



## DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

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Statement of  
**MIKE MCCARTNEY**  
Director

Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION**

Thursday, March 18, 2021

10:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of

**SCR72 / SR54**

**REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS TO  
ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP FUNDING SOURCES FOR RURAL  
BROADBAND IMPROVEMENTS.**

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) provides comments on SCR72 / SR54, which requests the DBEDT to establish a working group to facilitate the development of funding sources to increase broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of Hawaii, by identifying and addressing remaining obstacles to full deployment of broadband infrastructure to all areas of Hawai'i.

- Please note that though the body of the resolution requests DBEDT to establish the working group, the title requests DCCA to establish the working group.
- DBEDT recognizes HB1191, HD2, which establishes a broadband infrastructure grant program that seeks funding from various sources including State and Federal.
- DBEDT also recognizes SB850, SD2, which proposes to create a task force relating to broadband infrastructure for rural communities where seeking Federal funds will also take place.
- The function of these resolutions will be duplicative.
- DBEDT appreciates the intent of these resolutions and bills with the caveat that sufficient funding is provided to support the proposed activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony.



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN  
LT. GOVERNOR

**STATE OF HAWAII  
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

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CATHERINE P. AWAKUNI COLÓN  
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JO ANN M. UCHIDA TAKEUCHI  
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**Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Before the  
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Thursday, March 18, 2021  
10:00 a.m.  
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:  
S.C.R. 72, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER  
AFFAIRS TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP FUNDING SOURCES  
FOR RURAL BROADBAND IMPROVEMENTS.**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

Chair Baker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ji Sook “Lisa” Kim, and I am the Cable Administrator of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs’ (Department) Cable Television Division. The Department offers comments on this resolution.

The purpose of this resolution is to request that the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism establish a working group to facilitate the development of funding sources to increase broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of Hawaii.

The global pandemic, triggering stay-at-home and social distancing orders, has underscored the critical need for universal broadband access for distance learning, telework and job training, telehealth and social services, and social and civic engagement. To meet this need, the federal government is making more funding

available for broadband infrastructure, equipment, and internet services, and the Administration is focused on fostering a robust statewide broadband network and digital equity for residents.

The Department recognizes the value of coordination among broadband stakeholders to identify broadband deployment obstacles and capitalize on funding opportunities to improve broadband access and use; however, it defers to the lead agency regarding the specifics of this measure and the best means for coordination.

If this Committee decides to pass this resolution, the Department requests amending page 3, lines 18 and 19, to provide the Department with flexibility to better carry out its functions under this measure: “One representative of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs [~~Cable Television Division~~].” In addition, the title of the resolution should be amended for consistency with the purpose of the measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this resolution.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



ANNE E. PERREIRA-EUSTAQUIO  
DIRECTOR

JOANN A. VIDINHAR  
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IN REPLY, REFER TO:  
**OCS 21.1065**

March 15, 2021

To: The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair,  
The Honorable Stanley Chang, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer  
Protection

Hearing: Thursday, March 18, 2021

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 229, via Videoconference

From: Jovanie Domingo Dela Cruz, Executive Director  
Office of Community Services, an attached agency of the  
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

**Re: SCR 72/ SR 54 REQUESTING DCCA TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO  
DEVELOP FUNDING SOURCES FOR RURAL BROADBAND IMPROVEMENTS**

**I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

This measure would create a broadband working group under the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to explore funding sources to improve broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas in the State, particularly in rural areas.

**II. CURRENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOCIAL SITUATIONS**

Hawaii's remote communities are adversely affected economically and socially by poor access to telecommunications infrastructure, in particular the comparative lack of broadband.

This pair of proposed resolutions notes that, in 2012, the State adopted a Broadband Strategic Plan to provide information and a framework for the creation of policies and programs for both state and national broadband goals. As part of that strategic plan, grants were to be sought at both the State and County levels to implement policies, activities, and goals.

The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair,  
The Honorable Stanley Chang, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
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However, funding remains insufficient, and incentives for funding are not good where population densities are low and where poverty levels are high. These challenges have been exacerbated by the coronavirus over the past 12 months.

Even as the pandemic has made normal social and economic activity so difficult, the role of broadband in helping to overcome these difficulties increases in importance with the remoteness and other disadvantages that a population is experiencing. In other words, the more serious the problem, the more important the solution.

For Hawaii's more remote and underserved areas, better broadband service would – as the resolutions note – improve economic development, education, healthcare, public safety, and emergency services.

### **III. COMMENTS ON THE PRESENT RESOLUTIONS**

The Office of Community Services (OCS) was established in 1985 by the Legislature to serve economically disadvantaged communities, precisely the types of communities that these resolutions to serve. OCS regularly serves such communities through our administration of federal programs such as the Community Services Block Grants (CSBGs), the Weatherization Assistance Program, and multiple federal food programs, such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, and Commodity Supplemental Food Program, as well as other State and Federal programs.

While these resolutions do not specifically propose any role for OCS, OCS stands ready to assist if called upon, and OCS is supportive of these resolutions and their goals.



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Thursday, March 18, 2021; 10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229  
Via Videoconference**

**RE: SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 072/SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 054 --  
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS TO  
ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP FUNDING SOURCES FOR RURAL  
BROADBAND IMPROVEMENTS.**

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

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 072 and Senate Resolution No. 054.

The resolutions would request the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism to establish a working group to facilitate the development of funding sources to increase broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas by identifying and addressing remaining obstacles to full deployment of broadband infrastructure to all areas of Hawaii.

The resolutions also ask the working group to report its findings and recommendations to the 2023 Legislature.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii Federally-Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

Hawaii has long been at the forefront of integrating newer technologies into daily life. One example of this is Hawaii's Telehealth Law which has served as a model across the United States. Yet, it was only after COVID struck our islands that this law became fully integrated into daily life.

**Testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 072/Senate Resolution No. 054**  
**Thursday, March 18, 2021; 10:00 a.m.**  
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Today, it is common practice to ZOOM or SKYPE with your health practitioner instead of physically going to the provider's office for a visit. When COVID first hit our islands, many health providers had to limit the number of patients that could be serviced in-person because of a scarcity of Personal Protective Equipment, restrictions in the gatherings of groups, and the need for changes to the physical arrangement of examination rooms and other diagnostic facilities.

For people with adequate broadband access, telehealth was a lifeline for the provision of essential primary health care services. Yet, health care facilities in rural areas experienced the same problems when COVID hit. They too had to limit the number of patients they could see. But because these communities lacked adequate broadband access, they were effectively cut off from primary care. Many were forced to bear their maladies until it became necessary to go to the emergency room.

The Governor's suspension of statutes that prohibits the use of standard telephonic service in telehealth has temporarily eased this inequity. For those without adequate broadband, at least for now, they are able to obtain basic primary care services over landline telephones. But that is neither adequate, tenable, nor fair to the thousands of citizens who lack broadband access.

Because of this, the HPCA views the lack of broadband access in rural areas as an issue of social equity. In this day and age, everyone should have equal access to health care. Telehealth was envisioned as the means of leveling the field between urban and rural areas. The lack of broadband ensures that urban and rural communities remain unequal.

As a member of the Broadband Hui, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of these resolutions.

Lastly, we note there are technical issues (i.e., **See**, Title and first BE IT RESOLVED Clause.) with these documents that your Committee may wish to address.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or [eabe@hawaiiipca.net](mailto:eabe@hawaiiipca.net).

**SCR-72**

Submitted on: 3/16/2021 9:25:35 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/18/2021 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sherrell Watson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of this bill, SCR72. One of the most critical things the pandemic has taught us is how woefully underserved many parts of Big Island are with regards to internet access. Children and parents alike sit outside cafes and fast food establishments in order to attend school, and conduct their work remotely. This lack of access to technology and the world cannot stand if Hawaii doesn't want to continue to be left behind. It is also a safety issue as in addition to a lack of broadband, these locations often also don't have adequate cell reception for contacting emergency services.