



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

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

NADINE Y. ANDO
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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

Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the
House Committee on 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
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.

HR-101

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 7:55:28 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.