

MAR 10 2022

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO CONSIDER EFFORTS
TO MITIGATE HIGH ENERGY BURDENS FOR LOW- AND MODERATE-
INCOME CUSTOMERS 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
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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
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12 WHEREAS, consequently, households with lower incomes are
13 faced with higher levels of energy insecurity; and
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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
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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
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26 WHEREAS, rising temperatures and humidity due to climate
27 change has caused increased need for air conditioning, resulting



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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 amount 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 have shouldered
41 include high concentrations of particulate air emissions, loss
42 of open space, loss of other land uses, environmental concerns,



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

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

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

13
14 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
15 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2022, the
16 House of Representatives concurring, that the Public Utilities
17 Commission is requested to consider efforts to mitigate high
18 energy burdens for low- and moderate-income customers and
19 investigate how to integrate considerations of energy equity and
20 justice across its work; and

21
22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission
23 is requested to examine:

- 24
25 (1) Low- and moderate-income rate discounts, bill credits,
26 and direct payments and whether these would be
27 appropriate in the State;
- 28
29 (2) Expanded availability of utility bill assistance
30 programs and whether adequate payment plan
31 arrangements are available to low- and moderate-income
32 customers who are facing economic challenges, such as
33 loss of employment;
- 34
35 (3) Measures to protect low- and moderate-income
36 households, senior citizens, and households with
37 infants from service disconnections, including
38 reporting requirements for all utilities on the number
39 of customers annually disconnected due to non-payment;
- 40
41 (4) The advantages and disadvantages of rate design,
42 program offerings, and the requirements of community



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1 benefits agreements to address energy burden, energy
2 insecurity, and environmental and energy justice
3 concerns related to energy projects and programs; and
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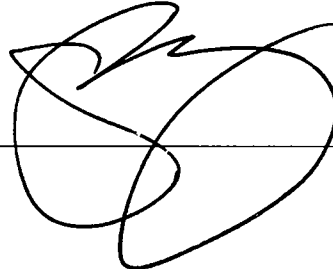
- 5 (5) Other customer-centric solutions to lessen the energy
6 burden on low- and moderate-income customers and
7 determine appropriate benefits above and beyond those
8 accrued to the overall electric grid for communities
9 that serve as geographic hosts to utility scale energy
10 projects; and
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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission
13 is requested to establish the necessary proceeding or
14 proceedings to conduct this examination; and
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission
17 is requested to submit a report to the Legislature of its
18 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
19 legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
20 the Regular Session of 2023; and
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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
23 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the
24 Public Utilities Commission.
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27

OFFERED BY: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and curves, positioned above a horizontal line that serves as a signature line.