

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



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Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the
Senate Committee on
Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

April 10, 2025
3:00 p.m.

Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee:

Measure: HCR 58, H.D. 1
Title: REQUESTING THE HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE TO CONVENE A GEOTHERMAL ENERGY WORKING GROUP TO EVALUATE THE REGULATORY AND POLICY LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY IN HAWAII.

Position:

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") supports this resolution and offers the following comments for consideration.

Comments:

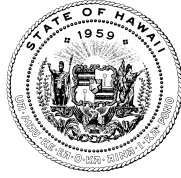
The Commission supports the intent of this measure to form a working group that would evaluate the regulatory and policy landscape surrounding geothermal energy in Hawaii.

The Commission recognizes the potential of geothermal energy to support the state's goal of achieving 100% renewable energy by 2045, as well as the importance of considering such potential in a transparent and coordinated manner. The Commission appreciates this resolution's inclusion of Commission staff in its proposed working group and stands ready to participate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ke Kia 'āina o ka Moku 'āina 'o
Hawai'i*

SYLVIA J. LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII
*Ka Hope Kia 'āina o ka Moku 'āina
'o Hawai'i*



KALI WATSON
CHAIRPERSON, HHC
Ka Luna Ho'okele

KATIE L. LAMBERT
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIR
Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS
Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawai'i

P. O. BOX 1879
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

LATE

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIR
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS
HEARING ON APRIL 10, 2025 AT 3:00PM IN CR 016

HCR 58, HD 1

April 10, 2025

Aloha Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) **supports** this resolution requesting the Hawaii State Energy Office to convene a Geothermal Energy Working Group to evaluate the regulatory and policy landscape surrounding geothermal energy in Hawai'i.

The Hawaiian Homes Commission requested that a permitted interaction group (P.I.G.) be established to study, evaluate, and recommend strategies related to geothermal exploration, feasibility, extraction, and/or use on Hawaiian Home Lands. DHHL is pursuing a multi-faceted approach to achieve its objectives, collaborating with the Hawaii State Energy Office (SEO) and the University of Hawaii's School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, specifically the Hawaii Institute of Geophysics and Planetology's Hawaii Groundwater and Geothermal Resources Center (HGGRC). DHHL has met with staff from the Hawaii Congressional Delegation and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Additionally, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), under contract with the US DOE's Geothermal Technologies Office, is conducting community-based listening sessions across the state, in which DHHL has been actively involved. DHHL believes this resolution establishes a step in the right direction toward the necessary and continued collaboration of the noted stakeholders and representatives.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS



Geothermal Development Project

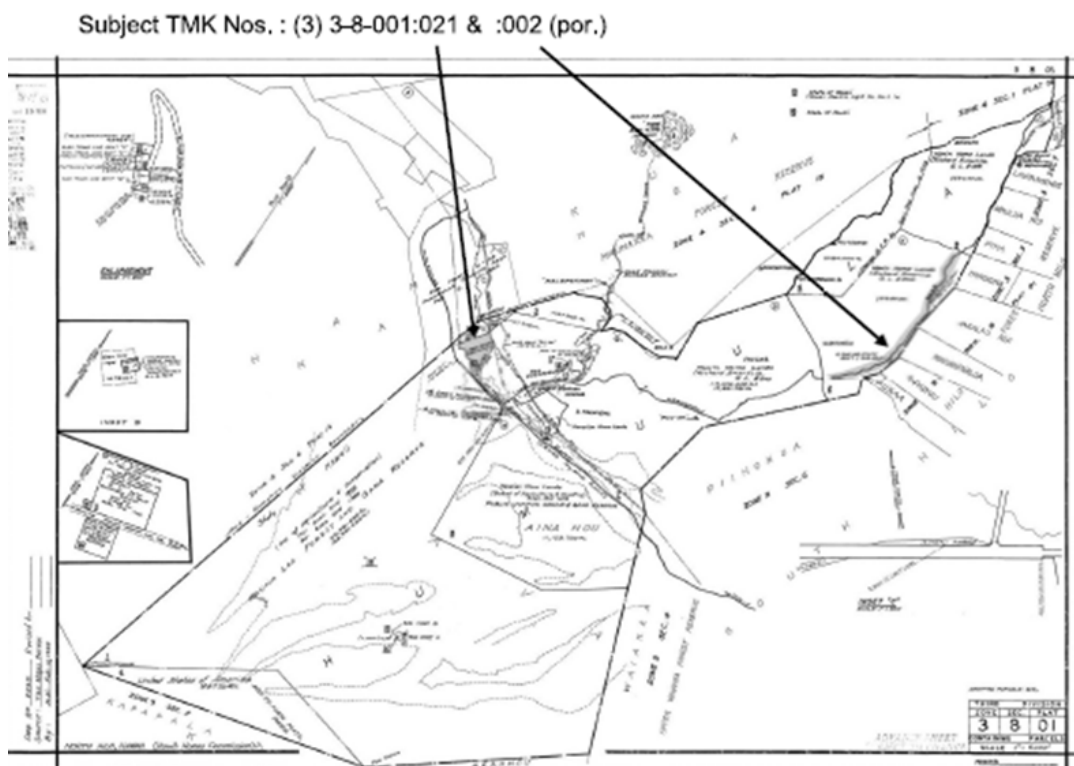
Summary

The Hawaii Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), under the governance of the Hawaiian Homes Commission, through its Geothermal Permitted Interaction Group, continues to investigate the viability of geothermal production on Hawaiian Home Lands. The main sites under current consideration are on Hawaii Island: Humu'ula, Kawaihae, and South Point (Ka'ū). Humu'ula is the preferred development site, located directly next to lands leased by the Department of Defense for the Pōhakuloa Training Area.

DHHL is pursuing a multi-faceted approach to achieve its objectives, collaborating with the Hawaii State Energy Office (SEO) and the University of Hawaii's School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, specifically the Hawaii Institute of Geophysics and Planetology's Hawaii Groundwater and Geothermal Resources Center (HGGRC). DHHL has met with staff from the Hawaii Congressional Delegation and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Additionally, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), under contract with the US DOE's Geothermal Technologies Office, is conducting community-based listening sessions across the state, in which DHHL has been actively involved.

As this represents DHHL's initial effort to commercialize its geothermal resources, the Department continuously seeks guidance from geothermal specialists to assist in its mission. DHHL recognizes that establishing commercial energy projects is complex and capital-intensive. Therefore, the Department is exploring funding opportunities at both federal and state levels and seeking private industry partners who can facilitate third-party investments in a public-private partnership (PPP) to develop and operate the project.

Recently, DHHL collaborated with HGGRC to have magnetotelluric (MT) testing and data collection take place at multiple sites within the DHHL's lands at Humu'ula and on the East Flank of Mauna Kea (see map below). This MT testing will further confirm or disprove the respective sites' suitability for geothermal power production. If this MT testing produces positive results, DHHL will move forward to financing and conducting exploratory slim-hole drilling. This step is crucial for further establishing the viability of the chosen site(s) for commercial geothermal production. The collected data will facilitate entering into a PPP with an experienced geothermal developer/operator.





Next Steps

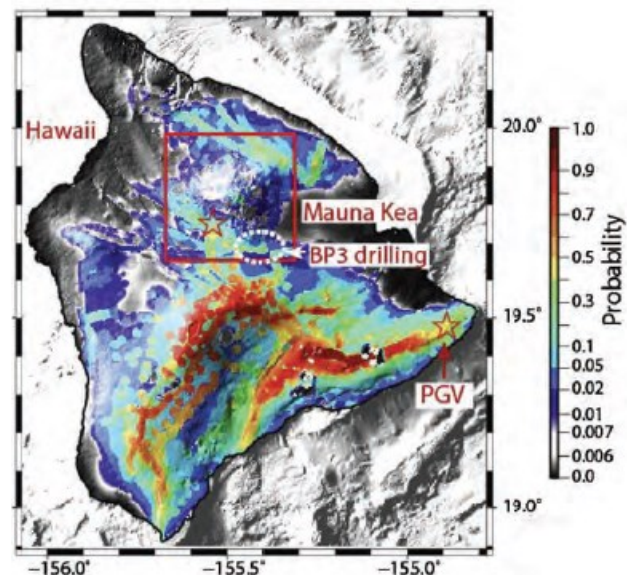
The aforementioned MT testing on DHHL's lands commenced in October 2024. Contingent on securing funding, DHHL would like to commence slim-hole water well drilling in 2025.

State and Federal Policy and Funding

State: DHHL will request \$20,000,000 in the state fiscal year 2025-2026 to develop slim-hole water wells for geophysical investigation, exploration, and identification of geothermal resources on Hawaiian home lands.

Federal: DHHL is considering policy proposals for submission to the Hawaii Congressional Delegation and is exploring USDOE funding opportunities to conduct MT testing and slim-hole water well drilling on various DHHL properties. In the long term, DHHL estimates that up to \$200M of non-competitive federal funding is ultimately needed: (i) to determine which DHHL site(s) provides the "best" opportunity for commercial production of geothermal power, and (ii) to position such site(s) for PPP development.

Resource probability map for Hawaii Island. Red box outlines area of geophysical surveying. Stars indicate a Saddle Drill site where high temperatures were found (north) and Hawaii's only geothermal production site Puna Geothermal Venture (south) (Lautze et al., 2020)



Other Information

Findings from the December 9, 2016, geothermal investigation suggest the following:

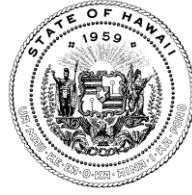
- Information found to date at the DHHL sites investigated supports the elements required for a blind (no surface features) geothermal system to exist are present
- Further exploration is needed to determine if the elements combine sufficiently to create a viable geothermal resource at depth
- Blind, high enthalpy systems do exist in volcanic settings elsewhere globally
- Analysis of the PTA-1 core log from 1,000m showed zones of highly fractured rock & geothermal fluid-rock interaction occurred in the core
- Same core section saw a temperature increase from 40° C - 140°C (104°F - 284°F)
- Important information on 2 key control variables for the geothermal resource. Relevant for “ground-truthing” the apparent resistivity values from the Magnetotelluric (MT) survey
- Additional testing & exploration are needed to justify any exploration drilling (slim hole) at sites
- Sufficient information to warrant & justify moving forward to undertake further MT surveys to create a robust 3D subsurface model at a number of potential locations



Hydrothermally altered ground at Kilauea. Various alteration clays, discharging steam, silica residue, sulphur vents and areas of bare ground all indicate the presence of a subsurface steam zone.

Image by Gary Smith





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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

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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
Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs
Thursday, April 10, 2025
3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 016

On the following measure:
H.C.R. 58, H.D. 1, REQUESTING THE HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE TO
CONVENE A GEOTHERMAL ENERGY WORKING GROUP TO EVALUATE THE
REGULATORY AND POLICY LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING
GEOTHERMAL ENERGY IN HAWAII

Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

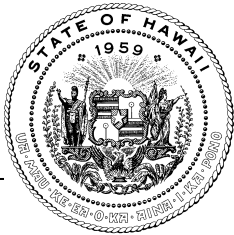
My name is Michael Angelo, and I am the Executive Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (Department) Division of Consumer Advocacy. The Department supports this resolution.

The purpose of this resolution is to request that the Hawaii State Energy Office (HSEO) convene a Geothermal Energy Working Group (Working Group) to evaluate the regulatory and policy landscape surrounding geothermal energy in Hawaii. In addition, the Working Group is requested to: (1) identify key regulatory, policy, and permitting challenges affecting geothermal energy in Hawaii; (2) review best practices from other jurisdictions with successful geothermal energy programs and consider best practices of Pacific island countries such as New Zealand; (3) assess the potential for geothermal expansion and its role in supporting energy resilience and affordability; and (4) provide

recommendations to the Legislature and Governor on policy and regulatory reforms necessary establish a clear and efficient pathway for geothermal energy in Hawaii. Furthermore, HSEO is requested to submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than 20 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2027.

The Department appreciates the resolution's intent to advance the State's commitment of achieving 100% renewable energy portfolio standards by 2045 and the recognition that work towards this commitment needs to be accelerated. As stated in the resolution, the Department also views geothermal energy as a form of firm renewable energy resource that can help provide grid stability. The Department also agrees that the development of geothermal energy in the State would be assisted by reviewing and investigating, among other things, methods and processes to establish efficient pathways to advance geothermal energy in the State. Furthermore, the Department appreciates the adoption the Department's recommendation to be included as a member of the Working Group, since the Department's Division of Consumer Advocacy is statutorily mandated to represent, protect, and advance the interests of all consumers of utility services. The Department looks forward to working with the members of the Working Group and other invited stakeholders to help advance the progress and development of geothermal energy in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution.



HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE STATE OF HAWAII

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MARK B. GLICK
CHIEF ENERGY OFFICER

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Testimony of
MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer

before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Thursday, April 10, 2025
3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 016 and Videoconference

In Support of
HCR 58, HD1

REQUESTING THE HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE TO CONVENE A GEOTHERMAL ENERGY WORKING GROUP TO EVALUATE THE REGULATORY AND POLICY LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY IN HAWAII.

Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) supports HCR 58, HD1, which requests HSEO to convene a geothermal energy working group to evaluate the regulatory and policy landscape surrounding geothermal energy in Hawai'i.

The state's energy transition to 100% RPS by 2045 will require the full diversity of available renewable resource options, despite much of the focus being on affordable and abundant intermittent solar and wind resources. Geothermal is a firm and dispatchable renewable energy resource that has enormous potential as an affordable means of energy security and reliability, and has the potential to have a transformative effect on Hawai'i's energy ecosystem.

However, potential roadblocks to advancing geothermal energy development require intergovernmental collaboration to overcome. These challenges include a lack of data on the geothermal and groundwater resources (resource potential), as well as uncertainty regarding the regulatory conditions for the permitting and construction of a new geothermal energy production plant. Relating to the understanding of resource potential, in 2024, Governor Josh Green, M.D., allocated \$5 million from the

Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund for slim-hole geothermal resource characterization to identify possible locations for viable geothermal energy deployment. HSEO is working with the University of Hawai'i's Groundwater and Geothermal Resource Center (HGGRC) to conduct this resource assessment, building on their research and the existing body of knowledge. However, more funding is needed to determine the resource potential statewide. Given the uncertain regulatory conditions, a review of policy and regulations leading to actionable recommendations could help lower the barriers to geothermal energy production.

HSEO recognizes that, as stated in the resolution, "a coordinated, transparent, and community-inclusive process is essential to evaluating the role of geothermal energy in Hawai'i". HSEO emphasizes that a key priority of the State, and a foundation of the working group, should be guided by the understanding of the underlying geothermal resource potential for which state support requested by the Green Administration this session is essential. Establishing this working group provides an important opportunity to collaboratively evaluate pathways for responsibly deploying geothermal energy in Hawai'i, address regulatory and community considerations, and inform the State's broader energy goals.

This working group could allow HSEO and other stakeholders the ability to find viable solutions for allowing the potential of geothermal energy production to become a larger reality as we move towards our clean energy goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Thursday, April 10, 2025 — 3:00 p.m.

UluPono Initiative supports HCR 58, HD 1, Requesting the Hawaii State Energy Office (HSEO) to Convene a Geothermal Energy Working Group to Evaluate the Regulatory and Policy Landscape Surrounding Geothermal Energy in Hawaii.

Dear Chair Wakai 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 and clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

UluPono supports HCR 58, HD 1, which requests that the HSEO convene a working group to evaluate the regulatory and policy landscape surrounding geothermal energy in Hawaii.

Hawaii needs all viable forms of renewable energy to meet the 100% renewable portfolio standard by 2045. New data underscores the widespread support among residents for this transition. Between October 2023 and January 2024, UluPono Initiative partnered with Anthology Research to conduct a statewide public opinion survey on energy in Hawaii involving 1,985 surveys across all four counties. With a margin of error +/- 2.21%, this is arguably the most extensive and comprehensive study on the topic to date. The findings are compelling.

A staggering 91% of respondents expressed their support for the expansion of renewable energy resources throughout the islands. Moreover, the importance of developing Hawaii's own energy resources was emphasized across all counties by the residents. This resounding endorsement from the community validates the strong support for continued investment and advancement in renewable energy solutions to meet our collective energy goals.

In order to ensure a transparent and responsible state approach, this resolution seeks to convene a working group of energy experts across the public and private sector to pave the way forward for future geothermal energy development throughout the State. Having a coordinated effort across all agencies and stakeholders will be key to the success of any geothermal program. We hope that this working group can allow for all those involved to be aligned and well-equipped with pertinent information and direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

APRIL 10, 2025

HCR 58, HD1, REQUESTING THE HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE TO CONVENE A GEOTHERMAL ENERGY WORKING GROUP TO EVALUATE THE REGULATORY AND POLICY LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY IN HAWAII

POSITION: SUPPORT

Coalition Earth supports HCR 58, HD1, which requests the Hawaii State Energy Office to convene a geothermal energy working group to evaluate the regulation and policy landscape surrounding geothermal energy in Hawaii.

According to a report produced by the Hawaii Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission, global sea levels could rise more than three feet by 2100, with more recent projections showing this occurring as early as 2060. In turn, over the next 30 to 70 years, approximately 6,500 structures and 19,800 people statewide will be exposed to chronic flooding. Additionally, an estimated \$19 billion in economic loss would result from chronic flooding of land and structures located in exposure areas. Finally, approximately 38 miles of coastal roads and 550 cultural sites would be chronically flooded, on top of the 13 miles of beaches that have already been lost on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui to erosion fronting shoreline armoring.

As we work to reduce carbon emissions and stave off the worst consequences of climate change, we must begin preparing for the adverse impact of sea level rise on our shores. We are now quantifying the speed at which we must act. We cannot continue to develop the 25,800-acre statewide sea level rise exposure area—one-third of which is designated for urban use—without risking massive structural damage and, potentially, great loss of life.

Just two years ago, we witnessed the impact of the climate emergency on our shores. On August 8, 2023, wildfires swept across Maui and killed at least 100 people, making it one of the nation's deadliest natural disasters. The spread of the fires has been attributed to climate change conditions, such as unusually dry landscapes and the confluence of a strong high-pressure system

to the north and Hurricane Dora to the south. The wildfires destroyed over 2,200 structures, including numerous residential buildings, historic landmarks, and school facilities. In September 2023, a report from the United States Department of Commerce estimated the total economic damage of the wildfires to be roughly \$5.5 billion. Investing in renewable energy generation could not be more urgent, given the growing threat of climate catastrophes to our island home.

Therefore, **our state should take steps to hasten our transition to a clean energy economy and continue our fight against climate change, including by investing in the potential of geothermal resources, a nearly unlimited source of renewable energy.** The Earth's inner core is as hot as the surface of the sun. As that heat radiates, it heats the rocks and water just beneath the Earth's surface and the steam that process generates can be used to generate heat and electricity. Harnessing geothermal energy can be accomplished at any time, since geothermal resources are reliably available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The United States leads the world in geothermal electricity capacity and generation. Yet, the U.S. has tapped less than 0.6 percent of its available geothermal electricity resources. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that there is enough geothermal potential under our nation's grounds to constantly produce 4,248,879 megawatts of energy. Notably, geothermal energy presents an opening for an almost seamless transition of investment, technology, and personnel away from fossil fuels. While the needed capital investment for geothermal ranges from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per kilowatt—as compared to solar and terrestrial wind, which run just \$1,700 to \$2,100 per kilowatt—this cost is declining as investments in new technology are being made. In terms of both economic and clean energy generation, we cannot afford to miss out on these opportunities.

Our state needs to establish a framework for expanding geothermal exploration and the development of utility-scale geothermal initiatives, goals that can be further accelerated through partnerships with research institutions like the University of Hawai'i's Groundwater and Geothermal Resources Center. Doing so would stimulate further possibilities for aligning public funding and private sector investment for geothermal power generation. Geothermal energy was also identified as both a near-term and mid-term decarbonization pathway in the Hawai'i State Energy Office's *Hawai'i Pathways to Decarbonization Report*, released in 2024.

We must avoid environmental risks when exploring geothermal energy. Relatedly, we should not engage in any geothermal expansion on Hawaiian homelands without beneficiary support. Yet, we would be remiss not to investigate the significant geothermal potential that resides, quite literally, within our island home. As the World Resources Institute has stated, "Next-generation geothermal as a promising path to a zero-carbon power grid. It's a clean, cost-effective way to fill supply gaps when solar and wind aren't available." In that way, geothermal has the capacity to play a major role in strengthening energy resilience for our state.

*Coalition Earth is a nongovernmental organization that works to preserve the well-being of people and our planet. We champion policies that advance climate resilience, clean energy, public health, and economic fairness for working families. **Contact us at info@coalitionearth.org.***



Sustainable Energy Hawai'i

sustainableenergyhawaii.org
info@sustainableenergyhawaii.org

Testimony in SUPPORT of HCR 58, HD1 Geothermal Energy Working Group

April 8, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

I'm testifying on behalf of **Sustainable Energy Hawai'i (SEH)**, a 501(c)3 non-profit and CBO dedicated to improving the quality of life for Hawai'i residents. Our mission is to enable an economic, social, and environmental revival in Hawai'i through a just transition to sustainable, 100% locally sourced renewable energy.

SEH supports HCR 58, HD1, which requests

"THE HAWAI'I STATE ENERGY OFFICE TO CONVENE A GEOTHERMAL ENERGY WORKING GROUP TO EVALUATE THE REGULATORY AND POLICY LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY IN HAWAI'I."

SEH supports establishing **a broad-based working group of stakeholders to evaluate the status and impacts of the regulatory environment surrounding the research and development of geothermal power generation technology across the State of Hawai'i.**

The governor issued Executive Order No. 25-01 calling for, among other actions to *"... stabilize and reduce energy costs, lower the State's carbon footprint, fortify energy security, and gain access to capital for the energy transition ..."*

In theory, Hawai'i has geothermal resources available statewide. However, the extent of those resources and to what degree they may be commercially viable remain unknown. What we do know includes:

- We now know that solar, wind and battery storage will not support the scope or scale required for Hawai'i's energy transition without the presence of firm, dispatchable and baseload power generation. There are only two technologies which can deliver that availability of generation without carbon emissions: Geothermal and Nuclear.



Sustainable Energy Hawai'i

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- Given the need and expense to characterize those resources, and in light of the governors' call in the above-referenced Executive Order to “gain access to capital for the energy transition,” public sector funding will not be sufficient to realize the goal. Private sector investment will be required.
- Historically, that investment has met with resistance due to at least two obstacles, both of which can be mitigated through regulatory modernization...
 - The absence of state-sponsored scientific-data-gathering required to derisk private sector investment, and
 - An existing regulatory environment that contributes to Hawai'i's reputation as a state where it can be difficult to do business.

As this resolution does not seek to appropriate funds in support of the proposed working group's operation and given the urgency the state has to explore remedies for the issues facing geothermal research and private sector investment, I respectfully ask for the committee's support in passing House Concurrent Resolution No. 58 HD1.

Sincerely

Peter Sternlicht
Member, Board of Directors
Sustainable Energy Hawai'i

HCR-58-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/8/2025 9:34:44 AM

Testimony for EIG on 4/10/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: The State of Hawaii should encourage geothermal development by simplifying and streamlining permitting, supporting geothermal research, and promoting efficiency in geothermal regulations. Please support this resolution.

SUPPORT for HCR58_HD1 - Geothermal Energy Working Group

Dear Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee,

Hearing: Thursday, April 10, 2025

HCR58_HD1, which requests “THE HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE TO CONVENE A GEOTHERMAL ENERGY WORKING GROUP TO EVALUATE THE REGULATORY AND POLICY LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY IN HAWAII.”

The ability to generate firm, clean, self-generated, baseload power is a critical bulwark against both natural and man made calamities. Hawaiian energy self-sufficiency is an urgent and important goal that benefits all who call Hawai'i home.

Establishing a working group of stakeholders to evaluate the current regulatory environment and to propose enabling legislation or regulatory changes needed for the development of geothermal energy.

Please support this measure and provide the resources for the working group to be successful.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Keith Neal
Waimea