

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 28 2025

RE: S.B. No. 191
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection and Ways
and Means, to which was referred S.B. No. 191, S.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Establish the Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program within the Department of Human Services to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills;
- (2) Require the Public Utilities Commission Public Benefits Fee Administrator to provide certain assistance to recipients of the Program;
- (3) Establish positions; and
- (4) Appropriate funds.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs; Department of Human Services; Public Utilities Commission; City and County of Honolulu Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency; Hawaiian Electric; Catholic Charities Hawai'i; VEIC; Hawai'i Energy; Climate Change and Health Working Group; and five individuals.

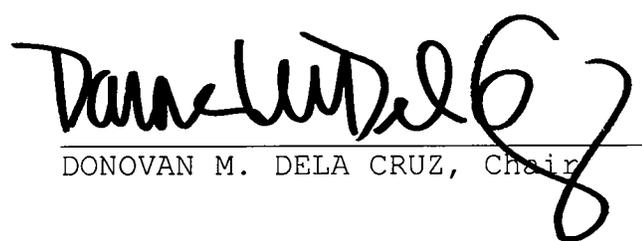


Your Committees received comments on this measure from the Tax Foundation of Hawaii.

Your Committees find that Hawaii's electricity rates are amongst the highest in the nation and the number of electric utility customers in arrears and facing disconnections has grown since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately eleven percent of households in the State are below the Federal Poverty Line and spend nearly twenty percent of their income on electricity costs, which is more than nine times greater than the statewide average. The high energy burden and other increases in the cost of living have led to utility disconnections, doubling in the last five years. This measure will provide immediate relief to the State's most vulnerable families and create a more equitable energy assistance framework to reduce utility disconnections and their associated societal costs.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection and Ways and Means that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 191, S.D. 1, and recommend that it pass Third Reading.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the members of the Committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection and Ways and Means,


DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, Chair


ARRETT KEOHOKALOLE, Chair

