

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that a local investor-
2 owned electric utility's planned public safety power shutoff
3 program, implemented on July 1, 2024, aims to reduce wildfire
4 risks by proactively shutting off power in high-risk areas
5 during specific weather conditions. While the program is
6 critical for public safety, its implementation poses significant
7 operational challenges for public schools. Presently, fifteen
8 department of education schools and one public charter school
9 are identified as vulnerable to planned public safety power
10 shutoff events. These power outages may disrupt essential
11 services including communication systems, water access, meal
12 programs, and accommodations for students and staff that are
13 reliant on electricity-dependent medical devices or assistive
14 technologies.

15 The legislature further finds that maintaining school
16 operations during planned public safety power shutoff events is
17 vital to ensuring educational continuity, providing access to



1 meals, and sustaining a sense of normalcy for students. This is
2 especially critical for students in remote or rural areas, where
3 schools often serve as essential community hubs. To meet this
4 need, schools must prepare for prolonged power outages by
5 implementing measures such as backup power solutions, access to
6 shelf-stable food and clean water, and fire safety protocols.

7 The devastating 2023 Maui wildfires underscores the
8 importance of preparedness and inter-agency coordination in
9 mitigating the impacts of emergencies and the United States
10 Department of Education's after-action report highlighted areas
11 for improvement, many of which align with the challenges posed
12 by the planned public safety power shutoff program.

13 Additionally, the department of education has implemented
14 measures to support recovery and resilience for Maui schools
15 affected by the 2023 Maui wildfires. These include monthly
16 working group meetings to address fire mitigation, hazardous
17 brush clearance, and community engagement. Funds from the
18 project school emergency response to violence grant have been
19 allocated for critical recovery efforts, including mental health
20 services, transportation for displaced students, and substitute
21 teachers to support staff well-being.



1 The legislature recognizes that lessons learned from the
2 2023 Maui wildfires and the department of education's subsequent
3 actions provide a strong foundation for addressing the
4 challenges of the planned public safety power shutoff program.
5 However, additional funding is essential to implement long-term
6 solutions, such as establishing regional hubs equipped with
7 emergency supplies, procuring backup power sources, and
8 providing comprehensive training for staff. These efforts will
9 ensure schools can remain operational during planned public
10 safety power shutoff events, safeguarding the well-being of
11 students and staff while maintaining access to essential
12 services. Through increased funding for schools impacted by the
13 planned public safety power shutoff program, the department of
14 education can assess the viability of using alternative power
15 solutions, such as generators and solar battery systems, for
16 planned public safety power shutoff identified schools;
17 establish regional resource hubs equipped with essential
18 supplies, including water, shelf-stable food, and backup
19 communication tools, to ensure continuity of operations during
20 outages; provide training and develop contingency plans to
21 enable schools to remain open and safe during power outages; and



1 enhance fire safety measures and accommodations for students and
2 employees with electricity-dependent needs.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
4 funds to the department of education to support schools impacted
5 by a local investor-owned electric utility's planned public
6 safety power shutoff program.

7 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
9 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
10 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
11 2026-2027 for the department of education to support schools
12 impacted by a local investor-owned electric utility's planned
13 public safety power shutoff program.

14 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
15 of education for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY: Michelle A. Tedone



S.B. NO. 533

Report Title:

DOE; Planned Public Safety Power Shutoff; Response;
Appropriations

Description:

Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to evaluate school needs to mitigate the impact of the planned public safety power shutoff program.

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