



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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PEARL CITY, HAWAII 96782
elections.hawaii.gov

SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 124
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 1, 2022

Chair Nakashima and members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs, thank you for the opportunity provide comments on House Bill No. 124. This bill requires the chief election officer to develop and distribute a voter information guide for all candidates running for state office, including candidates running for any trustee position of the office of Hawaiian affairs.

We believe an informed electorate is important for the health of our democracy, however, our office must remain apolitical. As such, to compile a voter information guide, we would ask all candidates to submit a statement for inclusion in a voter information guide when they file their nomination paper. After the candidate filing deadline, we would translate and compile these statements and publish a notice in the newspapers that it is available on our website. The voter information guide would need to be available at least 45 days before the primary election to coincide with ballots being sent to uniformed and overseas voters. Our initial cost estimate is \$50,000 to provide a voter information guide in this manner.

To print and insert a separate notice to include in the ballot packet for the primary and general election would raise the cost by approximately \$60,000. With this, the total estimated cost would be \$110,000.

If we were required to print and disseminate the voter information guide, we estimate it would be 200 pages. We are also assuming this would be disseminated before the primary election only. The table below estimates the total cost, by method of dissemination:

Target mailing	\$2,700,000
Publish the full guide	\$910,000
Libraries	\$50,800

We would also ask that the effective date for this measure be January 1, 2023, for the 2024 Elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill No. 124.

HB124

The House Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee,

The Green Party of Hawai'i asks you to support HB124 to create a voter information guide that is neutral and written in plain language. The voter's guide would be available to all candidates on the ballot at no charge, which eliminates one of the obstacles that create an environment for corruption. The passage of HB124 encourages more candidates to come forward to represent their districts and constituencies. Please support HB124.

Mahalo,

Green Party of Hawai'i

Co-Chair GPH Susan Roberts Emery

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Representative Mark Nakashima, Chair

Representative Scot Matayoshi, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

2:00 PM

HB 124 - SUPPORT FOR VOTER INFORMATION GUIDES

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the more than 4,103 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars or under the "care and custody" of the Department of Public Safety or the corporate vendor on any given day. We are always mindful that 1,113 of Hawai'i's imprisoned people are serving their sentences abroad thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

HB 124 requires the Chief Elections Office to develop and distribute a voter information guide. Community Alliance on Prisons is in support of this measure. vibrant democracy depends on an informed electorate. A responsible and responsive democracy is inclusive and accessible. We respectfully share some important things to think about when developing this guide.

- Ensure that it is nonpartisan, written in plain language, and is accessible to all.
- To ensure wide user-ability, the guide must be translated into the languages spoken in Hawai'i including, but not limited to Chuukese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Ilokano, Japanese, Samoan, Tagalog, Tongan, Vietnamese, etc.
- To ensure wide accessibility, besides the normal channels, newspapers, websites, social media, community newsletters, the guide should be available at local businesses and places where people gather - banks, grocery stores, libraries, community centers, government buildings, jails, etc.

Many states have voter guides and many have them translated into the languages spoken by their people. A quick look showed that Alaska's guide is translated into 12 different languages! Community Alliance on Prisons looks forward to the day when incarcerated persons will be treated as citizens and afforded the right to vote! Please pass this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Nothing can stop the power of an informed citizenry when it is empowered, organized, and motivated.

Ralph Nader

Statement Before The
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

2:00 PM

Via Video Conference

in consideration of

HB 124**RELATING TO ELECTIONS.**

Chair NAKASHIMA, Vice Chair MATAYOSHI, and Members of the House Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee

Common Cause Hawaii supports HB 124, which requires the chief election officer to develop and distribute a voter information guide for all candidates running for state office, including candidates running for any trustee position of the office of Hawaiian affairs.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of our representative democracy through efforts that increase civic engagement, voter turnout, and voter participation in our democratic processes.

A voter information guide would create a more informed voting public and hopefully increase voter participation in our elections. A significant number of states have official voter guides published by the state secretaries of state, which is equivalent to our State Office of Elections. See https://ballotpedia.org/Features_of_official_voter_guides,_compared_by_state#Comparison_of_voter_guides (retrieved Jan. 28, 2022); see also <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/fiscal-impact-statements.aspx> (retrieved Jan. 28, 2022).

For voter information guides to be trusted and useful to the public, they must:

- Be neutral and written in plain language.
- Be readily available to the public. They should not be disseminated by one means only, such as via electronic means, mail, or in the newspaper. As the current pandemic has revealed, many people do not have access to broadband and/or reliable mail delivery. Voter information guides must be made available at banks, grocery stores, community centers, public libraries, government buildings, and other locations where people are likely to gather.
- Be translated into different languages for all of Hawaii's citizens to be able to access. Hawaii is the most diverse state in the nation with a diversity index of 76% according to the 2020 U.S. Census. The April 2016 DBEDT Research and Economic Analysis Division report on Non-English Speaking Population in Hawaii indicates that Non-English speakers at home in Hawaii increased by 44% from 1980 to 2014. See https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/data_reports/Non_English_Speaking_Population_in_Hawaii_April_2016.pdf at Executive Summary pg. i (retrieved Jan. 28, 2022). Ilocano, Tagalog, and Japanese were the top three most common non-English languages spoken at home in Hawaii. *Id.*
- Be accessible to our disability community.
- Include county ballot initiatives and charter amendments and constitutional amendments and not be limited to candidates.

Common Cause Hawaii supports HB 124 creating voter information guides for a more informed and engaged public for the betterment of our representative democracy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 124. Common Cause Hawaii respectfully urges the Committee members to pass HB 124 out of your Committee with an effective date upon its approval. If you have any questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii





HAWAII

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MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 23404
Honolulu
Hawaii 96823

January 30, 2022

TO: Chair Nakashima and members of the Judiciary Committee

RE: HB 124 Relating to Elections

Support for hearing on February 1

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization founded in the 1950s by leading supporters of the New Deal and led by Patsy Mink in the 1970s. We are devoted to the promotion of progressive public policies.

We support this bill as we support more information for voters. If passed, this bill would develop and distribute a voter information guide for all candidates running for state office, including candidates running for any trustee position of the office of Hawaiian affairs. Often times voters know some about the top of the ticket but little about down-ticket races. This would help.

Thank you for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/28/2022 10:16:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Long overdue. Please include not just state candidates, but also everything that will appear on ballots so voters are well informed. Newspaper is not sufficient.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/29/2022 12:36:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Will Caron	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

YPDA Supports this bill, mahalo for reviving it!

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 7:37:20 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

This would create a more informed electorate, and could increase voting. The guide should be neutral and easy to understand, readily available where people gather, accessible to those with disabilities and who speak languages other than English and include ballot initiatives and constitutional amendments.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 9:17:38 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kauanoë Batangan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support HB 124 because a voter information guide will help create a more informed and engaged public.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 5:09:19 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
marjorie erway	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hoping that you will support producing a voter guide which is neutral, written in plain language, and translated in at least Japanese, Ilocano, and Tagalog.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 5:13:58 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Nancy Davlantes	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am but one of many who have urged the Elections Officer to publish such a guide but have always been met with "we just have the funds" among other excuses. This bill must be accompanied by sufficient staff to get the job done.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 5:53:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Susan Dursin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support HB124, which would create a voter information guide. Hawai`i has done a good job protecting and extending voting rights but is deficient when it comes to making information on candidates and issues easily accessible to voters.

For almost twenty years I have brought requests to the Legislature, asking for a voter information guide. When I lived in Alaska earlier, the voting guide helped farflung residents around the state understand what they would see on their ballots. Now it is time for Hawai`i to step up and join those states that believe in disseminating voting information -- neutral and easily understandable.

VOTE411, the website made available by the Hawai`i League of Women Voters, has become the single website where voters can learn about candidates and issues. Speaking from personal experience, I can tell you that voters are fulsome in their praise for the site. However, it requires hundreds of hours of volunteer work and some expense to the organization to be able to post the information. As much as LWV tries to publicize the site, many voters do not hear of it and vote blindly. Furthermore, many voters do not have access to the internet.

The responsibility for a voter guide that is disseminated through many avenues belongs to the state. Please support HB124.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 6:04:08 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
David Anderson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

A voter information guide would create a more informed voting public and hopefully increase voter participation in our elections.

A significant number of states have official voter guides published by the state secretaries of state, which is equivalent to our State Office of Elections.

For voter information guides to be trusted and useful to the public, they must:

- Be neutral and written in plain language.
- Be readily available to the public. They should not be disseminated by one means only, such as via electronic means, mail, or in the newspaper. As the current pandemic has revealed, many people do not have access to broadband and/or reliable mail delivery. Voter information guides must be made available at banks, grocery stores, community centers, public libraries, government buildings, and other locations where people are likely to gather.
- Be translated into different languages for all of Hawaii’s citizens to be able to access. Hawaii is the most diverse state in the nation with a diversity index of 76% according to the 2020 U.S. Census. The April 2016 DBEDT Research and Economic Analysis Division report on Non-English Speaking Population in Hawaii indicates that Non-English speakers at home in Hawaii increased by 44% from 1980 to 2014. Ilocano, Tagalog, and Japanese were the top three most common non-English languages spoken at home in Hawaii.
- Be accessible to our disability community.
- Include county ballot initiatives and charter amendments and constitutional amendments and not be limited to candidates.

I support HB 124 creating voter information guide for a more informed and engaged public for the betterment of our representative democracy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 8:34:40 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Lisa Huynh Eller	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support HB 124 creating voter information guide for a more informed and engaged public for the betterment of our representative democracy.

A significant number of states have official voter guides published by the state secretaries of state, which is equivalent to our State Office of Elections.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 11:47:24 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I come from Papakōlea, O‘ahu born and raised. I'm writing in support of HB124. This is important for folks to be informed in Hawai‘i.

me ke aloha ‘āina,
Nanea Lo

Mō‘ili‘ili District 1

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 1:33:16 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Barbara Dalton	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Many, many states provide election guides that are produced by Secretaries of State, the counterpart around the country of Hawaii's Office of Elections. To be truly helpful, multi-lingual versions must be available in print in convenient, public locations like post offices, grocery stores, banks, libraries, etc. Or, they should be mailed to registered voters, just as their ballots are. They should include info on everything that will appear on the ballot: partisan and non-partisan races, OHA, county ballot initiatives, charter amendments, and constitutional amendments (i.e., not just candidates for elected office.) I support HB 124 to create a voter information guide because it will encourage a more informed and engaged public, allow for a more effective representative democracy, and improve voter turnout in Hawaii.

HB-124

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 6:45:01 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/1/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Will Caron	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

It's crazy we don't already do this. Don't we want to have informed voters? That's pretty critical to a healthy democracy. If Jan. 6 taught us anything, it's that we need more engagement and education around civics, elections, government and policy if we want our democratic system to endure.

Please SUPPORT this bill.

Mahalo