

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

TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

February 6, 2024
2:00 p.m.

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee:

MEASURE: H.B. No. 2523

TITLE: RELATING TO ELECTRIC UTILITY LINEMAN.

DESCRIPTION: Beginning 1/1/2027, establishes licensing requirements, including minimum standards and qualifications, for journey worker electric utility linemen and expands the board of electricians and plumbers to include members engaged in electric utility work. Sunsets the original limited exemption from licensing requirements for qualified electricians that was originally enacted by Act 65, SLH 2013, and extended pursuant to Act 60, SLH 2018.

POSITION:

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

COMMENTS:

The Commission appreciates the intent of this measure to develop a local workforce of qualified workers to ensure public health and safety for electrical utility work.

The Commission agrees that having a robust certification framework would create a clear path to grow a local workforce of electricians to support and work on electric utility transmission and distribution line infrastructure. The Commission also agrees that these workers face inherent dangers in performing their everyday job functions. For that reason, the Commission offers the following comments for consideration, relevant to page 8, sections (A), (B), and (C):

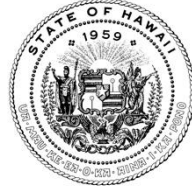
- The Committee may consider specifying a minimum number of years of experience in electrical utility lineworker work to align with how requirements of other job classifications are set;
- The Committee may consider adding a requirement for some training specifically with an electrical utility, whether prior to or as part of work with an electrical utility, to ensure alignment with utility-specific practices, which may sometimes be more stringent than the National Electrical Safety Code (“NEESC”);

On Page 13, the Committee may consider also including a requirement to section (b) for a training and safety course provided by the electric utility to ensure education is specific to electric utility infrastructure and lines.

The Commission believes that the hard-working journey electrical workers essentially keep the lights on and given the dangerous and critical nature of the work, would encourage careful consideration of any deviation from requisite time frames for training for similar job classifications. The Commission is cognizant of the pending lapse of the limited exemption by June 30, 2027, and suggests that perhaps the Committee could consider a tiered approach to licensure requirements for requisite training time, with workers that enroll within the program until June 30, 2027, being allowed a faster path to journey worker status i.e. three and a half years, while future enrollees after that date could face longer paths to journey worker status, up to the other cited time frames of five years.

The Commission would also encourage consideration of use of the term “lineworker” instead of “lineman” to promote gender equity in the field.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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

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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Tuesday, February 6, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 2523, RELATING TO ELECTRIC UTILITY LINEMAN**

Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

My name is Nadine Ando and I am the Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (Department). The Department supports this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish licensing requirements, including minimum standards and qualifications, for journey worker electric utility linemen and expands the board of electricians and plumbers to include members engaged in electric utility work beginning on 1/1/2027; and (2) sunset the original limited exemption from licensing requirements for qualified electricians that was originally enacted by Act 65, SLH 2013, and extended pursuant to Act 60, SLH 2018.

The department supports the intent of the bill to establish minimum standards and qualifications, and licensing requirements for an employee performing electric utility lineman work while employed by a third-party contractor which would protect the safety and welfare of the public as well as the individual performing the work and would be consistent with the licensure of a journeyman electrician or plumber, whose

qualifications, training, and practical experience would be reviewed and assessed prior to being cleared to sit for a qualifying exam and/or perform the work.

We also recognize the bill's intent to promote and develop a local, qualified work force through workforce development efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Testimony of the Board of Electricians and Plumbers

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Tuesday, February 6, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 2523, RELATING TO ELECTRIC UTILITY LINEMAN**

Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

My name is Phillip Lucero, and I am an Electrician Industry Member of the Board of Electricians and Plumbers (Board). The Board offers comments on this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to, beginning 1/1/2027, establish licensing requirements, including minimum standards and qualifications, for journey worker electric utility linemen and expand the board of electricians and plumbers to include members engaged in electric utility work. The bill sunsets the original limited exemption from licensing requirements for qualified electricians that was originally enacted by Act 65, SLH 2013, and extended pursuant to Act 60, SLH 2018.

It is unclear if this proposed measure would accomplish its goal of creating a local workforce of qualified linemen. Act 65 SLH 2013, Act 60 SLH 2018, and Act 68 SLH 2022, were enacted by the Legislature to address the need for individuals who were qualified to work with high voltage power lines. The Board has many questions and needs time for discussion with industry stakeholders to determine if this measure is the ideal way to ensure Hawaii develops a local workforce of properly qualified and trained individuals to meet the State's needs and protect consumers.

The Board seeks clarification on issues including, but not limited to 1) the scope of work of the journey worker electric utility lineman, 2) the impact of adding the journey worker electric utility lineman license on the Board's jurisdiction, 3) the license requirements, and 4) the necessity to change the Board's composition.

1) The description of the journey worker electric utility lineman's scope of work appears too broad and contains description of work that are not specific to the scope of lineman work. The proposed scope of the journey worker electric lineman work includes the "transmission and distribution of electricity from the electricity's original

source to the point of service.” However, the original source of the electricity could be defined as the substation, which is in the scope of work performed by a journey worker industrial electrician (“EJI”) or a journey worker electrician (“EJ”). In addition, the point of service could be defined as the switchgear or meter at a business or residence, which is in the scope of work of an EJ.

2) Currently, the work of electricians is within the scope and purpose of the National Electric Code (“NEC”). This measure requires the journey worker utility lineman to be licensed by the Board in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code (“NESC”) and must have experience in the NESC and other codes and standards adopted pursuant to HRS chapter 269. It is unclear if this measure expands the Board jurisdiction to all work performed under the scope and purpose of the NESC, as well as other codes and standards adopted pursuant to HRS 269.

3) The Board has concerns regarding the proposed license requirements as follows:

- There has not been sufficient lineman work outside of the public utility for individuals to gain the proposed three and a half years of full-time experience requirement. It is the Board’s understanding that currently only members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (“IBEW”) Local 1260 may have access to and gain experience with the lineman work that the public utilities perform in the State. The exclusive access of public utility lineman work to the union’s members limits non-union industry workers to the lineman work that is outside of the public utilities’ jurisdiction, or they must travel out-of-state for experience.
- The proposed license requirement for public utility employees and individuals actively performing journey worker electric utility lineman work in Hawaii is a minimum of six calendar months prior to January 1, 2027, whereas all others are required to have three and a half years field of experience, 432 hours of course work, and successfully pass an examination.
- It is unclear if there are enough individuals in the State that possess the proposed field experience and education requirement to qualify to take the

examination and could supervise other individuals to gain the proposed experience requirement.

- The requirement to show that the applicant has been actively performing journey worker electric utility lineman work in Hawaii needs clarification.
- The requirement for “satisfactory evidence of experience within the scope and practice of the NESC and other codes and standards adopted pursuant to chapter 269” needs to be clarified.
- It is the Board’s understanding that beyond the public utility and union programs, there are online correspondence courses provided by training providers such as Penn Foster Career School, Northwest Lineman College, and T&D Power Skills. The University of Hawaii must be consulted to determine and confirm the cost of the educational classes, availability of the classes across the State, number of instructors qualified to teach the classes, locations of the classes, and accessibility of the classes. Thus, it is also unclear if the January 1, 2027, effective date provides enough time to allow for design, staffing, and implementation of the required education courses, in addition to providing enough time for applicants to meet the requirements of 432 coursework hours prior to January 1, 2027.
- An appropriate exam would need to be developed for the proposed journey worker electric utility lineman license.

4) The Board has concerns that the proposed change to the Board’s composition may adversely impact the equity of Board decisions. Currently, the Board consists of seven members: two electricians, two plumbers, and three public members. The current composition is balanced and has worked well for many years, as industry and consumer interests are all represented. Additionally, the Board believes that an EJ is qualified to evaluate applications for all electrician licenses. This bill proposes to alter the Board’s composition by requiring two electric utility linemen, two electricians, two plumbers, and three public members. This change will clearly create an imbalance on the Board in favor of electricians and the Board is concerned it may lead to one-sided

decisions and may result in inequitable decisions for appropriate administration of the law.

The Board feels that the State can efficiently and sustainably develop a local workforce of properly qualified and trained linemen, as well as protect the health and safety of the public and utility workers and improve and maintain Hawaii's electrical infrastructure. A licensed EJ or EJI already possess core skills and theories of working with electricity. The Board suggests that current training programs in the State consider opening their programs to all qualified individuals, whether the individuals are a member of a union or not, and evaluate their programs for training and certification of the licensed journey worker electrician and journey worker industrial electrician, as a means of shortening the length of the program to become certified.

It is understood that the amount of lineman work fluctuates, often in response to weather events or other catastrophes. Career linemen typically travel frequently to where the jobs are and, for individuals in Hawaii who are qualified to perform only lineman work and no other electrical work, that could require they travel for extended periods, possibly leaving Hawaii to pursue their career. Licensed electricians in the State who are also certified to perform lineman work can adapt to market demands. Currently, individuals performing lineman work in the State have the appropriate training and certification. If the amount of lineman work decreases, licensed electricians are authorized to perform other electrical work in the State. This may help ensure a more stable industry to serve the market.

This measure was first discussed at the Board's January 23, 2024, meeting, and the Board requests additional time to consider and recommend options that could help meet the measure's goal of creating a local workforce of trained and qualified linemen.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL UNION 1260 EMPOWERING THE PACIFIC

JOINT HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND AND CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Committee Chair: Representative Mark M. Nakashima and Vice Chair: Representative Jackson D. Sayama

HEARING DATE: Tuesday, February 6, 2024
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
PLACE: State Capitol
Conference Room 329

RE: Testimony in **Strong Support** of House Bill 2523

Aloha Honorable Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee;

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union No. 1260 (IBEW 1260) would like to respectfully offer the following testimony in **Strong Support** of House Bill 2523.

IBEW 1260 is comprised of approximately 3,000 members representing Hawaii's electric utility companies, including electric utility linemen, as well as Government Service Contracts and Media Personnel throughout Hawaii, Guam, and Wake Island. Our members include 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 and resiliency of this precious resource.

IBEW 1260 strongly supports House Bill 2523 which establishes licensing requirements, including minimum standards and qualifications for journey worker electric utility linemen, and expands the board of electricians and plumbers to include members engaged in electric utility work; as well as sunsets the original limited exemption from licensing requirements that was originally established by Act 65, SLH 2013, and extended pursuant to Act 60, SLH 2018.

Act 65 (2013) extended a limited exemption from licensing requirements to electric utility lineman performing electric utility work while employed by a third-party contractor contracted by a utility. Employees of a utility are exempt from licensing under 448E (HRS), and are regulated by the Public Utilities Commission where standards for the Installation, Operation, and Maintenance of Overhead and Underground Electrical Supply in accordance with the purpose and scope of the National Electrical Safety Code are administered.

House Bill 2523 seeks to address concerns raised by the Legislature in 2013, when Act 65 was first adopted. **Concerns included licensing requirements, public safety and welfare, and the development of a qualified and trained local workforce.**¹ In addition, and at the time Act 65 was being discussed, industry

¹ See Senate Bill 512 Senate Draft 1, Senate Standing Committee Report No. 538, "The sunset provision will allow an electric utility to contract with qualified out-of-state high voltage workers in emergency situations *until in-state workers are appropriately trained through a high voltage apprenticeship program*".



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL UNION 1260 EMPOWERING THE PACIFIC

stakeholders also stated in written testimony, “...*local training to develop a quality Hawaiian workforce would be the best long- term goal for securing a safe and reliable electrical grid for our community*”.²

In response to the concerns raised by the legislature and comments made by industry stakeholders, IBEW 1260 who represents electric utility linemen throughout the state, established a state-approved apprenticeship program and has been actively developing such a qualified and properly trained local workforce to perform this work.

By establishing minimum standards and qualifications, and licensing requirements for an employee performing electric utility lineman work while employed by a third-party contractor, House Bill 2523 protects the safety and welfare of the public as well as the individual performing the work, as it would establish a process similar to that of a licensed inside journeyman electrician or a licensed journeyman plumber, whereby an individuals qualifications, training, and practical experience would be reviewed and assessed prior to being cleared to sit for a qualifying exam and/or perform such work.

IBEW 1260 also recognizes concerns raised by the Contractors License Board, in its recent meeting (January 26, 2024) while discussing House Bill 2523 and therefore, respectfully requests that Section 3 of House Bill 2523, in reference to Section 444-9.5 (HRS) on page 4, line(s) 16 through 21 and page 5, line(s) 1 through 4, be deleted from House Bill 2523 in its entirety.

The legislature, in response to industry concerns, provided a limited exemption from 448E (HRS) through Act 65 (2013), but as evidenced by its sunset clause, also tasked the industry with finding a long-term solution to the underlying issue of performing unlicensed electrical work, improving public safety and welfare, and developing a local workforce. House Bill 2523 intends to address these concerns and more.

At a time when electric utilities and its infrastructure are facing significant review and scrutiny, IBEW1260 believes House Bill 2523 is not only timely, but prudent in its intent to ensure that Hawai`i’s electric utility linemen workforce is of the highest quality and caliber, and to provide the administering agency and industry stakeholders with ample lead time to implement its provisions.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter, we look forward to working with you on this and other important matters going forward.

² See written testimony submitted by IBEW Local Union No. 1186 (D.Kim) in support of SB512 SD1, House Committee on Labor and Public Employment and House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection, March 15, 2013.

Testimony of the Contractors License Board

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Tuesday, February 6, 2024
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 2523, RELATING TO ELECTRIC UTILITY LINEMAN**

Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

My name is Candace Ito, Executive Officer, testifying for Neal Arita, the Chairperson for the Contractors License Board (Board). The Board offers comments on this bill.

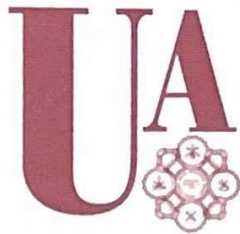
The purpose of this bill are to: (1) establish licensing requirements, including minimum standards and qualifications, for journey worker electric utility linemen and expands the board of electricians and plumbers to include members engaged in electric utility work beginning on 1/1/2027; and (2) sunset the original limited exemption from licensing requirements for qualified electricians that was originally enacted by Act 65, SLH 2013, and extended pursuant to Act 60, SLH 2018.

The Board requests the following amendment to section 444-9.5 starting on page 4, lines 16–21 to page 5, lines 1-4:

"(c) All individuals^[1] employed ~~[on a construction job site]~~ by an electrical or plumbing contractor^[1] who are licensed in accordance with chapter 448E shall visibly display their license on their person while ~~[[on the [construction]job site.]]~~ performing the work the individuals are licensed to perform pursuant to chapter 448E. Only individuals displaying their license at the time of a site inspection shall be counted as a licensee to determine compliance with this section."

This amendment would require electricians and plumbers to visibly display their license on their person while on the job site and not only when they are actually performing electrical and plumbing work on the job site.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



PLUMBERS AND FITTERS LOCAL 675 UNITED ASSOCIATION



COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Founded 1889

HEARING DATE: Tuesday, February 6, 2024

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: State Capitol; Conference Room 329

RE: Testimony **In Support of House Bill 2523** Relating To Electric Utility Lineman

Aloha Honorable Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee;

Chartered in 1919, the Plumbers and Fitters UA, Local 675 is one of the oldest organized labor unions in Hawai'i and one of three 'licensed' skilled-construction trades, steeped in a rich history as one of Hawai'i's construction-industry pioneers.

Local 675 **supports** House Bill 2523 that establishes licensing requirements, including minimum standards and qualifications, for journey worker electric utility linemen and expands the board of electricians and plumbers to include members engaged in electric utility work, and sunsets the original limited exemption from licensing requirements for qualified electricians that was originally enacted by Act 65, SLH 2013, and extended pursuant to Act 60, SLH 2018 as of January 1, 2027.

As one of three licensed trades in Hawai'i and one of two administered by the Electricians & Plumbers Board, we understand and recognize positive benefits to the state by requiring licensure of a trade or craft that performs work in an area that may pose a safety and welfare risk to the public, or to the individual performing the work.

Local 675 understands the intent of HB2523 is to promote the development of a local workforce and establish a process by which individuals performing certain work in a regulated industry, that may otherwise be unregulated should HB2523 not pass, would be vetted to ensure that they meet minimum standards of qualifications and training as a pre-condition of performing such work in the state. In light of the dangerous nature of the work being considered in HB2523, Local 675 believes such licensing requirements would be appropriate and an overall benefit to the public and to the state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

Valentino Ceria
Business Manager/
Financial Secretary

1109 Bethel St., Lower Level • Honolulu, HI 96813 • Ph.: (808) 536-5454 • Fax: (808) 528-2629 • www.plumbershawaii.com

"UA Skilled Craftsmen — No Ka Oi"





OPERATING ENGINEERS LOCAL UNION No. 3

2181 LAUWILIWILI STREET, KAPOLEI, HI 96707 • (808) 845-7871 • FAX (808) 682-0906

Jurisdiction: Northern California, Northern Nevada, Utah, Hawaii, and the Mid-Pacific Islands

February 1, 2024

Honorable, Mark M. Nakashima, House Committee on Protection & Commerce, Chair
Honorable, Jackson D. Sayama, House Committee on Protection & Commerce, Vice Chair
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Protection & Commerce,

RE: HB 2523- RELATING TO ELECTRIC UTILITY LINEMAN

Chair Ichiyama & Chair Nakashima,

My name is Ana Tuiasosopo. I am the District Representative and Trustee for Operating Engineers Local 3. We are the largest Construction Trades Local in the United States. I and the members of Operating Engineers Local 3 support HB 2523, establishes licensing requirements, including minimum standards and qualifications, for journey worker electric utility linemen and expands the board of electricians and plumbers to include members engaged in electric utility work.

We agree with the finding of the legislature, that it is critical to develop a local workforce of properly qualified, trained, and licensed electric utility linemen, which will protect the health and safety of the public and utility workers, and improve and maintain Hawaii's electrical infrastructure.

We humbly ask for your support and approval of HB 2523.

Sincerely,

Ana Tuiasosopo
Hawaii District Representative, Trustee
Hawaii Operating Engineers Local 3



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE**

HB 2523

Relating to Electric Utility Linemen

February 6, 2024
2:00 PM, Agenda Item #4
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Michael B. Ryder
Acting Director, Transmission & Distribution Operations
Hawaiian Electric

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael B. Ryder and I am testifying on behalf of Hawaiian Electric in support of HB 2523, Relating to Electric Utility Lineman.

Hawaiian Electric supports the intent of HB 2523, in that this bill is aimed at promoting the creation of a trained local workforce that promotes the safe and efficient construction of electrical transmission and distribution systems. Safety is Hawaiian Electric's number one priority. Adding "journey worker electric utility lineman" as a class of workers that require specific training under the National Electrical Safety Code and a license established under HRS 448E will promote the safe and efficient construction of utility systems.

Hawaiian Electric itself already provides training in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code to its utility linemen that satisfies the requirements of HRS 448E, through various programs and through direct work experience. That is why Hawaiian Electric's employees, and the employees of other franchised electric utility companies in Hawaii, are exempt from the licensing requirements of HRS 448E, as expressly stated under HRS 448E-13(a)(1).

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony.



Testimony Before the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

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

Tuesday, February 6, 2022; 2:00 pm
Conference Room #329 & Videoconference

House Bill No. 2523 - RELATING TO ELECTRIC UTILITY LINEMAN

To the Honorable Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair, Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair 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 appreciates the intent of this bill, which is to ensure the health and safety of the public and electric utility workers.

KIUC offers comments on this measure.

The labor shortage in the State of Hawai'i is having a significant impact on recruitment efforts for businesses of every type, including utilities. As of December 2023, Kaua'i had the lowest unemployment rate in the state at 2.3%.

Recruitment becomes even more difficult for positions requiring specialized skills, such as journeyman linemen. These positions are critical to ensuring KIUC can provide safe and reliable power to its members. Despite continued collaboration with schools, community colleges and other organizations committed to economic and workforce development, KIUC struggles to fill open lineman positions.

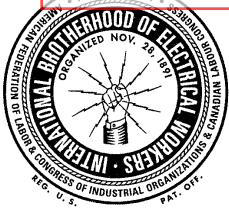
Additionally, special projects and unexpected events occasionally require KIUC to contract additional electric utility workers. Oftentimes these projects are necessary to ensure the health and safety of employees and the general public. These circumstances do not always rise to the level of a disaster declaration, during which the licensing requirements proposed in this bill could be suspended by a Governor's order.

Currently, KIUC verifies contracted journeyman lineman credentials prior to allowing work on KIUC facilities. Required credentials may include an active Journeyman Lineman card, IBEW Journeyman Lineman ticket, or Journeyman Lineman Certificate.

We do have concerns that requiring contracted electrical utility workers to comply with the examination requirements outlined in §448E-8.5 (b)(2) could impede an electric utility's ability to address urgent repair and maintenance needs in a timely manner. An alternative approach could be to allow a contractor to submit journeyman lineman credentials to initiate the state licensing process, allowing them to work until such time as the state license is obtained. This, along with the creation of a licensing process that would require days or weeks, rather than months, to complete would significantly alleviate KIUC's concerns.

KIUC also believes that public utility employees indentured under a utility apprenticeship program should be clarified as remaining exempt from licensing provisions of this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment.



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

LOCAL UNION NO. 1186 • Affiliated with AFL-CIO

1935 HAU STREET, ROOM 401 • HONOLULU, HI 96819-5003
TELEPHONE (808) 847-5341 • FAX (808) 847-2224

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE
Hearing on Tuesday, February 6, 2024 at 2:00p.m., Conference Room 329

RE: TESTIMONY **OPPOSED** TO HB 2523

Honorable Chair Mark M. Nakashima, Vice Chair Jackson D. Sayama, and Members of the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce:

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 1186 (IBEW 1186), is comprised of over 3,000 men and women working in electrical construction, telecommunications, civil service employees, and educator and faculty associations.

IBEW 1186 **OPPOSES** this bill in its effort to establish a license for electric utility linemen. We believe that adding this regulation will have several unintended consequences and may actually have the reverse effect of the bill's intention to build-up a local workforce of electric utility linemen.

IBEW 1186 does not dispute the extremely dangerous nature of this work. There are often no second chances when mistakes are made while working with high voltage electricity. Training and experience are essential to the safety of the worker and the public. This cannot be questioned nor compromised.

What this bill fails to recognize is the unique nature of the work of a utility lineman, specifically when the utility company hires contractors to do excess work beyond the capacity of its existing staff of linemen. This outside contracted work often ebbs and flows to the point where it can be extremely busy and then suddenly it could be almost non-existent, and the excess lineman will leave the State and travel to locations throughout the United States to meet the demands wherever they are.

IBEW 1186 experienced this unpredictability of the amount of work while establishing our own Lineman Apprenticeship Program, which is still available, however it is inactive with no apprentices. Much effort was put into establishing this apprenticeship program, and local residents were brought in to be trained; however, the work quickly dried up and the utility company was handling the work with their own staff and not contracting out the work to private contractors. Apprentices must have a sufficient amount of work to complete their programs.

In the case of the IBEW 1186 Lineman Apprenticeship Program, every apprentice was forced to leave the State in order to complete their training, due to the lack of available work being offered to private contractors by the utility company.

The IBEW 1186 Lineman Apprentice Program is still currently available, but still depends on the amount of available work the utility company contracts out. Even if the apprentices in the program were able to complete the program locally, their future existence of gainful employment would rely on the same conditions of available contracted work by the utility company. Without it, this same local resident, trained and qualified as a lineman, will have to leave the State to find the steady work if he is not an employee of the utility company.

The unintended consequence, and reverse effect, of this bill seeking to now require a license, would be that when the work amounts get busy, will all these locally trained linemen, who had to leave because of the lack of work, now just come home to Hawaii at the very moment? In addition, it would now require previously qualified linemen who come into the State when the workloads are high, to go through the complicated and often slow licensing process. It may be actually harder to get linemen to come here, and then there would actually be a need to exempt this licensing requirement to address priority work. The peaks and valleys nature of line work cannot be disregarded in this discussion.

An easier fix to increasing a local workforce would be to have the utility company hire and train more linemen and keep them on staff. Employees of the utility company are already exempted per existing licensing laws. However, it is probably a business decision to limit the hirings due to the peaks and valleys nature of the work.

Lastly, an additional unintended consequence of this license bill is that it could lead to many confusing and complicated jurisdictional questions of which license is required, or which license is acceptable for various types of electrical work. One of the most time consuming and often strongly contested subjects before the licensing boards is scope of license determinations.

IBEW 1186 believes that the current requirements the utility company already demands from any outside contractor, and their workers, is sufficient to ensure that qualified linemen are doing the work. The highest standards of safety precautions are already in place under the current system. While accidents may still happen, we don't see this license requirement as having an impact on whether those accidents happen or not. All of those doing linemen work now are still trained and qualified through the IBEW and its nationally recognized training programs.

For these reasons, **IBEW 1186 OPPOSES HB 2523.**

Sincerely,



Damien T.K. Kim
Business Manager/
Financial Secretary