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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ENERGY.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that it is imperative to  
2       enable the development of affordable clean energy resources for  
3       the benefit of utility customers in the State. Many existing  
4       generating units in Hawaii will need to be retired in the next  
5       few years due to obsolescence and environmental permitting  
6       requirements. The impending retirement of these units makes it  
7       urgent to obtain replacement resources, without which the  
8       reliability of electrical supplies in the State will be at risk.  
9       In addition, continued reliance on these aging units, even if  
10      feasible, would result in increased costs for utility customers  
11      and continued reliance on fossil fuels, contrary to the State's  
12      policy to transition to renewable, non-carbon-emitting  
13      resources.

14      The procurement or purchase of energy from replacement  
15      clean energy resources by a certain investor-owned electric  
16      utility and its electric utility subsidiaries is ongoing in its  
17      stage 3 request for proposals, further anticipated in its first



1 integrated grid planning request for proposals and other  
2 proposals. These requests for proposals implement energy plans  
3 that are developed through extensive engagement with local  
4 stakeholders and communities and reviewed and approved by the  
5 public utilities commission. The legislature finds that  
6 successful purchase of energy from clean energy resources is in  
7 the public interest and necessary to avoid significant  
8 detrimental reliability and affordability impacts to electric  
9 utility customers.

10 The legislature also finds that the development of clean  
11 energy resources by independent power producers is essential to  
12 achieve the State's goals of one hundred per cent net  
13 electricity sales from renewable sources by 2045, a zero  
14 emissions economy by 2045, and greater energy security and  
15 energy diversification, as established by the Hawaii State  
16 Planning Act and existing public utility laws.

17 The legislature further finds that continued development of  
18 clean energy resources requires adequate assurances to  
19 independent power producers that prompt and full payments for  
20 purchased power will be made, irrespective of the financial  
21 strength of an electric utility. The current



1 sub-investment-grade status of a certain investor-owned electric  
2 utility and its subsidiaries, arising from the tragic events  
3 that occurred in the 2023 Maui wildfires, has led independent  
4 power producers, and those who would finance renewable energy  
5 projects, to raise concerns about the reliability of payment by  
6 the utility and its subsidiaries under new power purchase  
7 agreements. Those concerns may cause independent power  
8 producers to cancel renewable energy projects or increase the  
9 prices they would charge for deliveries to address this  
10 perceived credit risk. Either outcome would be contrary to the  
11 interests of electric utility customers in the State.

12 The legislature further finds that the public interest  
13 could be served by the State providing limited credit support  
14 through step-in agreements, under which the State will agree to  
15 make payments to independent power producers in the event of a  
16 default in payment by an electric utility. These agreements can  
17 provide assurances to independent power producers that prompt  
18 and full payments for purchased power will be made. The  
19 legislature also finds that the intent of this Act is further  
20 served by appointing, authorizing, and empowering the electric



1 utility to serve as the billing, collection, payment, and  
2 management agent of the State.

3       The legislature also finds that the State's obligations in  
4 connection with step-in agreements do not constitute contingent  
5 liabilities of the State pursuant to article VII, section 13,  
6 clause 8, of the Hawaii State Constitution, because the State  
7 will be vested with all ownership of and title to revenues  
8 resulting from on-bill charges for power purchase costs, and the  
9 full faith and credit of the State will not be pledged for  
10 obligations under these step-in agreements. In the event of a  
11 default by an electric utility on its payment obligations, these  
12 revenues would cover all payment obligations of the State for  
13 electric energy and related products. In the absence of  
14 default, the electric utility will be authorized to utilize  
15 these revenues to discharge its obligations to pay independent  
16 power producers for electric energy and related products. The  
17 obligations of the State under this Act are undertaken for a  
18 public purpose, namely, the protection of public health, safety,  
19 and welfare by supporting the development of clean energy  
20 resources that are needed for the reliable provision of electric  
21 supply at a reasonable cost.



1 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to:

2 (1) Allow the State to enter into step-in agreements for  
3 payment obligations arising under new power purchase  
4 agreements entered into between an investor-owned  
5 electric utility and its regulated subsidiaries and  
6 independent power producers;

7 (2) Establish a trust fund within the State treasury that  
8 shall be capitalized immediately in the event of a  
9 default to fulfill state-backed payment obligations  
10 arising from power purchase agreements subject to  
11 step-in agreements;

12 (3) Establish that revenues from on-bill charges for  
13 covered power purchase agreements and accompanying  
14 reserves shall be held in trust by the State, and that  
15 independent power producers shall hold a beneficial  
16 interest in the revenues and reserves to the extent  
17 they are owed under the covered power purchase  
18 agreements; and

19 (4) Appoint, authorize, and empower an electric utility to  
20 serve as the billing, collection, payment, and  
21 management agent of the department of budget and



1 finance in the service of performing step-in  
2 agreements.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 269, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
4 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and  
5 to read as follows:

6 **"PART . STEP-IN AGREEMENTS COVERING POWER PURCHASE COSTS**

7 **§269-A Definitions.** As used in this part:

8 "Covered power purchase agreement" means a power purchase  
9 agreement that is subject to a step-in agreement.

10 "Default" means the failure by an electric utility to pay  
11 power purchase costs when due to an obligee under a covered  
12 power purchase agreement after the expiration of any applicable  
13 grace or cure periods and extensions thereto. "Default" shall  
14 not mean a bankruptcy filing by an electric utility.

15 "Department" means the department of budget and finance, or  
16 any successor by law.

17 "Electric utility" means a public utility that produces,  
18 conveys, transmits, delivers, or furnishes electric power.

19 "Energy cost recovery clause" means the provision, or other  
20 equivalent, in an electric utility's rate schedules that allows  
21 the electric utility to recover its costs of fuel, expenses, and



1 related taxes for energy costs of power purchased under a power  
2 purchase agreement.

3 "Fund" means the power purchase costs trust fund  
4 established pursuant to section 269-D.

5 "Investment grade status" means a credit rating for the  
6 electric utility's senior unsecured long-term debt obligations  
7 or an issued credit rating for the electric utility (in each  
8 case, not supported by third party credit enhancements) from at  
9 least two out of the three of the following:

10 (1) At least BBB- or higher from S&P Global Ratings, or  
11 any successor by law;

12 (2) At least BAA3 or higher from Moody's Investor  
13 Services, Inc., or any successor by law; or

14 (3) At least BBB- or higher from Fitch Ratings, Inc., or  
15 any successor by law.

16 "Obligee" means any user, owner, or operator of the Hawaii  
17 electric system that does not claim a tax credit for a project  
18 system under section 235-12.5 and that is owed payment of power  
19 purchase costs by the electric utility under a power purchase  
20 agreement.



1 "Power purchase agreement" means a contract between an  
2 electric utility and a user, owner, or operator of the Hawaii  
3 electric system, approved by the public utilities commission,  
4 pursuant to which the electric utility agrees to purchase, and  
5 the user, owner, or operator of the Hawaii electric system  
6 agrees to sell, electric energy and related products produced by  
7 plants or facilities that have not provided, sold, or  
8 transmitted electricity to the electric utility.

9 "Power purchase charges" means the on-bill charges  
10 authorized by the public utilities commission to be imposed on  
11 and collected from all existing and future customers of an  
12 electric utility or any successor for power purchase costs,  
13 including the energy cost recovery clause and the purchased  
14 power adjustment clause. "Power purchase charges" do not  
15 include any amounts for state and county revenue taxes,  
16 including any franchise tax, public service company tax, and  
17 public utility commission fee.

18 "Power purchase costs" means costs incurred by an electric  
19 utility pursuant to the terms of a power purchase agreement,  
20 including but not limited to termination payments payable by an  
21 electric utility in connection with the termination of a power





1 purchase agreement as a result of a default by the electric  
2 utility. "Power purchase costs" also include all categories of  
3 costs recoverable under the energy cost recovery clause and the  
4 purchased power adjustment clause under its respective tariffs.

5 "Purchased power adjustment clause" means the provision, or  
6 other equivalent, in an electric utility's rate schedules that  
7 allows the electric utility to recover expenses and related  
8 taxes for non-energy costs of power purchased under a power  
9 purchase agreement.

10 "Step-in agreement" means a contract by which the State  
11 undertakes an obligation of prompt and full payment for power  
12 purchase costs owed to an obligee by an electric utility under a  
13 power purchase agreement following a default.

14 "User, owner, or operator of the Hawaii electric system"  
15 has the same meaning as defined in section 269-141.

16 **§269-B Step-in agreements.** (a) The department shall  
17 enter into a step-in agreement with an obligee that requires the  
18 department to make prompt and full payments for power purchase  
19 costs owed by an electric utility to the obligee in the event of  
20 a default; provided that before entry into any agreement, the  
21 department may conduct due diligence on a prospective obligee.



1 Notwithstanding any other provision in this part to the  
2 contrary, a step-in agreement shall also obligate the department  
3 to pay claims of the obligee from moneys in the fund arising out  
4 of the termination of a covered power purchase agreement by the  
5 electric utility under bankruptcy law. Upon the default, the  
6 department shall make payments to the obligee for power purchase  
7 costs with moneys from the fund as and when due under the  
8 covered power purchase agreement. The step-in agreement shall  
9 not be an obligation for which the full faith and credit of the  
10 State is pledged, and an obligee shall have no claim or lien on  
11 any revenues or moneys of the State, except for those revenues  
12 from the power purchase charges attributable to the covered  
13 power purchase agreement.

14 (b) The department shall enter into a step-in agreement  
15 for each covered power purchase agreement. The department shall  
16 enter into a step-in agreement when the power purchase agreement  
17 subject to the step-in agreement is executed, or if the power  
18 purchase agreement has already been executed as of July 1, 2025,  
19 as soon as reasonably possible.

20 (c) Payment by the department under a step-in agreement  
21 shall commence not later than two days after the date of a



1 notice from the department to the electric utility pursuant to  
2 section 269-C(a).

3 (d) The step-in agreement shall terminate when the credit  
4 rating of the electric utility or its successor achieves  
5 investment grade status or by express agreement of the obligee.

6 (e) Following a default of a covered power purchase  
7 agreement and any payment by the department, the electric  
8 utility, through agreement with all obligees of its covered  
9 power purchase agreements, may elect to resume payments for  
10 power purchase costs owed by the electric utility, regardless of  
11 the credit rating of the electric utility at that time, in which  
12 case the electric utility may use the revenue from power  
13 purchase charges as specified in subsection (h); provided that  
14 the payments shall not terminate the step-in agreement, which  
15 shall remain in effect until terminated pursuant to subsection  
16 (d), and the department shall remain obligated to pay the  
17 obligee upon a subsequent payment default by the electric  
18 utility.

19 (f) The department may impose other conditions, and may  
20 include other terms, in a step-in agreement that the department  
21 deems necessary to implement the requirements of this part;



1 provided that the conditions and terms shall not adversely  
2 affect the obligation of the department to make prompt and full  
3 payments for power purchase costs owed by an electric utility to  
4 an obligee as and when due to a default as required under  
5 subsection (a) or otherwise be inconsistent with the covered  
6 power purchase agreement.

7 (g) As consideration for the State entering into the  
8 step-in agreement, the electric utility or its successor shall  
9 enter into an agreement to assign and transfer any ownership in  
10 and title to the revenue from power purchase charges  
11 attributable to the covered power purchase agreement to the  
12 department, and, under the agreement, the department shall be  
13 deemed to be the sole holder in trust of all ownership and title  
14 to the revenue for the benefit of the obligees under the covered  
15 power purchase agreements to the extent the obliges are owed.  
16 The revenue shall not be subject to appropriation for any other  
17 purpose. The revenue, if held in a depository other than the  
18 state treasury, shall be exempt from the requirements of  
19 chapters 36 and 38. The electric utility or its successor shall  
20 be obligated to bill and collect the power purchase charges and



1 to manage the revenue attributable to the agreement as an agent  
2 for the department.

3 (h) Except in the case of any bankruptcy filing by an  
4 electric utility, if any payment obligation of the electric  
5 utility under a covered power purchase agreement for power  
6 purchase costs becomes owed and due, any ownership of or title  
7 to the revenue from power purchase charges for the payment  
8 obligation owed and due shall divest from the department and  
9 vest in the electric utility or its successor at the time the  
10 payment by the electric utility is made to the obligee. Any  
11 vesting of revenues to the electric utility when payment  
12 obligations are owed and due may be made without appropriation  
13 or allotment by the legislature. The department may not  
14 otherwise assign, sell, or transfer any ownership of, or title  
15 to, any claim or right to the revenue from power purchase  
16 charges.

17 (i) To meet the requirements of the State and the public  
18 utilities commission as it pertains to electric reliability,  
19 energy security, and energy diversification under this chapter  
20 and any rules adopted pursuant thereto, an electric utility  
21 shall ensure that it maintains sufficient availability of



1 electric energy and related products, to the extent provided by  
2 an obligee in accordance with a covered power purchase  
3 agreement. The department shall exercise its regulatory powers  
4 to ensure that an electric utility complies with its obligations  
5 under the covered power purchase agreements.

6 (j) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, an  
7 electric utility shall file with the public utilities  
8 commission, and the public utilities commission shall allow to  
9 become effective, monthly rate adjustments provided under the  
10 energy cost recovery clause and purchased power adjustment  
11 clause to establish or adjust power purchase charges in a manner  
12 designed to:

13 (1) Generate sufficient revenue to timely and fully pay  
14 amounts when owed and due under covered power purchase  
15 agreements; and

16 (2) Ensure that in no event shall revenues fall below the  
17 amounts owed and due under covered power purchase  
18 agreements by a sum that exceeds the amounts in the  
19 reserve established under section 269-E.

20 To achieve the objectives established pursuant to this  
21 subsection, unless the public utilities commission otherwise



1 directs, the electric utility may retain revenue collected in  
2 excess of amounts owed and due under the covered power purchase  
3 agreement. The obligations of the electric utility and of the  
4 public utilities commission under this section shall survive any  
5 default by the electric utility and shall terminate only upon  
6 the termination of the step-in agreement as provided in  
7 subsection (d).

8 (k) If the electric utility fails to timely file any  
9 submission as described in subsection (j), the department shall  
10 promptly file, and the public utilities commission shall allow  
11 to become effective, a substitute submission as if the  
12 submission had been filed by the electric utility under  
13 subsection (j). The electric utility shall implement the power  
14 purchase charges in the substitute submission from the  
15 department.

16 **§269-C Default of electric utility; successor**  
17 **requirements.** (a) If the obligee provides notice to the  
18 department of a default of a covered power purchase agreement,  
19 the department shall provide the electric utility notice of the  
20 default. Two days after the electric utility receives the  
21 notice, the electric utility shall turn over all revenues from



1 power purchase charges arising from any covered power purchase  
2 agreements identified in the notice, regardless of when  
3 collected, then in its possession, and all future revenues from  
4 the power purchase charges thereafter collected, to the fund as  
5 directed by the department; provided that the amounts shall  
6 include revenues received by the electric utility after a  
7 default for power purchase charges billed before the default  
8 that were intended to be used to pay power purchase costs  
9 arising from the covered power purchase agreement. The  
10 department shall use the revenue from the power purchase  
11 charges, including the revenues turned over, only in the order  
12 as follows:

- 13 (1) To pay power purchase costs pursuant to a step-in  
14 agreement, subject to the appointment, authorization,  
15 and empowerment of the electric utility as an agent as  
16 described in section 269-F(e); and  
17 (2) To implement a rate credit to customers for revenue in  
18 excess of amounts owed under the covered power  
19 purchase agreement.





1 (b) Any step-in agreement shall remain in full force and  
2 effect notwithstanding any bankruptcy, reorganization, or other  
3 insolvency proceedings with respect to the electric utility.

4 (c) The obligation of an electric utility to collect and  
5 remit the power purchase charges pursuant to the requirements of  
6 this part shall not be subject to any setoff, counterclaim,  
7 surcharge, or defense by the electric utility, or in connection  
8 with a bankruptcy of any electric utility.

9 (d) Any successor to an electric utility shall be bound by  
10 the requirements of this part. The successor shall perform and  
11 satisfy all obligations of the electric utility in the same  
12 manner and to the same extent as the electric utility, including  
13 the obligation to bill and collect the power purchase charges  
14 and remit the collected revenue to the department in connection  
15 with any covered power purchase agreement, unless and until the  
16 step-in agreement is terminated as described in section  
17 269-B(d).

18 (e) If the credit rating of the electric utility or its  
19 successor achieves investment grade status, then by operation of  
20 law, any ownership of and title to the revenue from power  
21 purchase charges attributable to the covered power purchase



1 agreement shall immediately divest from the department and vest  
2 in the electric utility or its successor; provided that the  
3 electric utility or its successor shall thereafter be the sole  
4 owner and holder of title or beneficial and equitable interest  
5 in, and any claim or right to, the revenue, and the obligation  
6 of the electric utility or its successor to bill and collect the  
7 power purchase charges and manage the revenue as an agent for  
8 the department, and, if applicable, to remit the collected  
9 revenue to the fund, shall terminate.

10       **§269-D Power purchase costs trust fund.** (a) There is  
11 established outside the state treasury the power purchase costs  
12 trust fund, to be administered by the department, into which  
13 shall be deposited all proceeds of the power purchase charges to  
14 be paid in the event of a default of a covered power purchase  
15 agreement by the electric utility.

16       (b) Moneys in the fund shall be administered and held by  
17 the department in trust for the benefit of obligees of covered  
18 power purchase agreements to the extent the obligees are owed.

19       (c) If the credit rating of the electric utility or its  
20 successor achieves investment grade status, the fund shall cease  
21 to receive any revenue from the power purchase charges collected



1 by that electric utility and shall pay to the electric utility  
2 or its successor the remainder of any moneys in the fund;  
3 provided that the moneys in the fund shall be considered revenue  
4 of the electric utility.

5 (d) The department shall be under no obligation to make  
6 payment to any obligee if the moneys in the fund are depleted.  
7 Any default or failure by the department to make payments  
8 pursuant to the terms of a step-in agreement under this part  
9 shall not result in any recourse by the electric utility or  
10 obligee to any funds of the State other than the revenues  
11 derived from power purchase charges and the subsidy for the  
12 reserve account collected and on deposit in the fund.

13 **§269-E Power purchase costs reserve fee; establishment.**

14 (a) By August 1, 2025, the public utilities commission shall  
15 authorize a surcharge proposed by an electric utility, referred  
16 to as the power purchase costs reserve fee, the revenue from  
17 which shall be accorded the same treatment as revenue from power  
18 purchase charges as described in section 269-B(g). The power  
19 purchase costs reserve fee may be included in the purchased  
20 power adjustment clause on customer bills.



1 (b) The power purchase costs reserve fee shall be  
2 collected and maintained to establish a reserve in an amount not  
3 to exceed fifteen per cent of the forecasted monthly power  
4 purchase costs of all covered power purchase agreements.

5 (c) In the event of default pursuant to section 269-C(a),  
6 all previously collected revenues and all future revenues from  
7 the power purchase costs reserve fee shall be accorded the same  
8 treatment as revenues from power purchase charges as described  
9 in section 269-C.

10 (d) Notwithstanding subsection (c), if the credit rating  
11 of the electric utility or its successor achieves investment  
12 grade status and the step-in agreement terminates pursuant to  
13 section 269-B(d), all moneys remaining in the reserve collected  
14 from the power purchase costs reserve fee shall be returned,  
15 together with any associated interest earned, to customers  
16 through a rate credit.

17 (e) In the special circumstances of this part, the  
18 legislature finds and declares that the reasonable reserve  
19 requirement of article VII, section 13, clause 8 of the Hawaii  
20 State Constitution, to the extent applicable, has been  
21 satisfied.



1       **§269-F Electric utility; agent of the department.** (a) To  
2       implement the requirements of this part, the department may  
3       contract with an electric utility or its successor to act as an  
4       agent of the department to provide billing, collection, payment,  
5       management, and other related services on terms and conditions  
6       that reasonably compensate the electric utility or its successor  
7       for its incremental cost to provide services, and adequately  
8       secure payment to the department.

9       (b) At the request of the department, the public utilities  
10      commission shall order an electric utility or its successor to  
11      perform the duties pursuant to a contract under subsection (a).

12      (c) The act of serving as an agent to bill and to collect  
13      the power purchase charges shall not cause any electric utility  
14      to be subject to the laws that regulate financial institutions,  
15      escrow depositories, or collection agencies. An electric  
16      utility shall not be responsible for lending, underwriting, and  
17      credit determinations in respect to these billing and collection  
18      activities.

19      (d) To the extent any moneys are received by an electric  
20      utility pursuant to subsection (a) or section 269-B(g), in the  
21      process of collection, and pending their transfer to the



1 department, those moneys shall be held in trust for the  
2 department's exercise of its obligations pursuant to this part.

3 (e) To implement the requirements of this part, the  
4 director of finance may appoint, authorize, and empower the  
5 electric utility, as agent for and on behalf of the State, to  
6 manage and pay out moneys, including from the fund, for  
7 fulfillment of payment obligations of the State arising from  
8 covered power purchase agreements. The appointment shall  
9 terminate when the step-in agreement for the covered power  
10 purchase agreements terminates pursuant to section 269-B(d)."

11 SECTION 3. If any provision of this Act, or the  
12 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held  
13 invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or  
14 applications of the Act that can be given effect without the  
15 invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions  
16 of this Act are severable.

17 SECTION 4. In codifying the new sections added by  
18 section 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute  
19 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating  
20 the new sections in this Act.

21 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on May 13, 2040.



**Report Title:**

BNF; Public Utilities Commission; Energy; Step-In Agreements;  
Power Purchase Agreements; Power Purchasing Costs Trust Fund

**Description:**

Allows the State to enter into step-in agreements for payment obligations arising under certain power purchase agreements. Establishes the Power Purchasing Costs Trust Fund. Establishes that revenues from on-bill charges for power purchase agreements and accompanying reserves shall be held in trust by the State, and that independent power producers shall hold a beneficial interest in the revenue and reserve to the extent of the amounts owed under the covered power purchase agreements. Appoints, authorizes, and empowers an electric utility to serve as the billing, collection, payment, and managing agent of the Department of Budget and Finance in the service of performing step-in agreements. Effective 5/13/2040. (SD2)

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