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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO CONSIDER EFFORTS TO MITIGATE HIGH ENERGY BURDENS FOR LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME CUSTOMERS AND INPUT BY THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE AND INVESTIGATE HOW TO INTEGRATE CONSIDERATIONS OF ENERGY EQUITY AND JUSTICE ACROSS ITS WORK.

1           WHEREAS, many households in Hawaii have difficulty paying  
2 energy bills and suffer energy insecurity, in which they are  
3 faced with difficult choices, such as whether to sacrifice food  
4 or medicine to be able to pay for energy; and

5  
6           WHEREAS, the Department of Business, Economic Development,  
7 and Tourism found that "household electricity burden - the  
8 percentage of household income spent on electricity bills - is  
9 one of the key elements contributing to a household's energy  
10 insecurity, especially for low-income households"; and

11  
12           WHEREAS, consequently, households with lower incomes are  
13 faced with higher levels of energy insecurity; and

14  
15           WHEREAS, forty-two percent of households in the State live  
16 below the ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed)  
17 threshold, meaning that almost half of all families in Hawaii  
18 are struggling to make ends meet, even though they are employed;  
19 and

20  
21           WHEREAS, additionally, nine percent of these ALICE families  
22 are living in poverty, and this trend has progressively worsened  
23 in recent years due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic;  
24 and

25  
26           WHEREAS, rising temperatures and humidity due to climate  
27 change have increased the need for air conditioning, resulting



1 in the need for more electricity and further exacerbating the  
2 situation of energy insecurity for residents; and

3  
4 WHEREAS, Hawaii's electricity rates are the highest in the  
5 nation, at close to three times the national average; and

6  
7 WHEREAS, although the federal Low Income Home Energy  
8 Assistance Program is available for bill assistance, an average  
9 of only twenty percent of qualifying households actually receive  
10 benefits, leaving an obvious unmet need for bill assistance or  
11 rate relief to those in privation; and

12  
13 WHEREAS, the State's electric utilities do not offer  
14 utility specific low- to moderate-income discount rates and have  
15 limited, if any, bill assistance options; and

16  
17 WHEREAS, in recognition of these and other disparities  
18 contributing to high electricity burdens, some state utilities  
19 in Arizona, California, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts,  
20 Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island,  
21 and Vermont are authorized to offer lower rates to low- and  
22 limited-income customers to reduce residential electricity  
23 burden and ensure continued access to electrical power; and

24  
25 WHEREAS, when comparing electricity burden maps in the  
26 Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism's  
27 electricity burden report to the Hawaii Statewide Energy Project  
28 Directory provided by the Hawaii State Energy Office, a  
29 substantial number of the current and planned energy project  
30 locations are in or near areas that have higher electricity  
31 burdens; and

32  
33 WHEREAS, the communities that serve as geographic hosts for  
34 major energy projects receive the same project benefit of secure  
35 provision of service as all other ratepayers, yet must live with  
36 the burdens associated with hosting those projects and are  
37 neither offered compensation for doing so nor are generally  
38 meaningfully engaged in the planning process; and

39  
40 WHEREAS, the burdens host communities shoulder include high  
41 concentrations of particulate air emissions, loss of open space,  
42 loss of other land uses, environmental concerns, and projects



1 that are maligned with the host community's localized needs and  
2 priorities for provision of electrical service; and

3  
4 WHEREAS, without intentional and informed planning,  
5 progression toward the State's clean energy goals may therefore  
6 come at the expense of already burdened communities; and

7  
8 WHEREAS, current circumstances necessitate an explicit  
9 focus on energy and climate justice to ensure that the benefits  
10 and burdens of energy infrastructure development in the face of  
11 climate change are equitably distributed; and

12  
13 WHEREAS, the Public Utilities Commission has worked on and  
14 continues to work on energy resource issues through its docket  
15 proceedings, such as docket no. 2019-0323, which is  
16 investigating distributed energy resource policies pertaining to  
17 the Hawaiian Electric Companies; now, therefore,

18  
19 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
20 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
21 of 2022, the Senate concurring, that the Public Utilities  
22 Commission is requested to consider efforts to mitigate high  
23 energy burdens for low- and moderate-income customers and input  
24 by the Consumer Advocate and investigate how to integrate  
25 considerations of energy equity and justice across its work; and

26  
27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission  
28 is requested to examine:

- 29
- 30 (1) Low- and moderate-income rate discounts, bill credits,  
31 and direct payments and whether these would be  
32 appropriate in the State;
- 33
- 34 (2) Expanded availability of utility bill assistance  
35 programs and whether adequate payment plan  
36 arrangements are available to low- and moderate-income  
37 customers who are facing economic challenges, such as  
38 loss of employment;
- 39
- 40 (3) Measures to protect low- and moderate-income  
41 households, senior citizens, and households with  
42 infants from service disconnections, including



- 1 reporting requirements for all utilities on the number
- 2 of customers annually disconnected due to non-payment;
- 3
- 4 (4) The advantages and disadvantages of rate design,
- 5 program offerings, and the requirements of community
- 6 benefits agreements to address energy burden, energy
- 7 insecurity, and environmental and energy justice
- 8 concerns related to energy projects and programs; and
- 9
- 10 (5) Other customer-centric solutions to lessen the energy
- 11 burden on low- and moderate-income customers and
- 12 determine appropriate benefits above and beyond those
- 13 accrued to the overall electric grid for communities
- 14 that serve as geographic hosts to utility scale energy
- 15 projects; and
- 16

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission  
 18 is requested to establish the necessary proceeding or  
 19 proceedings to conduct this examination; provided that the  
 20 proceedings are not duplicative, but rather focus on the need  
 21 for integration of energy equity and justice in the ongoing and  
 22 future work of the Public Utilities Commission; and

23  
 24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission  
 25 is requested to submit a report to the Legislature of its  
 26 findings and recommendations, including any proposed  
 27 legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
 28 the Regular Session of 2023; and

29  
 30 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
 31 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the  
 32 Public Utilities Commission and Department of Commerce and  
 33 Consumer Affairs Consumer Advocate.

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