

MAR 10 2022

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# SENATE 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

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 has caused increased need for air conditioning, resulting  
28 in the need for more electricity and further exacerbating the  
29 situation of energy insecurity for residents; and  
30



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

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

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

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

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

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

37 WHEREAS, the burdens host communities have shouldered  
38 include high concentrations of particulate air emissions, loss  
39 of open space, loss of other land uses, environmental concerns,  
40 and projects that are maligned with the host community's  
41 localized needs and priorities for provision of electrical  
42 service; and



1  
2 WHEREAS, without intentional and informed planning,  
3 progression toward the State's clean energy goals may therefore  
4 come at the expense of already burdened communities; and  
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6 WHEREAS, current circumstances necessitate an explicit  
7 focus on energy and climate justice to ensure that the benefits  
8 and burdens of energy infrastructure development in the face of  
9 climate change are equitably distributed; now, therefore,  
10

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

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission  
19 is requested to examine:  
20

- 21 (1) Low- and moderate-income rate discounts, bill credits,  
22 and direct payments and whether these would be  
23 appropriate in the State;  
24
- 25 (2) Expanded availability of utility bill assistance  
26 programs and whether adequate payment plan  
27 arrangements are available to low- and moderate-income  
28 customers who are facing economic challenges, such as  
29 loss of employment;  
30
- 31 (3) Measures to protect low- and moderate-income  
32 households, senior citizens, and households with  
33 infants from service disconnections, including  
34 reporting requirements for all utilities on the number  
35 of customers annually disconnected due to non-payment;  
36
- 37 (4) The advantages and disadvantages of rate design,  
38 program offerings, and the requirements of community  
39 benefits agreements to address energy burden, energy  
40 insecurity, and environmental and energy justice  
41 concerns related to energy projects and programs; and  
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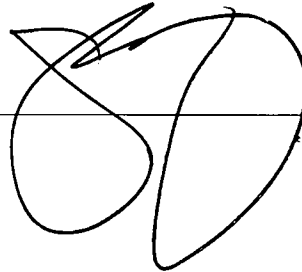
1 (5) Other customer-centric solutions to lessen the energy  
2 burden on low- and moderate-income customers and  
3 determine appropriate benefits above and beyond those  
4 accrued to the overall electric grid for communities  
5 that serve as geographic hosts to utility scale energy  
6 projects; and  
7

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission  
9 is requested to establish the necessary proceeding or  
10 proceedings to conduct this examination; and  
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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission  
13 is requested to submit a report to the Legislature of its  
14 findings and recommendations, including any proposed  
15 legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
16 the Regular Session of 2023; and  
17

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this  
19 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Public  
20 Utilities Commission.  
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22  
23

OFFERED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' or 'D' shape with a horizontal line through it, positioned over the signature line.