catastrophic wildfire; and
- (3) Any insurance policy providing coverage for those losses.

(f) Within ninety days after a property owner submits a claim for compensation from the wildfire relief fund, including the documentation required in this section, the administrator shall determine whether the documentation is adequate and, if so, the appropriate amount of the payment to the property owner from the wildfire relief fund. If the administrator determines that the property owner has not submitted sufficient documentation for the administrator to evaluate the claim, the administrator may request additional documentation from the property owner and may set a date by which the additional information shall be provided by the property owner.

(g) If no insurance policy provides coverage for the losses for which a property owner seeks compensation from the wildfire relief fund, the property owner shall be eligible to receive as compensation from the wildfire relief fund a maximum of \$ _____.

(h) If an insurance policy provides coverage for the losses for ~~which~~ property damage incurred by a property owner who seeks compensation from the wildfire relief fund, the property owner shall be eligible to receive as compensation from the wildfire relief fund only compensation for uninsured real or personal property damage, in an amount up to the lesser of:

(1) ___ per cent of the amount by which the property owner's losses exceed the amount of insurance coverage for the losses; or

(2) ___ per cent of the property owner's insurance coverage applicable to the losses;

provided that the property owner submits adequate documentation of those losses, as required by this section.

§ -16 **Fund depletion.** (a) Within thirty days of a catastrophic wildfire, the administrator shall assess whether the total payments that the wildfire relief fund is projected to make to eligible property owners, property insurers, and the State and other governmental entities under sections -13, -14, and -15, respectively, are expected to exceed seventy-five per cent of the total available money remaining in the wildfire relief fund. The board shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 regarding the performance of this assessment.

(b) If the administrator assesses pursuant to subsection (a) that the total payments that the wildfire relief fund is projected to make to eligible property owners, property insurers, and the State and other governmental entities under sections -13, -14, and -15, respectively, are expected to exceed seventy-five per cent of the total available money remaining in the wildfire relief fund, the administrator shall seek to increase the total amount of money in the fund using all available methods under this chapter.

(c) Depletion event. If the administrator is unable, despite taking the steps under subsection (b), to secure sufficient additional funding for the wildlife relief fund, including credible pledges for future funding, to reverse the administrator's assessment under subsection (a) within forty-five days, the administrator shall declare the existence of a depletion event.

(d) Depletion percentage. If the administrator declares the existence of a depletion event, the administrator shall

determine what percentage of total eligible payments the wildlife relief fund can make without the likelihood that the payments will exceed seventy-five per cent of the total available money in the wildlife relief fund. This percentage shall be deemed the depletion percentage.

(e) Depletion payment. The administrator shall thereafter offer all property owners, property insurers, the State, and other governmental entities that submit claims for compensation from the wildfire relief fund and would otherwise, under sections -13, -14, and -15, respectively, be entitled to a particular payment amount, that amount multiplied by the depletion percentage. This amount shall be deemed the depletion payment.

(f) All claimants that are offered the depletion payment may choose to accept or decline the payment. Any property owner or property insurer, other than a contributor, that declines to accept the depletion payment shall:

(1) Be ineligible for any payments by the wildfire relief fund with respect to the catastrophic wildfire for which the claim was made; and

(2) Not be bound by the limitation on claims under section -18 with respect to only that catastrophic wildfire; **and**

(3) The limitation period provided for any cause of action arising out of the catastrophic wildfire that could be asserted by the property owner or property insurer that declines to accept the depletion payment shall be tolled for the period from the date of the catastrophic wildfire to the date the Administrator offers claimants the depletion payment.

(g) After the payments to all claimants who accepted the depletion payment have been made, the administrator may

recommend to the board, and the board may decide, in its discretion, to make a further payment to all claimants who accepted the depletion payment. The board shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 for the making of this decision.

(h) Multiple catastrophic events. The board shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 regarding how to pay claims in the event that one or more catastrophic wildfires occur while the corporation is in the process of assessing, receiving, determining, or paying claims from an earlier catastrophic wildfire.

§ -18 **Limitations on claims.** (a) No suit, claim, or other civil legal action may be instituted or maintained against contributors or their affiliates, employees, agents, or insurers:

(1) For recovery of losses or damages of a type for which compensation may be sought from the wildfire relief fund; and

(2) By persons or entities:

(A) Who are contributors, property owners who do not opt out of the wildfire relief fund, or property insurers who elect to participate in the wildfire relief fund; or

(B) Who seek indemnity or contribution for amounts paid, or that may be paid, to contributors, property owners who do not opt out of the wildfire relief fund, or property insurers who elect to participate in the wildfire relief fund.

(C) Provided, however, that the rights of a property insurer to sue as subrogee of its policy holder shall not be affected by a property owner's participation in the wildfire relief fund and eligibility to seek uninsured property damages from the wildfire relief fund, but instead such subrogation rights will be affected only if the insurer participates in the wildfire relief fund.

(b) Persons or entities who are eligible to seek compensation from the wildfire relief fund for property damage arising from a catastrophic wildfire may not seek to recover for

damage from electric utilities, public utilities other than electric utilities, the State, or private landowners who are contributors, notwithstanding that the claimed property damage may exceed the amount of payment by the wildfire relief fund for the damage.

(c) The wildfire relief fund shall be subrogated to the rights of the contributors, property owners who do not opt out of the wildfire relief fund, and property insurers who elect to participate in the wildfire relief fund, to the extent of any payment made by the wildfire relief fund to those persons or entities, and may pursue claims against a person or entity that is not a contributor for damages resulting from the catastrophic wildfire.

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SanHi

GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

A LIMITED LIABILITY LAW PARTNERSHIP

DATE: February 25, 2024

TO: Representative Kyle T. Yamashita
Chair, Committee on Finance

FROM: Matt Tsujimura

RE: **H.B. 2700 H.D. 2 – Relating to Wildfires**
Hearing Date: Monday, February 26, 2024 at 2:00PM
Conference Room: 308

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee on Finance:

I am Matt Tsujimura, representing State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company (State Farm). State Farm offers this testimony **in opposition** to H.B. 2700 H.D. 2, Relating to Wildfires.

H.B. 2700 H.D. 2 establishes the Hawaii Wildfire Relief Fund and corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State.

H.B. 2700 H.D. 2 does not protect consumers. Participating in the Wildfire Relief Fund would result in the property owner never being made whole. Instead, the proposal asks property owners and insurers to waive rights before a loss has occurred and the extent of the damage and liability is known. It requires property owners to participate in the fund unless they “opt out.” If the property owner does not affirmatively “opt out,” the only source of recovery against a negligent party is a pre-determined amount (uninsured property owner) or a percentage (insured property owner) of their overall loss. A property owner who failed to “opt out” may unknowingly waive their individual right to seek damages from a negligent party and which may also impact an insurer’s subrogation rights.¹

Insurers are required to “opt-in” to participate in the proposed Wildfire Relief Fund and, if they do so, the recovery is limited to a percentage predetermined by the fund. The proposal essentially asks an insurer to assess liability and likelihood of potential recovery before the event has occurred, a time when the facts, circumstances, and identity of the responsible parties is unknown.

H.B. 2700 H.D. 2 does not appear to *require* any type of wildfire mitigation plan by contributing entities to prevent catastrophic wildfire events. Rather, the proposal gives the public utilities commission, the fund administrator, or other state agency the ability

¹ Subrogation supports a critical public policy purpose of ensuring the party who caused the loss bears the financial burden for the damage caused.

to determine if the conduct was “prudent.”² While unlikely, this could enable contributing entities to pay into the fund to significantly limit their liability while limiting other types of preventative wildfire measures they could take due to the protection offered by being a fund contributor.

Ultimately, State Farm is concerned this proposal is detrimental to consumers and does little to help mitigate wildfire losses, while allowing the responsible parties to limit liability for their wrongful conduct.

For these reasons we offer this testimony in opposition. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

² Investor-owned utilities who have a wildfire mitigation plan approved by the public utilities commission are deemed to have been “prudent” unless a party to the proceeding creates doubt as to the conduct.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Monday, February 26, 2024 — 2:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports the intent and offers amendments on HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

Dear Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono supports the intent and offers amendments on HB 2700 HD2, which establishes the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State, but shares some comments for the committee's consideration.

Hawai'i's unique communities and ecosystems are increasingly threatened by the devastating impacts of wildfires. In recent years, we have witnessed a rise in the frequency and intensity of wildfires, exacerbated by climate change, land and water management practices, and urban encroachment into fire-prone areas. The culmination of these forces resulted in the devastating and heartbreaking destruction seen on Maui last year.

It is undisputed that it is important to prepare for increased risks from wildfires, and to ensure that loss and damage caused by wildfires are addressed. The establishment of the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation could be an important opportunity to address the financial aftermath of such disasters. This initiative can help serve as a safety net for those affected, ensuring that residents have the support they need to rebuild their lives and homes without the overwhelming burden of financial insecurity.

While many may view such a bill as a benefit to existing electric utilities, it is important to note that any business will struggle with unlimited liability, making access to capital difficult or more expensive and constraining a business' ability to make much needed investments in the interim.¹

¹ As stated by the Hawaiian Electric Companies in its January 31, 2024, filing with the Public Utilities Commission, "Maui Electric is aware of 100 complaints related to the August 2023 Maui wildfires that assert claims against Maui Electric. One complaint is pending in the First Circuit Court in O'ahu, 19 complaints are pending in the Second Circuit Court in Maui County, and 80 complaints are pending in the U.S. District Court. for the District of Hawai'i." See Non-Docketed Case No. 2023-04643 Maui Electric Monthly Wildfire-Related Litigation Report January 2024.

<https://shareus11.springcm.com/Public/DownloadNative/25256/e52ef351-84c0-ee11-b83e-48df377ef808/0b5fa85f-a9c0-ee11-b83e-48df377ef808>

Furthermore, there is a very real risk that utilities may be unable to adequately insure against future climate related disasters, such as wildfires, and will increasingly rely on new approaches to risk mitigation.² UluPono recognizes the multifaceted challenges facing the electric utilities, including the need to address ongoing potential wildfire liability while aggressively pursuing the state's policy goals of increasing clean energy, improving grid reliability and resiliency, and reducing costs for customers. As such, a measure such as this bill can help establish an approach going forward that would place boundaries around potential liability, while ensuring a pool of resources to help aid in future recovery needs. This is not a perfect solution—there are tradeoffs to be sure—but, on the whole, UluPono considers this a net positive for the state. There are a few elements worth noting from the bill as currently drafted:

The measure only covers property damage, not loss of lives: The bill does not attempt to place any limitations on the liability of loss of life, only focusing on loss of property. UluPono recognizes that such limitations are reasonable, by not constraining liability for the most sensitive and difficult type of loss.

A wildfire relief fund would reduce barriers to entry for potential third-party buyers of the electric utility: A financial support structure will reduce risk for potential investors in an investor-owned utility, thereby making it a more favorable opportunity.

UluPono offers the following comments/suggestions to improve the bill's effectiveness:

Determination of Total Risk and Contributions: As currently drafted, the bill proposes to determine the total potential wildfire risk and determine the apportionment of contributions from fund members using an actuarial methodology. Such an approach should be better defined, as it is unclear how the apportionment between entities would be established without significant challenges from participants and stakeholders—which could lead to the delay in development of the fund and potentially slow down or inhibit the effectiveness of the fund.

Liability for Employee Error: As currently drafted, the bill protects funders from liability due to employee error, which should be modified to include what is legally applicable under normal employer/employee liability scenarios.

20% Cap on Transmission and Distribution Equity Rate Base: As currently drafted, the Public Utilities Commission, upon a finding of imprudence, is prohibited from ordering the investor-owned utility to reimburse the wildfire relief fund in an amount that exceeds the lesser of:

- (1) The costs that the Public Utilities Commission determines were due to the investor-owned utility's imprudence; or
- (2) Twenty per cent of the investor-owned utility's transmission and distribution equity rate base minus the amounts the utility has reimbursed, or is required to reimburse, the wildfire relief fund during the period of three consecutive calendar years ending on December 31 of the year in which the calculation is being performed.

It is unclear whether the 20% cap on investor-owned utility's transmission and distribution equity

² **As wildfires losses mount, will commercial insurers decline to cover utilities?** *Utility Dive*, January 31, 2024. <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/wildfire-utility-grid-insurance-climate-pge-xcel-hawaiian-electric/703178/>

rate base is a reasonable amount to place such a limitation. The concern would be that such a limitation would in fact be the lesser of the two potential amounts to such an extreme degree that the liability would far outstrip the cap. Further evaluation and analysis should be conducted in concert with the investor-owned utility to determine if this amount is prudent.

10% Cap on Hawai'i-Based Assets for Other Fund Contributors: On a similar note, other fund participants, such as a cooperative utility, another governmental entity, or a private landowner that is a contributor that may have caused the occurrence or contributed to the severity of a catastrophic wildfire, are subject to a cap of 10% of the contributor's assets within Hawai'i, measured over a rolling three-year period. While such a construct may work for some entities, other entities may be significantly shielded from liability due to their limited asset holdings in Hawai'i. As such, Uluono recommends a deeper evaluation of the proposed caps to ensure adequate coverage if a finding of imprudence is in fact determined.

The establishment of the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund has the potential to help provide much-needed support and relief to those affected by wildfires in our state. By offering a reliable source of compensation, the fund will enhance the resilience of our communities, enabling quicker recovery and rebuilding efforts, and minimizing the long-term socio-economic impacts of wildfires.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

HEARING DATE: Monday, February 26, 2024
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
PLACE: State Capitol
Conference Room 308

RE: Testimony in Support With Amendments- House Bill 2700 HD2

Aloha Honorable Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of Committee;

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1260 (IBEW 1260) would like to respectfully offer the following testimony in Support of House Bill 2700 HD2 with amendments offered by Hawaiian Electric (HECO).

IBEW 1260 is comprised of approximately 3,000 members representing Hawaii's electric utility companies as well as government service contracts and media personnel throughout Hawaii, Guam, and Wake Island. Our members are a diverse local workforce of dedicated, highly skilled, and trained individuals working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to generate, transmit, and distribute electricity throughout Hawai'i and to ensure the reliability of this precious resource.

IBEW 1260 supports House Bill 2700 HD2 with the amendments proposed by HECO; which establishes the Hawai'i Wildfire Relief Fund and Corporation to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State.

House Bill 2700 H2 seeks to establish a streamline process to provide mitigative relief and economic stability to all who would be affected by future catastrophic events. Recent events have magnified the tragic harm that can befall an entire community by such occurrences, and how critical such processes and financial backstops are to prevent economic uncertainty and to ensure the continued stability and viability of Hawai'i's major institutions.

The electric utility and infrastructure that Hawaiian Electric provides is vital to our community, and to our members and their families. As a local company, tracing its roots back to Hawai'i's monarchy, HECO has been a generous corporate partner and philanthropic contributor to our community and provides a valuable and sustainable careers to many of Hawai'i's local residents. In a time when the cost of living and affordability ...especially here in Hawai'i, is at the forefront of most public policy discussions, it is important that we give exceptional consideration to policy that aims to prevent added harm from future events like what recently occurred on Maui, as well as processes to ensure Hawai'i's vital institutions like HECO, remain viable and able to continue to serve our community as it has for over a century.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter, we respectfully ask that you consider the amendments offered by HECO in a House Draft 3.

**TESTIMONY OF EVAN OUE ON BEHALF OF THE HAWAII
ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE (HAJ) IN OPPOSITION OF
HB 2700 HD2**

Date: Monday, February 26, 2024

Time: 2:00 p.m.

My name is Evan Oue and thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on behalf of the Hawaii Association for Justice (HAJ) in **OPPOSITION** to HB 2700 HD2 - RELATING TO WILDFIRES. The measure seeks to establish a Hawaii Wildfire Fire Relief Fund to provide compensation for property damage resulting from catastrophic wildfires in the State.

Primarily, HAJ is concerned with § -18, pages 40-41, relating to limitations on claims. Specifically, the measure provides that: "**No suit, claim, or other civil legal action may be instituted or maintained against contributors or their affiliates, employees, agents, or insurers:** (1). For recovery of losses or damages of a type for which compensation may be sought from the wildfire relief fund." HB 2700 HD2 seeks to immunizes electric utilities, public utilities other than electric utilities, the State, or private landowners from property damage claims arising from a catastrophic wildfire.

HAJ has always held the position that broad immunity is bad public policy. In this instance, HAJ is concerned that the proposed measure will preclude all property damage claims against fund contributors for any disaster in the future. The measure seeks to revictimize the people of Maui who were affected by the 2023 wildfires and to undercut the rights of victims of any, and all future disasters. This immunity will apply even to disasters that are caused by the sort of negligence that led to the recent destruction of so many lives and livelihoods on Maui.

HAJ understands the implications this measure may have for fund contributors, however, we fail to see why those who have caused so much damage and destruction should grant broad immunity for the damage they caused at the expense of their victims.

Furthermore, HAJ is not aware of any other state that has provided such broad immunity of this type when establishing a relief fund. Under the current measure, Hawaii would be the first state in the nation to reward potentially responsible parties by absolving them of their responsibilities to those they harm. Providing immunity under this measure will remove any accountability for utility companies, the State, and private landowners whose actions or omissions result in damage to residents across the state. The current immunity language sets a dangerous precedent of rewarding companies, our government, and private landowners for their negligence which contribute to catastrophic wildfires or disasters in the future.

Ultimately, the residents of Hawaii will be unable to seek recourse for damage to their property. HB 2700 HD2 may remove fund a contributor's responsibility to safely design and maintain their operations. The public welfare depends on fund contributors employing reasonable diligence and our state should not limit claims for our residents, especially immediately following a disaster which impacted so many. We encourage the State to protect the residents of Hawaii and ensure that victims of these disasters are able to freely seek recourse for damage to their property.

We look forward to working with all involved stakeholders on this measure. Thank you very much for allowing me to testify in **OPPOSITION** of this measure. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or desire additional information.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Jamie Lee

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

My name is Jamie Lee and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 29 years. Having worked for the company as an accountant, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

HB-2700-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 5:50:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacklyn Spencer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 P.M.

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Jacklyn Spencer

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

My name is Jacklyn Spencer and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 25 years. Having worked for the company as a Clerk Dispatcher, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing

to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Earlynne F. Maile

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Earlynne Maile and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD1, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 35 years. Having worked for the company primarily as an Engineer, Project Manager and Planner, I am very proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, and run by leadership from Hawai`i.

The company has provided career opportunities for myself and others who grew up here in the islands. I went to college on the mainland and wanted to come back to Hawai`i to live and raise my family. Hawaiian Electric made that possible. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Karen Hirota

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

My name is Karen Hirota and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 20 years. Having worked for the company as an executive assistant, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Ellaham Toko

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

My name is Ellaham Toko and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 20 years. Having worked for the company as a Meter Reader, Lineman and Field Technical Trainer, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Sharon Suzuki

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

My name is Sharon Suzuki and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 28 years. Having worked for the company in various positions, most recently as President, Maui County and Hawaii Island Utilities, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families, like mine, who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Michael T Iwahashi

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

My name is Michael T Iwahashi and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2,
Relating to Wildfires.

- I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 33 years. Having worked for the company as a Lineman, Troubleman, Foreman & Asst Superintendent, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Kerry Kanakaole

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

My name is Kerry Kanakaole and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 29 years. Having worked for the company as a(n) Apprentice Lineman, Journeyman Lineman, Asst Superintendent and C&M Superintendent, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Mark Suehiro

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

My name is Mark Suehiro and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 29 years. Having worked for the company as an Electrical Engineer, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

HB-2700-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 12:11:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dan Giovanni	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee Members:

I am 100% in support of HB2700 HD2. It critical that the residents an visitors of Hawai'i have a world-class, reliable electric utility operating on each island. This requires the utility to have a reasonable credit rating so that it can properly function in the finanical world. HB2700 HD would provide the confidence and stability in the creiit markets for Hawaiian Electrtric Company.

Sincerely,

Dan Giovanni

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Robert Young

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

My name is Robert Young and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 40 years. Having worked for the company as an electrical engineer, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State.

The company has provided career opportunities for families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our young an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move elsewhere.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Darren Yamamoto

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

My name is Darren Yamamoto and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 34 years. Having worked for the company as a lineman and various administrative positions, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Teri Theuriet

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

My name is Teri Theuriet and I'm testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

As someone who was born and raised in Kāneʻohe, I know that Hawaiian Electric has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 24, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Susan A. Li

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

My name is Susan A. Li and I submit this testimony in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and worked there for nearly 30 years in their legal department. I am proud to have been a part of one the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii, and contributing significantly to the community for over 100 years.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland. The company has also provided opportunities for employees to give back to their community and to support many non-profit organizations in the state.

HB 2700 HD2 proposes a solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any number of unknown factors. While we hope that what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure that resources would be available if it does. The bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and would provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Accordingly, I urge the committee to pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2700-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 6:54:13 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chris Reynolds	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Joyce Chang

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

My name is Joyce Chang and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 15 years. Having worked for the company as a Senior Financial Administrator, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Lorie Nagata

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

My name is Lorie Nagata and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 36 years. Having worked for the company in its finance and accounting area, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Lorrie Iwanaga

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

My name is Lorrie Iwanaga and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 32 years. Having worked for the company as an executive assistant, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by **Wilfred Sibayton**

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

My name is Wilfred Sibayton and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 29 years. Having worked for the company as a supervisor in T&D Engineering , I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Gary Hanaoka

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

My name is Gary Hanaoka and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 11 years. Having worked for the company as a(n) ERP System Administrator, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Lyanne Hiromoto

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

My name is Lyanne Hiromoto and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 32 years. Having worked for the company, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Alden Ishii

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

My name is Alden Ishii and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 31 years. Having worked for the company in management (Engineering, Power Plant, and Safety). I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Lyle J. Matsunaga

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

My name is Lyle Matsunaga and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Maui Electric and Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 19 years. Having worked for the companies as a Manager, Accounting and Director, Finance, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The companies have provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The companies continue to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Grant Ching

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

My name is Grant Ching and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

Hawaiian Electric has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Gayle Ohashi

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

My name is Gayle Ohashi and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 29 years. Having worked for the company as an accountant, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON
WATER & LAND AND CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

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

My name is Lynne Unemori and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric, where I worked for more than 31 years.

HB 2700 HD2 provides an important way to support Hawai'i families in the event of another catastrophic wildfire. While all efforts are being made to prevent what happened in West Maui from ever occurring again, this bill helps ensure resources would be available if it does. HB 2700 HD2 would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawai'i families with an efficient process for receiving resources to help recover from property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, regardless of the cause. This bill would also protect the credit of the state, counties, landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. In doing so, it would reduce the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. Reducing this uncertainty has a direct public benefit. For example, reducing financial uncertainty can help improve a utility's credit rating which would allow it to access cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid. Electric utility customers directly benefit from the savings of lower financing costs as well as from the actual grid improvements. Similarly, reducing the credit risk of the state and counties helps reduce financing costs, resulting in more resources available for other government services.

In fact, the interests of our community and the utility are very much intertwined in many ways. I am proud to have been a part of one of the few remaining local companies in Hawai'i, led by local leadership and management. As I experienced for more than three decades at the company, Hawaiian Electric and its employees are sincerely committed to serving our local families and businesses, providing local jobs and consistently giving back to our communities through charitable giving and community service.

Please support HB 2700 HD2 as a way to provide critically needed resources promptly to help our community if a catastrophic wildfire should ever occur again. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-2700-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 11:06:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tamara Paltin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Yamashita and Vice Chair Kitagawa,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on HB2700 HD2

I stand in strong support of this measure, many in our communities are barely meeting the financial requirements of day. to day living and are living without insurance altogether or are severely under-insured whether that is for their home or business. Even with insurance there are many unanticipated costs associated with re-building and even more so with a disaster of this magnitude where the whole town is rebuilding.

Mahalo for your service and support for our communities,

Tamara Paltin

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Timothy Lee

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

My name is Timothy Lee and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for eight years. I am also a retired employee of Verizon Hawaii with 24 years of service. Having worked for the company as a regulatory analyst, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii. Having also retired from Verizon Hawaii, I can share that the experience with the Carlyle Group to acquire Verizon Hawaii was not a positive one.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

Even if I were not a retiree of Hawaiian Electric, I would still support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's

positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Everett A. Lacro

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

My name is Everett Lacro and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 25 years. I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Lon Okada

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

My name is Lon Okada and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I retired from Hawaiian Electric Industries and was employed there for over 37 years, including six years at Hawaiian Electric. Having worked for the company in the finance area, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund by mitigating the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Linda Tait

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

My name is Linda Tait and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 30 years. Having worked for the company, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

Testimony Before the House Committee on Finance

HB 2700, HD 2
Relating to Windfires
Monday, February 26, 2024
2:00 pm
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

Submitted by Lori Hoo

Aloha, Chair Yamashiro, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee.the

My name is Lori Hoo. I am testifying in support of HB 2700, HD 2 Relating to Wildfires.

I am a former employee of Hawaiian Electric Company and was hired to establish a community relations unit at the peak of the Waahila Ridge controversy in 2001. I retired in 2020 after working at Hawaiian Electric for almost 20 years directing the company's community relations efforts. I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management and run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some a legacy of generations. I am proud to have been a part of a company that valued hard work and innovation from its employees as well as heartfelt caring and generosity from its employees towards the communities that we served. As one of the largest local companies in the state Hawaiian Electric has been a major factor in slowing the "brain drain" by providing our younger generation opportunities to live and work in the islands rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700, HD 2 because it would rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires by ensuring that resources would be available if it does occur. The bill establishes a wildfire relief fund for potential victims and at the same time protects the creditworthiness of contributors to the fund such as the state, counties, large landowners and utilities—potentially a major statewide economic factor should there be another catastrophic wildfire event. I strongly urge the Committee to pass this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

HB-2700-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 1:58:43 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen Zelko	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Karen Kuis-Zelko and I am testifying in support of HB2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires. I support HB2700, HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor.

In preparation for a future event this bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims. This bill would provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and uilties that contribute to the fund by reining in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catatrophic wildfires.

Please pass HB 2700, HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

HB-2700-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 2:01:18 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Tsue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Lori Tsue and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires. I support HB 2700, HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor.

In preparation for a future event this bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims. The bill would provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund by reining in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires.

Please pass HB 2700, HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Lori Yafuso

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

My name is Lori Yafuso and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 22 years. Having worked for the company as a(n) IT Program Manager, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Enrique Che

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

My name is Enrique Che and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 32 years. Having worked for the company as an engineer, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii.

The company has provided career opportunities for our families who grew up here in the islands, and for some, a family legacy of generations. The company continues to provide our younger generation an opportunity to live and work in the islands, rather than having to move to the mainland.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE**

HB 2700 HD2

Relating to Wildfires

Monday, February 26, 2024

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 308

Submitted by Patsy Nanbu

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

My name is Patsy Nanbu and I am testifying in support of HB 2700 HD2, Relating to Wildfires.

I am a retired employee of Hawaiian Electric and was employed there for over 35 years. Having worked for the company in the finance and regulatory areas, I am proud to have been a part of the very few remaining local companies in the State, led by local management, run by leadership from Hawaii. I believe Hawaiian Electric has and continues to be deeply committed to serving local families and businesses, providing jobs and giving back to the communities it serves.

I support HB 2700 HD2 because it is proposing a future solution in the event of another catastrophic wildfire that could be caused by any unknown factor. While we hope what happened in West Maui never occurs again, this bill is being proposed to ensure resources would be available if it does. This bill would create a future wildfire relief fund for potential victims and provide Hawaii families with an efficient process for recovering property damage from a future catastrophic wildfire, no matter the cause. In addition, this bill would protect the creditworthiness of the state, counties, large landowners and utilities that contribute to the fund. This bill's purpose is to rein in the financial uncertainty created by the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. For example, a utility's positive credit rating would allow them access to cost-effective financing to improve the safety and reliability of its electrical grid.

Please pass HB 2700 HD2. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.