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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
Thursday, March 21, 2024
9:31 a.m.
Conference Room 325**

**On the following measure:
H.C.R. 120/ H.R. 101, REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO
ORDER HAWAIIAN ELECTRIC TO CONTINUE TO DEPLOY AND PURSUE
COMMUNITY-BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS**

Chair Lowen 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 provides comments on this resolution.

The purpose of this resolution is to request the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to order Hawaiian Electric to: (1) continue the deployment of community-based renewable energy (CBRE) projects through Phase 2, Tranche 2 of the CBRE program, and (2) revoke the suspension of procurement and continue to issue requests for proposals for the CBRE program.

The Department supports the addition of more renewable energy projects to our electrical grids to help the State reach its clean energy goals quickly and affordably. When renewable energy projects can be sited and connected at competitive pricing, the Department supports socializing the benefits of that project, such as potential bill savings,

for all utility customers. The Department notes the Commission's ongoing Docket No 2022-0250, Instituting a Processing to Investigate Equity, in which the Consumer Advocate echoes community voices calling for greater community involvement in the development of request for proposals within the Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc.'s, Integrated Grid Planning process and in establishing a process for ensuring that developer's commitments to communities are fulfilled. The Department also notes the work of the Molokai community on the Molokai Community Energy Resiliency Action Plan, from which two community proposed and driven renewable energy projects were recently approved in Docket Nos. 2023-0389 and 2023-0390.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution.



**Testimony of
Gwen Yamamoto Lau
Executive Director
Hawaii Green Infrastructure Authority
before the
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
March 21, 2024, 9:31 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325
in consideration of
House Concurrent Resolution 120
REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO ORDER
HAWAIIAN ELECTRIC TO CONTINUE TO DEPLOY AND PURSUE
COMMUNITY-BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS**

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and provide comments on House Concurrent Resolution 120. The Hawai'i Green Infrastructure Authority (HGIA) **supports** this resolution requesting the Public Utilities Commission to order Hawaiian Electric to continue to deploy and pursue community-based renewable energy projects, including community-owned, community based renewable energy projects.

HGIA, Hawai'i's Green Bank, works to advance the State's goals of a 100% renewable portfolio standard in energy production by leveraging innovative financing mechanisms to democratize clean energy by making financing more affordable and accessible to ratepayers previously locked out of solar. HGIA has applied for funding under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Solar for All (SFA) grant program, which will provide loan capital to finance community-owned, community solar projects benefitting disadvantaged communities.

Learning from the model created by Ho'ahu Energy Cooperative Molokai, a volunteer, grassroots nonprofit, with a mission to produce locally owned, affordable, renewable energy for the benefit of its members, the community, and environment, SFA-HI hopes to facilitate, through Financial Assistance and Technical Assistance, other community-owned, community solar projects statewide.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and provide comments in support of HCR120.

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

TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Thursday, March 21, 2024
9:31 a.m.

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran, and Members of the Committee:

MEASURE: H.C.R. 120 / H.R. 101

TITLE: REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO ORDER HAWAIIAN ELECTRIC TO CONTINUE TO DEPLOY AND PURSUE COMMUNITY-BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS.

POSITION:

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

COMMENTS:

The Commission supports the intent of this measure to require that the Hawaiian Electric Companies move to expeditiously launch Phase 2, Tranche 2 of the Community-Based Renewable Energy (“CBRE”) program.

The Commission agrees that the CBRE program is an important tool to promote renewable energy development in Hawaii, particularly because it benefits families and businesses who may not otherwise be able to invest in solar energy. The Commission is committed to implementing solutions that promote customer affordability, equitable distribution of benefits from clean energy, and that expand renewable energy in Hawaii.

The Commission notes that Hawaiian Electric’s request to delay the implementation of Phase 2, Tranche 2 of the CBRE program was not approved, and the Commission stated its intent to continue development of the CBRE program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**Testimony to the Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
March 21, 2024
VIA Video Conference & Conference Room 325, Hawaii State Capitol**

HCR 120 / HR 101

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran, and members of the committee,

Elemental Excelerator is in strong support of HCR 120 and HR 101, which requests the public utilities commission to order Hawaiian Electric to continue to deploy and pursue community-based renewable energy projects.

Elemental Excelerator is a Honolulu-based non-profit organization that supports climate positive startup companies that help address Hawai'i's most urgent climate resilience issues. Each year, we select 15-20 companies that best fit our mission and fund each company with up to \$1 million in investment. To date, we have awarded over \$70 million to 160+ companies, and additionally supported more than 100 new tech demonstration projects right here in Hawai'i & the Asia Pacific.

Community based renewable energy (CBRE) was passed by the legislature in 2015, the same year that 100% RPS was passed. CBRE was created to ensure that the far-reaching economic benefits of solar would be available to low- and moderate-income consumers, senior citizens, renters who don't own their own rooftops, and others. CBRE offers these hard-to-reach citizens a method to not only support critical clean energy goals, but also important cost reduction protection as oil prices and electric rates continue to rise.

CBRE is an important and widely-used energy equity mechanism by multiple states and utilities across the country. When compared to other jurisdictions, the implementation of CBRE by Hawaiian Electric has been notable for its delay—with the result that nine years after passage by the legislature only now are local communities beginning to reap the benefits of the program. Hawaiian Electric should be rapidly expanding and accelerating the CBRE program, not asking for a pause—and we believe the legislature is right to request the PUC to reject any additional delay requested by Hawaiian Electric.

Elemental Excelerator has helped support dozens of climate tech companies that create jobs, transition our economy to 100% clean energy, and accelerate equitable access to renewable energy solutions for all residents. While Elemental has supported companies that specialize in community solar related deployment, they have not yet been active in Hawai'i—in part because other jurisdictions have moved much quicker and been more supportive.

We support HCR120 and HR101, making it easier and more affordable for Hawai'i residents to benefit from the clean energy transition and this valuable program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Joint Testimony of the Hawaii Solar Energy Association (HSEA) and Hawaii PV Coalition (HPVC),
Regarding House Concurrent Resolution No. 120 and House Resolution No. 101, Before the House
Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection**

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran, and committee members,

The Hawaii Solar Energy Association (HSEA) and Hawaii PV Coalition (HPVC) **strongly support HCR 120 and HR 101**, which request that the Public Utilities Commission order Hawaiian Electric to continue to deploy and pursue community-based renewable energy projects.

HSEA members include the majority of locally owned and operated solar and renewable energy companies doing business in the state of Hawaii along with leading global cleantech manufacturers and service providers that invest and sell in our market. We employ thousands of residents in diverse green economy jobs and advocate for policies that help Hawaii achieve critical climate and resilience goals.

Hawaii PV Coalition ("HPVC") promotes the development of sound and fair energy policies that enhance Hawaii's energy security and environmental and economic sustainability in the state's energy sector. HPVC member companies are responsible for tens of thousands of solar installations in the State and employ hundreds of Hawaii residents. We are committed to the success of Hawaii's energy transition toward a customer-centric electric grid with fair and equitable access to electric markets for non-utility solar developers and other distributed energy resource providers.

Community-based renewable energy (CBRE) or "shared solar" offers an attractive opportunity to expand access to the direct financial benefits of clean and resilient solar energy to underserved and low-to-moderate income communities as well as renters or other residents that are unable to install solar at their location or on a rooftop. If designed and implemented effectively, CBRE also offers an attractive option for developers to fund and deploy projects aligned with the public interest. As we pursue the State's decarbonization, renewable energy, and affordability goals, we need a diverse portfolio of options. Please re-start CBRE as one of those options.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HCR 120 and HR 101**.

Respectfully,

/s/ Rocky Mould, HSEA Exec. Dir

/s/ Mark Duda, HPVC Pres

HCR-120

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 7:54:42 AM

Testimony for EEP on 3/21/2024 9:31:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Hellkamp	Solar United Neighbors	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Cochran, and members of the committee,

Solar United Neighbors ([SUN](#)) is a national nonprofit that represents tens of thousands of solar supporters in Hawai'i and around the nation. We believe in a fair and equitable energy system with rooftop solar at the cornerstone. But not everyone has a roof or home suitable for rooftop solar. That's why we support innovative programs like community solar that level the playing field and allow everyone with an electric bill to access the benefits of solar energy.

On behalf of Hawai'i's solar owners and subscribers, we strongly urge your support of HCR 120 and HR 101. These resolutions would ensure that the Hawai'i Public Utilities Commission requests Hawaiian Electric companies to deploy and deliver community-based renewable energy projects to their customers. The Community Based Renewable Energy (CBRE) program was created in 2015 by the legislature as a sensible and cost-effective solution that ensures the benefits of clean energy for all households, regardless of their income or property ownership status.

Hawaiian Electric companies recently requested to deprioritize and suspend future procurement of the second phase of the CBRE program until an unspecified date. This puts Hawai'i's community solar program at risk of being underutilized and unfairly blocks access to clean energy for renters and low-income families.

Since the program began in 2015, the urgent need for equitable access to renewable energy has increased. Inflation and high energy bills still have many families struggling to make ends meet. Community solar not only supports a grid more resilient to power outages and extreme weather events, it also delivers the benefits of solar to economically disadvantaged communities. More than 218,000 low-income households in Hawai'i spend [4% of their income on energy](#); that includes electrical bills and heating and cooling. Extremely low-income households earning less than 30% of Area Median Income (AMI) spent [11% of their income on electricity bills](#), almost five times higher than the average spending of overall Hawai'i households. These energy-burdened families stand to benefit the most from a community solar program. We shouldn't delay a community solar program when many communities are just beginning to reap the benefits.

The sun shines everywhere in Hawai'i. But not all Hawai'i residents could take advantage of it before community solar came along. We encourage state lawmakers to make the right decision

for their constituents and support policies that increase access to clean energy and promote energy equity.

I urge you to support HCR 120 and HR 101 which will allow more residents of Hawai'i to benefit from community solar and support equitable access to clean energy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.