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Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the
House Committee on
Finance

February 21, 2025
12:00 p.m.

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

Measure: HB. No. 1055, H.D. 1

Title: MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION.

Position:

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") is in strong support of the measure and offers the following comments for consideration.

Comments:

The Commission is in strong support of this measure that makes an emergency appropriation out of the Public Utilities Commission Special Fund for the Commission to procure services by consultants with technical expertise in the efforts to strengthen the resilience and reliability of electric utility services in the aftermath of the 2023 Maui Wildfires.

Since the August 2023 Maui Wildfires, the Commission has taken many initiatives in response to the growing threat of wildfires and other natural hazards to the State. The Commission is currently engaged in efforts to strengthen critical infrastructure, mitigate risks, protect utility customers, and ensure resilient recovery after extreme weather events. For example, the Commission has required regulated utilities to submit natural hazard mitigation plans. Just last month the Commission opened a docket proceeding to review Hawaiian Electric's wildfire mitigation plan (filed on January 10, 2025) and plans to open a docket proceeding to review Kauai Island Utility Cooperative's wildfire mitigation plan that was filed on January 28, 2025.

The Commission will require technical advice on many aspects, including but not limited to, natural hazard (including wildfire) mitigation plans, resilience and reliability of electric utility services, and utility organization.

Furthermore, the Legislature is currently considering multiple bills affecting the electric utilities that will require specialized expertise in the planning and implementation of any new laws. This appropriation will be helpful for the Commission in other areas as well with the growing threat of storm-related power outages, grid restoration and preparation for rebuilding Maui's infrastructure, and direct impacts of other natural disasters to the State.

To clarify the Commission is requesting that the Commission be allowed to increase its budgetary ceiling and then encumber \$700,000 within FY 2024-2025 for the above efforts, and that should this measure advance, the Commission is willing to forego \$700,000 of the \$1,000,000 ceiling increase in H.B. No. 300 and S.B. No. 473 for the same purpose, thus reducing the particular \$1,000,000 ceiling increases in those measures to \$300,000 for FY 2025-2026. If this measure does not advance, the Commission respectfully wishes to retain the \$1,000,000 ceiling increase in H.B. No. 300 and S.B. No. 473 for the same purpose.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**Hawaiian
Electric**

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

HB 1055, HD1

Making An Emergency Appropriation To The Public Utilities Commission

Friday, February 21, 2025

12:00 pm

State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

James Abraham
Associate General Counsel
Hawaiian Electric

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

My name is James Abraham and I am submitting testimony on behalf of
Hawaiian Electric **in support of** HB 1055, HD1, Making An Emergency Appropriation
To The Public Utilities Commission.

Hawaiian Electric submitted its 2025-2027 Wildfire Safety Strategy to the Hawai'i Public Utilities Commission in January, which details Hawaiian Electric's plans to deploy new technology, fortify infrastructure, minimize fire hazards and expand community partnerships to significantly reduce the risk of a wildfire started by its equipment. The Commission has opened a proceeding to review the Wildfire Safety Strategy and has similar dockets ongoing that examine related issues such as natural hazard mitigation and resiliency of the electric grid.

We support this bill as it would help ensure that the Public Utilities Commission has adequate resources to timely review these proceedings with assistance of industry expertise as needed.

Accordingly, Hawaiian Electric **supports** HB 1055, HD1. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.