

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 12 2025

RE: S.B. No. 51
S.D. 1

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

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred S.B.
No. 51 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCING FOR
CANDIDATES TO ELECTED OFFICE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to establish a comprehensive system of public financing for all candidates seeking election to state and county public offices in the State, beginning with the 2026 general election year.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Campaign Spending Commission, one member of the Hawai'i County Council, Hawai'i Environmental Change Agents Solid Waste Reduction Task Force, Greenpeace Hawaii, Our Hawai'i, League of Women Voters of Hawaii, Education Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action, Chamber of Sustainable Commerce, 350Hawaii, Green Party of Hawai'i, and one hundred eighteen individuals.

Your Committee received testimony in opposition to this measure from the East Hawaii Republican Party and forty-seven individuals.



Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Budget and Finance and Office of the City Clerk of the City and County of Honolulu.

Your Committee finds that providing a mechanism to fully fund the elections of candidates for state and county offices who voluntarily agree to abide by campaign fundraising and expenditure guidelines will have significant public benefit. Comprehensive publicly-funded campaign programs are intended to improve the process by allowing candidates to compete without reliance on private funds and by also allowing elected officials to make decisions without the influence, or appearance thereof, of private individuals, lobbyists, political parties, political action committees, unions, corporations, and other entities. The State became a leader in public funding programs when it added language to the Hawaii State Constitution in 1978 that established the Partial Public Funding Program, which candidates continue to use today. Other comprehensive public financing programs, sometimes termed "clean elections", were established in 1996 in Maine, in 1998 in Arizona, and have since also been adopted in Connecticut and New Mexico. This measure will increase public confidence in the State's candidates and elected officials by establishing a comprehensive program to publicly fund candidates in the State.

Your Committee notes the testimony of the Campaign Spending Commission regarding staffing issues. Specifically, your Committee notes that the Campaign Spending Commission has not had an increase in personnel for the past twenty-nine years, and will require more permanent staff to effectuate the comprehensive system of public financing established by this measure. Your Committee further notes the Campaign Spending Commission's testimony regarding the timeline of the program established by this measure. Your Committee finds that, since the 2026 election period started the day after the general election on November 5, 2024, it would be impossible for the Campaign Spending Commission to implement the program established by this measure by the 2026 general election year.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Requiring that the comprehensive system of public financing begin with the 2028 general election year, instead of the 2026 general election year;



- (2) Making the positions established by this measure permanent instead of temporary positions;
- (3) Changing the appropriation and numbers of new positions to unspecified amounts;
- (4) Inserting an effective date of April 23, 2057, to encourage further discussion;
- (5) Amending section 1 to reflect its amended purpose; and
- (6) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

Your Committee notes that this measure, as amended, contains unspecified appropriation amounts. Should your Committee on Ways and Means choose to deliberate on this measure, your Committee respectfully requests that it consider inserting an appropriation amount of:

- (1) \$30,200,000 for deposit into the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund established under section 11-421, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and
- (2) \$200,000 in preparation for the comprehensive public funding of candidates in elections taking place in 2028, including the hiring of two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) permanent positions.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 51, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 51, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Judiciary,

Karl Rhoads

KARL RHOADS, Chair



**Record of Votes
Committee on Judiciary
JDC**

***Only one measure per Record of Votes**