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Statement of
THEODORE E. LIU
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Tuesday, February 17, 2009
9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

in consideration of
HB 279, HD1
RELATING TO ENERGY

Bill No. 279

Support Y N

Date 2/17/09

Time 752

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Type 1 2 (WI)

Chair Morita, Chair Ito, Vice Chair Coffman, Vice Chair Har, and members of the committees.

The Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) strongly supports HB 279, HD1, which would establish a renewable energy branch in DBEDT to coordinate and support renewable energy initiatives.

Renewable energy is an area with great promise for Hawaii. Rather than exporting billions of dollars every year for the purchase of imported fossil fuels, we could utilize our abundant renewable energy resources - sun, wind, wave, geothermal, biomass, ocean thermal energy, and hydropower - to meet a significant portion of our energy needs.

The timing for this transition is upon us. Many of the technologies have matured and been proven in other locations; others are on the brink of commercialization. We have an agreement between the State and our local utilities to make this transition now. Federal support for renewable energy projects is extremely high, not only via the Hawaii Clean Energy Initiatives but also through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and other upcoming

Federal energy initiatives. Hawaii is well positioned to develop these projects and to make use of these opportunities -- more so than any other state, in fact, since we are the most dependent on petroleum for our energy use.

However, in order for this to happen, we need a State renewable energy program that is adequately staffed to apply for these funds and to carry out these programs.

House Bill 279 establishes a renewable energy branch, and strengthens the supporting state energy program, to be able to do this. The Renewable Energy Branch will be one of three branches comprising the Hawaii State Energy Office, and will work cooperatively with the Energy Policy Branch and the Energy Conservation Branch to achieve the energy independence goals of the state.

We encourage your strong support of this bill, and thank you for your understanding of the importance of this opportunity for Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



WINDWARD AHUPUA'A ALLIANCE

From the Peaks of Na Ko'olau to the Outer Reefs

*Community-Based Planning
Sustainable Economic Development
Restoration, Preservation, Protection & Public Access
Educational & Cultural Programs*

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

*Rep. Hermina Morita, Chair
Rep. Denny Coffman, Vice Chair*

COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND & OCEAN RESOURCES

*Rep. Ken Ito, Chair
Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair*

HB 279 HD1 - RELATING TO ENERGY
Strongly Support With An Amendment

PUBLIC HEARING

9 am
Tuesday, February 17, 2009
Conference Room 325

Bill No. 279
Support Y N
Date 2/17/09
Time 9:13
Cat AF AS AX BC
Type 1 2 (W)

My name is Shannon Wood speaking on behalf of the *Windward Ahupua'a Alliance* in support of **HB 279 HD1 - RELATING TO ENERGY** because it will help provide a resource for all energy producers to get with the program to reduce our dependence upon imported fossil fuels.

Having said that, however, I want to make sure that there is a clear & unambiguous definition of the word indigenous in the bill itself by providing examples such as wind, solar, wave, *OTEC*, geothermal, and sustainable biofuels.

I've brought along a summary of the Stimulus Bill and note that on Page 6 there are a number of possible allocations which might be utilized to underwrite the funding for this bill. Unfortunately, Hawai'i only received about one-tenth of one per cent of the total funds so there may be a need for the Energy Coordinator to play *Jan-Ken Po* with other program directors and coordinators to get the full funding for this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.