

TESTIMONY OF  
JAMES P. GRIFFIN, Ph.D.  
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
STATE OF HAWAII

TO THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

February 10, 2022  
2:00 p.m.

Chair Johanson and Members of the Committee:

**MEASURE:** H.B. No. 1782, HD1

**TITLE:** RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE.

**DESCRIPTION:** Allows an electric utility to own, operate, lease, plan, construct, install, maintain, or replace broadband facilities, including middle mile infrastructure, to help facilitate the development of and investment in broadband facilities and services to rural, unserved, underserved, and urban communities throughout the State. (HD1)

**POSITION:**

The Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) offers the following comments for consideration.

**COMMENTS:**

The Commission appreciates the intent of this measure to facilitate improvements in broadband services to rural, unserved, underserved, and urban communities throughout the state.

The Commission notes that the Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism recently passed SB 2173, the companion to this bill. In doing so, the Committee amended the measure to incorporate suggestions shared by the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs’ Division of Consumer Advocacy (“Consumer Advocate”) to facilitate streamlined and efficient application and review processes. The Commission supports the intent of these amendments and defers to the Consumer Advocate on whether the proposed language is consistent with their recommendations.

Should this measure be adopted, the Commission will take appropriate actions to ensure that regulated utilities are required to accurately account for their broadband-related financial activities and to distinguish these transactions from those that might impact ratepayers. Such actions will help to identify cost causation and prevent cross-subsidization among electricity customers and broadband customers, or between electric utilities and unregulated affiliates that may provide broadband service using utility infrastructure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN  
LT. GOVERNOR

**STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310  
P.O. BOX 541  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
Phone Number: 586-2850  
Fax Number: 586-2856  
cca.hawaii.gov

CATHERINE P. AWAKUNI COLÓN  
DIRECTOR

JO ANN M. UCHIDA TAKEUCHI  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Before the  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Thursday, February 10, 2022  
2:00 PM  
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:  
H.B. 1782, HD1, RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Chair Johanson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dean Nishina, and I am the Executive Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Division of Consumer Advocacy. The Department offers comments on this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to facilitate the development of broadband facilities and services throughout the state by allowing electric utilities to use utility easements and public rights of way to deploy broadband infrastructure and by allowing electric utilities to own, operate, lease, plan, construct, install, maintain, and/or replace broadband facilities. This bill will add a new chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes entitled Broadband Deployment Over Electric Easements Act.

The Department observes that H.D.1 clarified the term "person" in the definitions section.

The Department appreciates the intent of the bill and recognizes the importance of developing broadband facilities that reach all communities throughout the state, especially those in unserved and underserved areas. The COVID pandemic has clearly

shown the need for broadband facilities to allow for distance learning, telemedicine, teleworking, and staying connected in our communities. The Department also appreciates the comprehensive provisions including the liability provisions to protect the electric utility and the owner of real property with an existing electric easement.

The Department offers the following observations and comments.

The Department recognizes that the purpose of the bill is to enable the electric utilities to facilitate broadband access to our most vulnerable populations. The Department recommends that there should be a requirement for electric utilities to establish Hawaii Public Utilities Commission approved procedures and processes related to the clear separation as to how the electric utility records the financial activities for any such investments in broadband facilities and services to avoid the possibility that electric service might subsidize broadband service. The Department maintains that costs should be paid by the cost causer and that electric customers should not be potentially burdened with higher rates.

It is for the above reason that the Commission established rules known as the Affiliate Transaction Requirements<sup>1</sup> that provide safeguards to avoid potential market-power abuses and cross-subsidization between regulated and unregulated activities and to govern the interactions between the Hawaiian Electric Companies and their affiliates in transactions related to acquisitions or investments. Since this bill will give the electric utility authority to allow a broadband affiliate or any other person to construct, install, own, operate, lease, maintain, and/or replace broadband facilities within the electric utility's easements, the proposed bill may require the Commission to revisit and possibly amend the safeguards included in the Affiliate Transaction Requirements to accommodate a broadband affiliate.

§A-6(b) states that except for the provisions in §A-6(a), the new statute is not intended to alter HRS § 269-19. The Department suggests that clarifying language be added to HRS § 269-19 that provides for a streamlined application process for the sale, lease, assign, mortgage, disposal or encumbrance of any utility property used for broadband deployment. Further, in order to facilitate a streamlined process while still

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibit A filed in Order No. 36112 in Docket No. 2018-0065 on January 24, 2019.

protecting electric customers and the respective electric, broadband, and telecommunications markets, the electric utility companies should be required to file applications that have the necessary information to facilitate a streamlined and efficient review process.

The Department offers that these provisions may require the Commission and the Consumer Advocate to seek additional resources to initiate and maintain oversight over the broadband activities of the electric utilities and to ensure that customers are protected from cross-subsidization and unreasonable electricity rates.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Hearing Date: Thursday, February 10, 2022, 2pm

**Honorable Representatives Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair; Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee**

**Subject: HB 1782, HD1  
Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

Aloha Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members:

Ocean Networks, Inc. (“ONI”) has supported the expansion of Broadband Services in the State of Hawaii for many years. As such we firmly support this bill.

**ONI supports this bill because it will enact steps to positively impact the expansion of broadband and provide digital equity specifically to the unserved and underserved areas which will contribute to the greater good for all people of Hawaii. Additionally, this broadband service infrastructure initiative will enhance the educational and healthcare services provided within the state. Historically middle mile infrastructure or the lack of such has made it difficult to deploy broadband connectivity throughout the State of Hawaii. Allowing deployment over Electric Easements will greatly increase the ability of third parties to deliver broadband.**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.



Testimony Before the House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

By David Bissell  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative  
4463 Pahe'e Street, Suite 1, Lihu'e, Hawai'i, 96766-2000

Thursday, February 10, 2022; 2:00 pm  
Conference Room #329 & Videoconference

**House Bill No. 1782 HD1 - RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE**

To the Honorable Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair, Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee:

Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) is a not-for-profit utility providing electrical service to more than 34,000 commercial and residential members.

**KIUC supports this measure.**

There is no question that the continued deployment of broadband throughout the state is critical to promoting economic development, creating job opportunities, and advancing health care and educational goals and initiatives.

As an owner of critical infrastructure that could potentially assist in the expansion of broadband on Kaua'i, KIUC appreciates this effort to clarify the role we may play in the deployment of broadband facilities in our service area. We will continue to examine broadband opportunities in the broader context of our core mission, which is to safely provide reliable electrical power to our members that is fairly and competitively priced.

Thank you for your consideration.



Charter Communications  
Testimony of Rebecca Lieberman, Director of Government Affairs

**COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE**

Hawai'i State Capitol  
Thursday, February 10, 2022

**OPPOSITION TO H.B. 1782, RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **opposition** to H.B. 1782, a bill that would (1) grant authority to electric utilities to provide wholesale and retail broadband service, and (2) perfect their electric easements so that they can be used for broadband.

Charter supports efforts to promote fair competition and increased choices for broadband consumers. We also strongly favor policies designed to foster broadband expansion to unserved areas of Hawaii. The State's broadband policies, however, must ensure that competition is fair and equitable and that customers of regulated electric utility services are not subsidizing entry of electric companies into the broadband marketplace. When entities like electric utilities – which control the market – seek to enter competitive markets (like the broadband market), then, respectfully, legislators need to guard against the potential for them to leverage built-in advantages in an effort to gain an immediate and anticompetitive foothold in the new market. Electric utilities possess numerous advantages, including a captive rate-base and ownership of key infrastructure inputs like utility poles that, if left unpoliced, could become a means of artificially tilting the broadband market in their own favor. The



legislation, as currently drafted, neither acknowledges the existence of nor seeks to address the potential for utilities to leverage these kinds of advantages, to the detriment of consumers.

Allowing a monopoly provider of essential electric service to compete with private broadband providers risks distorting the marketplace and dis-incentivizing private investment in broadband in at least four respects.

First, electric utilities frequently control the poles that broadband providers must attach to in order to build out to customers, and charge providers for access to those poles. Because electric utilities own the poles on which Charter and other broadband providers attach, they have the incentive and ability to leverage their control over those poles in a manner that stifles broadband deployment and competition by over-allocating costs to competing providers for attaching to their poles. They may also engage in conduct that hampers competition, by slow-rolling or complicating make-ready work necessary for competitors to attach their transmission lines. Hawaii already has some of the highest pole rental rates for attachment to poles owned by the electric utilities and this has the potential to get worse if this bill passes. Under pole attachment agreements with the major provider in the state, broadband providers' use of the electric utility pole is secondary to the use by the electric utility and if they enter the broadband market, the electric utility can force broadband providers like Charter off the poles to make way for their own capacity. In addition, electric utilities entering the broadband market also have an incentive to provide their broadband affiliate – either directly or indirectly – with more favorable rates, terms, and conditions for accessing and utilizing poles.

Second, an electric utility with a captive electric market could drive private competitors out of the market by subsidizing build-out and customer broadband prices with their electric service. Electric utilities are driven by a completely different set of incentives than firms participating in competitive markets. Irrespective of the type of rate regulation their utility electric service operates under, they are effectively guaranteed a rate from their captive electric rate-base of customers that enables them to recover their costs, whether or not those costs are associated with the delivery of electric utility service. This gives them an incentive to push as many costs as possible – warehouse, vehicle, property, administrative, overhead, etc. – onto their utility rate base without a fear that customers will leave them for another provider. Hawaii already has the highest electric rates in the country and this could lead to even higher electric rates. If electric customers see their rates go up even further so their utility can deploy fiber, then they are contributing to the kind of cross-subsidization that PUCs and state legislatures have long sought to deter and prevent.

Third, while cost recovery of investments, plus a guaranteed profit on top of those investments is a core principle of electric utility regulation – that is certainly not the case with broadband networks. Internet service providers (ISPs), like Charter, invest large sums of risk capital every year without any guarantee of recouping those investments, let alone turning a profit. By contrast, utilities are able to avail themselves of guaranteed cost recovery mechanisms in their core electric business, which risks turning an otherwise competitive broadband market into an extension of the monopoly electric market. If an ISP must spend money to compete for customers on an uneven playing field, that can

affect its cost of capital – particularly relative to a regulated utility – as well as its incentive and ability to invest and innovate in its network or expand broadband into rural areas.

Fourth, allowing electric utilities to enter the broadband business puts the electric system and ratepayers at risk. If the broadband business fails, the electric utility must cover that failure through higher rates and taking on debt. It is the customer that pays for that failure over the long-term by paying those higher rates and the interest payments on those debts. There is no guarantee that a duplicative network will attract enough customers to generate the revenue needed to be successful and meet debt obligations, thereby leaving electric ratepayers and taxpayers with the bill.

Charter believes that every Hawaii resident should have reliable access to the Internet ecosystem. We stand ready to help bring the benefits of broadband and access to the internet to those who need it most. In 2020 alone, Charter extended its network to reach an additional 14,000 homes and small businesses in Hawaii, investing more than \$87 million in the state. Additionally, Charter is pleased to now provide high-speed data services to beneficiaries living in the Hawaiian Homelands following an announcement made earlier this month by DHHL, which allows homesteaders to obtain telecommunications services from a provider of their choice.

Charter is a member of DBEDT's weekly Broadband Hui to assist in strategic broadband planning and closing the Digital Divide. Additionally, Charter participated in the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB) and is now participating in the \$14.2 billion federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The EBB, and now the ACP, has helped connect over 18,000 eligible

households in Hawaii with high-speed broadband during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Broadband internet access is more important than ever and the newly adopted ACP offers a tremendous opportunity to help low-income families stay connected, providing eligible households a discount of up to \$30 per month toward broadband service and up to \$75 per month for households on the Hawaiian Homelands.

Today's broadband ecosystem is robustly competitive. Competition thrives – and consumers benefit most – when firms compete for customers on a level playing field and success is determined by market forces and consumer preferences rather than via leveraging of monopoly assets and a regulated utility rate base. Because the risks to consumers and competition of entry into the Hawaii broadband marketplace by electric utilities outweigh the benefits, Charter respectfully opposes H.B. 1782.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



**Hawaiian  
Electric**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION &  
COMMERCE**

**1782 HD1**

**Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure**

Thursday, February 10, 2022

2:00pm, Agenda Item 7

State Capitol, Conference Room 329 and Videoconference

Christian Whitney  
Director of Pole Infrastructure Enterprise  
Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc.

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the Committee:

My name is Christian Whitney, and I am testifying on behalf of Hawaiian Electric Company **in support** of HB1782 HD1. The purpose of this bill is to allow electric utilities to facilitate broadband expansion by leveraging their existing and future telecommunications infrastructure to promote broadband deployment and digital equity to Hawaii's rural, unserved, underserved, urban and Hawaiian Home Land communities. The bill also allows Electric Utilities ("EUs") to share their easements with others so that they can build out fiber more efficiently, where mutually beneficial, and requests the Hawaii Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") create an expedited review of broadband activities by EUs.

In order to meet shared State and community goals for a distributed energy future, including Hawaiian Electric's 100% renewable energy goal by 2045 and our 70% carbon reduction goal by 2030, we must modernize our electric grid which requires unique, robust and diverse telecommunications infrastructure to all of our grid assets at the edge of every community on every island we serve. We are always focused on

providing maximum value to the ratepayer; therefore, we support maximizing the value of Hawaiian Electric’s investments in telecommunications infrastructure in new and creative ways to address the growing need for equitable access to telework, telemedicine, remote learning, and participation in the digital economy. As the owner and manager of our own telecommunications network, we are able to provide our foundational, diverse middle mile infrastructure, leasing both existing and new, to internet service providers (“ISPs”) and other third parties without duplicating efforts, congesting the right-of-way or view plane, or increasing costs to the consumer.

The idea of maximizing an EU’s telecommunications infrastructure for broadband deployment is consistent with what we observe in other states where similar legislation was passed in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Virginia and Texas.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is consistent with the priority of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners’ (“NARUC”)<sup>2</sup> November, 2021 *Resolution Supporting Energy Company Communications Infrastructure for Broadband Expansion*, to expand consumer broadband access by allowing EUs to provide middle mile communications infrastructure, and to reduce regulatory hurdles for doing so.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Ala. Code § 37-16; Ga. Code Ann. § 46-3-205; Miss. Code Ann. §§ 77-3-2(1), 77-3-44; Va. Code Ann. § 55.1-306; Tex. Utilities Code §§43.001-43.152.

<sup>2</sup> NARUC is a non-profit organization that seeks to improve the quality and effectiveness of public utility regulation and ensure that utility services are provided at rates and conditions that are fair, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory for all consumers. NARUC supports both a limited grant of authorization to electric utilities that provide broadband facilities and minimal regulation of electric utilities that contribute to broadband expansion.

<sup>3</sup> “Resolution Supporting Energy Company Communications Infrastructure for Broadband Expansion,” National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, Nov. 9, 2021, (“NARUC Resolution”), <https://pubs.naruc.org/pub/48B7A610-1866-DAAC-99FB-EEAD58155985>, resolving that, “in the planning of [its own telecommunications] networks, energy companies should to the extent that they are authorized and it is feasible, consider sharing or making available wired and wireless ‘middle mile’ communications infrastructure to support the expansion of consumer broadband access.” And further resolving that, “state legislatures and appropriate agencies and commissions should consider identifying and mitigating any overly burdensome legislative or regulatory obstacles to the expeditious deployment of energy company wired and wireless networks for critical grid communications and work to encourage the leveraging of ‘middle mile’ infrastructure for broadband expansion in unserved and underserved communities.”

An EU's telecommunication capabilities are increasingly important to operate the electric grid safely and efficiently. This bill overlays Hawaiian Electric's existing and future telecommunications infrastructure needs with the State's need to provide broadband to more consumers. It can simultaneously offer diverse routes from those that otherwise exist.<sup>4</sup> Generally speaking, broadband consumers are also electric utility ratepayers, and by allowing Hawaiian Electric to leverage its broadband facilities and middle mile infrastructure in conjunction with last-mile providers, together we hope to positively impact the end user of both services—Hawaii's consumers.<sup>5</sup> However, we must be careful to ensure one industry is not subsidizing the other, and that both industries benefit from the mutual partnership opportunities presented in this bill.

- Ratepayers will not be negatively impacted by this bill because any work the EU performs will be to support the course of its normal work in the performance of its grid modernization, distributed energy resources, resiliency, security, and other efforts. EUs will not be performing any work outside its normal scope (except incremental support) other than leasing its dark fiber and partnering with others to share costs in bringing broadband to new areas that otherwise are not commercially viable to reach for ISPs. In this way, the impact to the EU ratepayer would typically be positive because the EU would be generating revenue from its leases that would be passed on to its ratepayers.

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<sup>4</sup> NARUC states that energy companies that are building their telecommunication network can share their middle mile infrastructure with ISPs, "leveraging the energy company infrastructure to reduce the cost of bringing broadband Internet access to unserved or underserved communities." *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> "Those communities in which the 'leveraging' approach is implemented will benefit from both the increased availability of consumer broadband and the increased grid efficiency, reliability, safety, and security made possible by the new energy company broadband network deployed for critical grid communications." *Id.*

- If ISPs choose to utilize an EUs telecommunications infrastructure, they should also benefit with operational cost savings by not having to install fiber for the entire route themselves; instead, they will only have to install last mile fiber connections to the end user. Logically, this would reduce the costs for the ISPs to get to new areas, which could be passed down to consumers in that area.

The community as a whole will benefit from this bill if the Commission regulates broadband expansion by EUs in conjunction with their already quasi-jurisdiction over pole attachments.<sup>6</sup> The Commission could have oversight over not only EUs, but also over all ISPs or third parties partnering with EUs in broadband expansion. This oversight will help ensure ratepayers and internet consumers receive maximum benefit without cross-subsidization.

In closing, we view this bill as a creative and efficient way to bring together EUs' middle-mile telecommunications infrastructure and their electric easements with last-mile service providers to accomplish mutually beneficial broadband expansion objectives. We encourage any partnership that will allow Hawaiian Electric's ongoing and significant investments in grid reliability and security to bring additional benefits to the community by way of broadband equity.

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<sup>6</sup> Hawaiian Electric's pole attachment program is regulated at the federal level by the FCC pursuant to the Federal Pole Attachment Act, and at the state level by the Commission. While attachments to investor-owned utility poles in most states are regulated either by the FCC or the relevant state public service Commission, in Hawaii, both the FCC and the Commission have overlapping oversight over pole attachments. Being regulated by both brings greater scrutiny over our pole attachments and how Hawaiian Electric participates in broadband expansion, particularly from a broadband consumer and utility ratepayer perspective. See 47 U.S.C. § 224; Haw. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 269-19. The federal Pole Attachment Act requires that Hawaiian Electric provide non-discriminatory access to all attaching entities in the communications space on a distribution pole, and requires that Hawaiian Electric be bound by the same federal and state pole attachment requirements as all other pole attachers. This ensures fair competition and non-discriminatory treatment in Hawaiian Electric's participation in leasing middle mile fiber and providing broadband services.



Accordingly, Hawaiian Electric supports HB1782 HD1. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Written Statement of  
**Jeannine Souki**  
Sr. Manager – Government & Regulatory Affairs

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE**

February 10, 2022, 2:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329, Videoconference

**OPPOSITION TO:**

**H.B. NO. 1782 HD1 RELATING TO BROADBAND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE**

To: Chair Johanson, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee

**Re: Testimony opposing HB 1782 HD 1**

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our testimony in **opposition** to House Bill 1782 HD1. The primary intent of this bill is to allow an electric utility to own, operate, lease, plan, construct, install, maintain, and/or replace broadband facilities including middle mile infrastructure, to help facilitate the investment to rural, unserved, underserved, and urban communities throughout the State.

Hawaiian Telcom met with the proponents of this legislation to discuss their need for this legislation. We have several concerns regarding this bill:

First, based on our meeting with the proponents of this legislation, we do not understand why this legislation is needed. For example, Hawaiian Electric can already build and lease broadband facilities to other companies as evidenced by Docket No. 2021-0186 before the Hawaii Public Utilities Commission, requesting approval to lease excess fiber to the military. Unlike the electric industry, there is no barrier for entry and significant competition in the broadband and telecommunications industry. This is evidenced by the 142 wireline telecommunications and 76 wireless telecommunications providers authorized to do business in Hawaii. As it stands today with or without this legislation, utilities like Hawaiian Electric can build and lease fiber to third parties. Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”) procedures are already in place to establish new service providers including affiliates of electrical utility companies which in turn can enter into agreements with electrical utilities to lease their infrastructure.

Secondly, Hawaiian Telcom has serious concerns that this legislation will allow electric utilities, to leverage their ratepayer subsidized assets and easements to build out broadband infrastructure for other providers creating an uneven playing field.

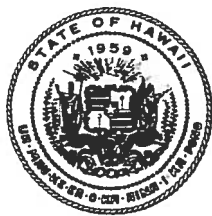
Third, this legislation has the potential to impose significant impacts on a property-owner easement rights by allowing “any other person” to run networks that bypass and possibly undermine regulatory rules, and procedures. This provision should give all landowners, both small and large, pause that access rights currently in place could become superseded by language in this bill.

Fourth, this legislation does not address gaps in broadband infrastructure service or digital equity needs because it does not prioritize the expansion of broadband infrastructure and services in unserved and underserved areas. This bill does not protect consumer interests and could very well result in higher costs for consumers.

Hawaiian Telcom supports fair market competition and increased choices for broadband consumers. We also support policies that promote the expansion of broadband infrastructure and services in unserved and underserved areas in the state. We do not believe this bill will achieve the state’s goals and will instead create an unfair advantage for electric utilities that will result in a reduction in both private investments and market competition in the broadband and telecommunications sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony opposing House Bill 1782 HD1.





## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129

**LATE**

February 10, 2022

### TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

House Bill 1782, House Draft 1 – Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 1782, House Draft 1 Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure.

Broadband access provides persons with disabilities access to programs and services. Please ensure that this bill will protect the public including people with disabilities from unreasonable or increase of rates.

Broadband access for all should be affordable especially for underserved communities to increase vitality in the industrial and economic development, increase of job opportunities, enhanced health care, and education.

Digital equity and nondiscrimination ensure people with disabilities to access broadband and promotes quality of life for persons with disabilities in society.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kirstine Pagano*  
for KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director

**HB-1782-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2022 1:30:52 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/10/2022 2:00:00 PM



<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Roberta Murray	Policy Advisory Board on Elder Affairs	Support	No

Comments:

On behalf of the Policy Advisory Board on Elder Affairs (PABEA), I am writing to express strong support for HB1782 HD1 allowing an electric utility to build, expand and maintain broadband infrastructure. Internet access is a given in today's world. Yet, for many in our island state who reside in rural, underserved communities, this crucial tool is literally out of range.

Broadband infrastructure would achieve access to the internet, particularly in rural underserved communities statewide. Benefits to our kupuna include:

1. Connecting with family and loved ones who do not live nearby.
2. Medical consults via tele-health.
3. Life-long learning through online education
4. Online banking and shopping especially for the housebound
5. Access to social networks to promote exercise, healthy aging, good nutrition
6. Reduce the negative effects of social isolation on mental and physical well being

The development of broadband infrastructure is the first step in achieving broadband equity across the island chain.