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## Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the  
House Committee on  
Education

February 6, 2025  
2:00p.m.

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

**Measure:** H.B. No. 902  
**Title:** RELATING TO EDUCATION.

### Position:

The Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) supports this measure and offers the following comments for consideration.

### Comments:

The Commission appreciates the intent of this measure to help support schools impacted by electric utility public safety power shutoffs (“PSPS”). Schools are vital community hubs that provide education, resources, and stability, making it essential to ensure their resilience and preparedness during PSPS events.

The Commission recognizes the significant operational challenges posed by PSPS for schools across the state. Appropriating funds for the Department of Education to identify methods that support schools during PSPS events will help to ensure minimal disruptions to students and school employees should a PSPS occur in the future.

That being said, the Commission believes the intent of the measure could be further improved by striking “Hawaiian Electric Company’s Planned” on page 4 line 17 and replacing it with “electric utilities” as PSPS could also affect parts of Kauai Island.

Lastly, the Commission notes this measure aligns with the Commission’s 2024 Inclinations goal of creating Resilience Hubs in isolated, vulnerable and/or high fire risk communities to ensure access to critical resources during extended power outages

including PSPS.<sup>1</sup> The Commission is committed to facilitating collaboration between electric utilities and state and county agencies to accomplish this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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<sup>1</sup> See Hawaii Public Utilities Commission's 2024 Inclinations On The Future Of Energy In Hawaii, available at: [https://puc.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Hawaii-PUC-Energy-Inclinations-White-Paper-FINAL.12.31.24\\_signed.pdf](https://puc.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Hawaii-PUC-Energy-Inclinations-White-Paper-FINAL.12.31.24_signed.pdf).



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/06/2025

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Bill Title:** HB 0902 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to conduct a study on methods to support department schools that may be impacted by the Hawaiian Electric Company's Planned Public Safety Power Shutoff program.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 902, which seeks funding to assess the impact of the Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) program on affected schools. Fourteen Department schools are vulnerable to PSPS events, which disrupt essential services, including communication, meal programs, and accommodations for students and staff reliant on electricity-dependent devices.

The 2023 Maui wildfires underscored the importance of preparedness. The U.S. Department of Education's after-action report identified key areas for improvement, many of which relate to the challenges posed by PSPS events. While the Department has implemented measures to enhance resilience, additional funding is needed to assess long-term solutions.

This measure would provide the necessary resources to:

- Evaluate alternative power solutions, such as generators and solar battery systems for PSPS-affected schools;
- Assess the feasibility of establishing regional hubs stocked with emergency supplies;
- Develop training and contingency plans to maintain school operations during outages; and
- Assess fire safety measures and accommodations for electricity-dependent students and staff.

The appropriation of \$1,000,000 for fiscal years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 will allow the Department to conduct these assessments and ensure schools are prepared for future PSPS events.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 902.



**Hawaiian  
Electric**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**HB 902**

**Relating to Education**

Thursday, February 6, 2025

2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 309

James Abraham  
Associate General Counsel  
Hawaiian Electric

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

My name is James Abraham and I am testifying on behalf of Hawaiian Electric **in support of** HB 902, Relating to Education.

Hawaiian Electric supports this bill, which will help schools impacted by the Company's Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) program prepare for situations where hazardous weather conditions require preemptive outages for community safety. Hawaiian Electric conducted extensive community outreach during its PSPS planning process, including meeting with numerous government agencies and stakeholders. This included multiple meetings with both executive and leadership teams at the Department of Education, as well as providing updates on our plans as they were refined. Hawaiian Electric has taken steps to minimize the impact of PSPS on customers by installing sectionalizing equipment, which has allowed us to configure the system so that schools on O'ahu were removed from PSPS outage areas, although some schools on Maui and Hawai'i Island remain as they could not be removed using this method.

Hawaiian Electric has hosted and attended several community meetings in communities impacted by the PSPS program to help ensure affected customers are prepared, and we will continue to evaluate ways to support these communities. The funding provided for in this bill would help the Department of Education implement emergency preparedness initiatives for the schools and communities that remain within PSPS areas.

Accordingly, Hawaiian Electric **supports** HB 902. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.