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# SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS' DIVISION OF CONSUMER ADVOCACY, TO CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO CREATE A HAWAII LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS WITH PAYING FOR THEIR HOME ENERGY.

1           WHEREAS, the Department of Business, Economic Development,  
2 and Tourism states in its July 2021 report, "Electricity Burdens  
3 on Hawaii Households", that household electricity burden, the  
4 percentage of household income spent on electricity bills, is  
5 one of the key elements contributing to a household's energy  
6 insecurity, especially for low-income households; and  
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8           WHEREAS, Hawaii's electricity rates are one of the highest  
9 in the nation, at close to three times the national average, and  
10 vary based on availability of renewable resources, power plants,  
11 fuel costs, and pricing regulations; and  
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13           WHEREAS, the 2020 report commissioned by the Aloha United  
14 Way, "ALICE in Hawaii: A Financial Hardship Study", states that  
15 forty-two percent of households in the State live below the  
16 ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed) threshold,  
17 meaning that almost half of all families in Hawaii are  
18 struggling to make ends meet, even though they are employed; and  
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20           WHEREAS, nine percent of these ALICE families are living in  
21 poverty, and this trend has progressively worsened in recent  
22 years due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic;  
23 and  
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25           WHEREAS, national survey results show that households below  
26 the ALICE threshold fared significantly worse than households  
27 above the ALICE threshold during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite



1 the added protective measures of eviction moratoria and food  
2 assistance programs; and

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4 WHEREAS, the electric utility companies in the State  
5 reported that for the month of December 2021, 6,225 customers  
6 became eligible for service disconnection due to nonpayment of  
7 bills; and

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9 WHEREAS, the electric utility companies also reported that  
10 they entered into 2,974 payment plan agreements with customers  
11 to allow those customers to pay off their unpaid bills over an  
12 extended period of time; and

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14 WHEREAS, in response to the devastating impacts of the  
15 COVID-19 pandemic, the American Rescue Plan of 2021 authorized  
16 the United States Department of the Treasury's Emergency Rental  
17 Assistance Program to help households that are unable to pay  
18 rent or utilities; and

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20 WHEREAS, in Hawaii, these federal funds are being  
21 distributed by each county through the Rental and Utility  
22 Assistance Programs and are scheduled to end by September 30,  
23 2025; and

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25 WHEREAS, once the federal funding from the Emergency Rental  
26 Assistance Program ends, it is anticipated that low-income  
27 households will still require utility payment assistance to  
28 prevent service terminations; and

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30 WHEREAS, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program  
31 (LIHEAP) is a federally-funded, state-administered energy  
32 program that has been in existence since 1981; and

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34 WHEREAS, the purpose of LIHEAP is to assist low-income  
35 households, particularly those with the lowest incomes, that pay  
36 a high proportion of household income for home energy; and

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38 WHEREAS, LIHEAP prevents low-income families from having to  
39 choose between paying for their electric utility bills or  
40 purchasing necessary medication and food; and



1 WHEREAS, the federal Administration for Children and  
 2 Families' Office of Community Services notes that being  
 3 qualified for LIHEAP does not guarantee that a person in need  
 4 will receive help because LIHEAP assistance disbursements depend  
 5 on the amount of LIHEAP funds available for the year; once funds  
 6 run out for the year, further benefits cannot be distributed  
 7 until more funds are made available by Congress; and

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 9 WHEREAS, according to Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity,  
 10 fewer than nine thousand Hawaii households, or about two  
 11 percent, participated in LIHEAP in 2020; now, therefore,

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 13 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first  
 14 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2022, the  
 15 House of Representatives concurring, that the Public Utilities  
 16 Commission, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce and  
 17 Consumer Affairs' Division of Consumer Advocacy, is requested to  
 18 convene a working group to create a Hawaii Low Income Home  
 19 Energy Assistance Program to assist low-income households with  
 20 paying for their home energy; and

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 22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group consist of  
 23 the following:

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 25 (1) One representative from the Public Utilities  
 26 Commission;  
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 28 (2) One representative from the Department of Commerce and  
 29 Consumer Affairs' Division of Consumer Advocacy;  
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 31 (3) One representative from the Department of Human  
 32 Services' Division of Benefit, Employment and Support  
 33 Services;  
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 35 (4) One representative from the Department of Labor and  
 36 Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services;  
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 38 (5) One representative from the Hawaii State Energy  
 39 Office;  
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 41 (6) One representative from each electric utility  
 42 operating in the State;



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(7) The Chairperson of the House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Energy and Environmental  
Protection;

(8) The Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on  
Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism; and

(9) One representative from Hawaii Energy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested  
to submit a report of its findings and recommendations,  
including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature and  
Governor no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the  
Regular Session of 2023; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Human  
Services, Director of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Consumer  
Advocate, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations,  
Chairperson of the Public Utilities Commission, Chief Energy  
Officer of the Hawaii State Energy Office, President and Chief  
Executive Officer of the Hawaiian Electric Company, Chairperson  
of the Kauai Island Utility Cooperative Board of Directors, and  
Executive Director of Hawaii Energy.

