

**JOSH GREEN M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION**

Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau  
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**GARY S. SUGANUMA**  
DIRECTOR

**KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**TESTIMONY OF**  
**GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

**TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. No. 1620, Relating to Energy

**BEFORE THE:**

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

**DATE:** Thursday, January 29, 2026

**TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 325

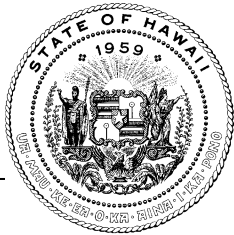
Chair Lowen, Vice-Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding H.B. 1620 for your consideration.

H.B. 1620 amends Section 243-3.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by increasing the Environmental Response, Energy, and Food Security Tax, commonly referred to as "the barrel tax," from \$1.05 to \$1.15 on each barrel of petroleum product that is not aviation fuel. The bill also increases the allocation of the tax deposited into the electric vehicle charging system subaccount from 3 cents to 13 cents per barrel. This bill would take effect upon approval.

DOTAX recommends an effective date of January 1, 2027. This would allow sufficient time to notify the public, update systems, and make the necessary administrative adjustments, while also giving taxpayers adequate time to prepare for the change.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



# HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE STATE OF HAWAII

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Telephone:  
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JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR

MARK B. GLICK  
CHIEF ENERGY OFFICER

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## Testimony of **MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer**

### before the **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Thursday, January 29, 2026  
9:30 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325 and Videoconference

Providing Comments on  
**HB 1620**

### **RELATING TO ENERGY.**

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers the following comments on HB 1620, which increases the environmental response, energy, and food security tax and the amount collected from the tax that is deposited into the electric vehicle charging system subaccount.

There is no dispute that meeting Hawai'i's decarbonization goals will require significant emissions reductions from ground transportation with Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) as a key strategy as reported in HSEO's *Hawai'i Pathways to Decarbonization* report<sup>1</sup> submitted to the Legislature in December 2023 pursuant to Act 238 (2022). Expanding access to reliable EV charging is also an essential component of this strategy. Currently, Hawai'i has approximately 44 registered EVs per public charging port statewide<sup>2</sup>, the second worst ratio in the nation.

All three mitigation scenarios in the *Hawai'i Pathways to Decarbonization* report assume Hawai'i will achieve 100% ZEV light-duty vehicle sales by 2035, with 21% of registered light-duty passenger vehicles needing to be ZEVs by 2030. While achieving

<sup>1</sup> <https://energy.hawaii.gov/what-we-do/clean-energy-vision/decarbonization-strategy/>

<sup>2</sup> Alliance for Automotive Innovation: Get Connected Electric Vehicle Quarterly Report, Second Quarter 2025

these goals requires policies that remove barriers to EV adoption, including access to charging infrastructure for residents in affordable housing, HSEO defers to the Department of Budget and Finance on whether imposing a tax is an appropriate means of removing such barriers, as well as the fiscal impacts of this measure to the state budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
465 S. KING STREET, #103  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

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CHAIR

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## Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the  
House Committee on  
Energy & Environmental Protection

Thursday, January 29, 2026  
9:30 a.m.

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee:

**Measure:** H.B. No. 1620  
**Title:** RELATING TO ENERGY

### Position:

The Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") supports this measure and offers the following comments for consideration.

### Comments:

The Commission supports the intent of this measure to increase the environmental response, energy, and food security tax and the amount collected from the tax that is deposited into the electric vehicle charging system subaccount.

The Commission currently manages the state's Electric Vehicle Charging Station ("EVCS") Rebate Program as established in sections 269-72 and 269-73, Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS"), in consultation with Electric Vehicle stakeholders and in cooperation with the program's administrator, Hawaii Energy.

The EVCS Rebate Program has been a successful program for our state, beginning with the pilot program in 2019 to present. From January 2020 through June 2025, Hawaii Energy deployed over \$2.5 million in rebates supporting over 450 new and upgraded EVCS installations across all four counties in Hawaii, and include both Level 2 and DC Fast Chargers<sup>1</sup>. The proposed increase would result in a tax resource of \$0.13 per \$1.15 of tax (increased from \$0.03 currently per \$1.05 of tax). Current program appropriations

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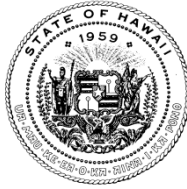
<sup>1</sup> See Hawaii Energy's EVCS Rebate webpage for more information and data:  
<https://hawaiienergy.com/for-business/rebates-for-business/electric-vehicle-charging-stations/>

are \$750,000 per year, and the proposed increase would potentially increase the annual appropriations by over 4 times the current level (projected at over \$3 million per year).

This measure would allow for continued expansion of this successful program, and ensure more substantial deployment of EV charging infrastructure throughout the state in support of the evolving demand from Hawaii's electric vehicle drivers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



EDWIN H. SNIFFEN  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

Deputy Directors  
Nā Hope Luna Ho'okele  
DREANALEE K. KALILI  
TAMMY L. LEE  
CURT T. OTAGURO  
ROBIN K. SHISHIDO

**LATE**

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU  
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

Thursday, January 29, 2026  
9:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, 325

HB1620  
**RELATING TO ENERGY**

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

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The Department of Transportation (DOT) supports House Bill 1620, relating to the increase of the environmental response, energy, and food security tax, and the allocation of additional funds to the electric vehicle charging system subaccount.

This bill directly lessens one of the main barriers to electric vehicle (EV) adoption, especially for low- and moderate-income households – the availability of public EV charging stations. Additional funding in the electric vehicle charging system subaccount will lead to timely development of additional public EV charging stations, which will encourage more residents and visitors to choose EVs. A greater share of EVs on the road will reduce Hawaii's dependence on imported fuel, reduce emissions, improve air quality, and reduce asthma and other lung conditions.

The DOT's Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan published in October 2025, explains how the transportation sector (including everyone who uses transportation) could meet the state's emission reduction targets established in state law. Without immediate additional investments and implementation of emission reduction strategies, Hawaii will not meet its targets. This bill proposes increased funding for a tangible and proven emissions reduction strategy that will move the state closer to achieving its targets. Electrification is the leading emissions reduction strategy for ground transportation, and expeditious development of public EV charging stations is critical to

equitably electrify. The DOT is continuing to build public EV charging stations under its National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Hawaii State Plan. We have developed public charging stations at Kahului Park and Ride, Aloha Tower, and Daniel K. Inouye International Airport. Construction of another station is underway at Kapalua Airport, and we will install additional stations in 2026 and 2027 on Kauai, Molokai, Hawaii Island, Lanai and Oahu. Even with DOT's continued investments, many more public EV charging stations are needed statewide.

The DOT's Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan have three pillars that act as check and balances to develop and prioritize the Plan's strategies: 1) affordability, 2) local energy security, and 3) emissions reduction. While it is clear how additional public EV charging stations would increase local energy security and emissions reduction, it is less obvious how the proposal might impact affordability. Therefore, the remainder of our testimony will provide analysis into how this proposal may impact affordability for residents.

Public EV charging stations play a critical role in advancing equity, access, and environmental justice, especially for low and moderate income individuals and communities. Without robust public charging infrastructure, EV adoption remains accessible only to those who can install a charger at home typically higher-income households who own their own home and are often also able to afford rooftop solar. Low and moderate income households often live in apartments, rentals, or multifamily housing without dedicated parking or EV chargers. Public EV charging, or workplace EV charging is needed to make EV ownership feasible for this segment of our community. Once low- and moderate-income households have confidence in being able to charge an EV near to where they live or work, they can make the switch to an EV and then realize the cost savings that current EV owners already enjoy. EVs generally have lower "fuel" costs than gas powered vehicles, as well as lower maintenance costs. These benefits should be available to all in our community, and this bill levels the playing field by providing critical public infrastructure.

This bill proposes to increase the environmental response, energy, and food security tax (also known as the "Barrel Tax") from \$1.05 to \$1.15 per barrel of petroleum product and increase the allocation of those revenues into the electric vehicle charging system

subaccount from 3 cents per barrel to 13 cents per barrel. An additional 10 cents per barrel in the electric vehicle charging system subaccount will allow installation of additional public EV charging stations.

To understand how the proposed change would affect the average driver in Hawaii, we can use the following hypothetical example. Kimi drives a Toyota Tacoma, a popular model in Hawaii, which has a fuel tank capacity of approximately 20 gallons. Kimi drives to work, her children's school and sports practices, and the beach on the weekends. The current Barrel Tax is \$1.05 per 42-gallon barrel of petroleum products, which equates to 2.5 cents per gallon. Kimi refills her 20-gallon truck every other week, which means each time Kimi refills, she currently pays 50 cents in Barrel Tax (20 gallons x 2.5 cents), which adds up to \$13/year (50 cents x 26 refills/year).

If this bill passes, and the Barrel Tax increases to \$1.15 per 42-gallon barrel, that equates to roughly 2.74 cents per gallon – a \$0.0024 increase per gallon. When Kimi fills up her 20-gallon truck, she would then pay 54.8 cents in Barrel Tax each time (20 gallons x 2.74 cents) - a 4.8-cent increase per full tank refill. Assuming she continues to fill gas every 2 weeks, she would pay roughly \$14.25/year in Barrel Taxes (54.8 cents x 26 refills/year) - a \$1.25 increase total per year. Even if she needed to drive more, and therefore refilled a full tank of gas weekly, she would pay roughly \$28.50/year in Barrel Taxes (54.8 cents x 52 refills/year) - which would only be a \$2.50 increase total for the year. This conservative increase in the Barrel Tax should not overly burden residents and should meaningfully expand the development of a robust and accessible EV charging network for all Hawaii residents and visitors.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



# TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

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735 Bishop Street, Suite 417

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

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SUBJECT: MISCELLANEOUS; FUEL, Hike Barrel Tax to Feed EV Charging System Fund

BILL NUMBER: HB 1620

INTRODUCED BY: LOWEN, PERRUSO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Increases the environmental response, energy, and food security tax and the amount collected from the tax that is deposited into the electric vehicle charging system subaccount.

SYNOPSIS: Amends section 243-3.5, HRS, to change the barrel tax from \$1.05 to \$1.15 per barrel, and to raise the earmark to the electric vehicle charging system subaccount from 3 cents to 13 cents.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon approval.

STAFF COMMENTS: The barrel tax, HRS section 243-3.5, now imposes a tax of \$1.05 on each barrel of petroleum product sold to an end user. It also imposes a tax on 19 cents per million BTU on a fossil fuel other than a petroleum product that is sold to an end user.

If it is proposed to raise the barrel tax on petroleum products, we question why there is no comparable increase to the barrel tax on non-petroleum fossil fuels.

In addition, the proposed measure would perpetuate the earmarking of tax revenues. Incentives for electric vehicle charging systems may be a worthy expense if considered alone. But does that justify bypassing the normal appropriation and budgeting process that also considers invasive species, risks to the social safety net, and the aging infrastructure in our educational system?

Earmarking revenues from any tax type for a particular purpose decreases transparency and accountability.

Next, it should be remembered that revenues diverted for a special purpose, in this case to fund electric bicycle charging systems, will not be counted against the state's spending ceiling or debt limit and will obscure the state's true financial condition.

Digested: 1/26/2026

Jan. 29, 2026, 9:30 a.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Conference Room 325 and Videoconference

**To: House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection**  
**Rep. Nicole Lowen, Chair**  
**Rep. Amy Perruso, Vice Chair**

**From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii**  
**Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns**

Re: HB1620 — RELATING TO TAXATION

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso and other members of the Committee,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **opposes** [HB1620](#), which would increase the environmental response, energy and food security tax from \$1.05 to \$1.15 per barrel of petroleum.

Hawaii's residents and businesses cannot afford new taxes, tax increases, fees or surcharges. Any increase in the tax rates for petroleum products will only contribute to the high cost of living, especially the state's high energy and gas prices.

Hawaii residents already pay the highest electricity prices in the country,<sup>1</sup> and the islands that depend heavily on petroleum to provide grid-scale electricity — especially Lanai, Molokai and Oahu — would be hit hardest by the increase proposed in this legislation.<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas  
Director of Strategic Campaigns  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

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<sup>1</sup> "[Hawaii](#)," U.S. Energy Information Administration, May 15, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Leon R. Roose, Marc Matsuura and Damon Schmidt, "[Fundamentals of Energy Transition in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories](#)," GridSTART, Oct. 24, 2025, pp. 8-9.



JANUARY 29, 2026

## HOUSE BILL 1620

CURRENT REFERRAL: EEP

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@imuaalliance

Kris Coffield,  
*President*

David Negaard,  
*Director*

Mireille Ellsworth,  
*Director*

Justin Salisbury,  
*Director*

Eileen Roco,  
*Director*

Beatrice DeRego,  
*Director*

Corey Rosenlee,  
*Director*

Amy Zhao,  
*Policy and Partnerships  
Strategist*

### POSITION: SUPPORT

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Imua Alliance supports HB 1620, relating to energy, which increases the environmental response, energy, and food security tax and the amount collected from the tax that is deposited into the electric vehicle charging system subaccount.

Imua Alliance is a Hawai'i-based organization dedicated to ending exploitation of both people and our planet. Accordingly, as the link between gender violence and the climate crisis is becoming clearer and more urgent, we support measures that drive climate action, including this proposal, which strengthens Hawai'i's electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and helps accelerate a just transition away from fossil fuels.

Electric vehicle adoption is growing, but Hawai'i still lags its potential. Hawai'i is a national leader in EV adoption, but still far from where we need to be. As of December 2025, more than 40,000 electric passenger vehicles were registered in the state, according to the Hawai'i Electric Vehicle Association, representing about 3.8% of all passenger vehicles, with year-over-year growth exceeding 15%.

Yet over 93% of passenger vehicles in Hawai'i still run on gasoline or diesel, and ground transportation remains a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and imported fuel dependence. To meet Hawai'i's climate goals and reduce the state's reliance on imported fossil fuels, EV adoption must accelerate dramatically.

Moreover, charging infrastructure remains a primary barrier to EV adoption for both the public and private sector. The Legislature has already recognized that Hawai'i is among the leading states in EV adoption, but among the last in the availability of public charging infrastructure, creating a widening infrastructure gap.

This problem has become more acute over the past year, as federal officials have targeted numerous programs that stimulate the adoption of clean energy

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and electric vehicles, heightening the need to enact state policies to safeguard these programs at the local level. According to a white paper published by Harvard University's Salata Institute for Climate and Sustainability in March of 2025, federal efforts to cut electric vehicle tax credits will likely reduce zero-emissions vehicle adoption rates by at least 6%, while increasing carbon emissions by 20.3 million metric tons over baseline projections for 2030.

Transitioning public sector transportation fleets to zero-emissions vehicles is critical in achieving Hawai'i's statutory commitment to achieving a 100% renewable portfolio standard. Under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation created the Ride and Drive funding opportunity for states, which set aside \$51 million in grants for projects to improve the performance, reliability, and resiliency of electric vehicle charging, while strengthening the electric vehicle workforce.

The Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO), in collaboration with other state agencies, applied for funding through the Ride and Drive program. Such funding was intended to address the infrastructure needs of Hawaii's government fleets to meet state mandates that require public agencies procuring new light-duty passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, or multi-purpose passenger vehicles to prioritize the purchase of zero-emission vehicles, with the goal of attaining 100% fleet conversion by 2035.

In October of 2025, however, the United States Department of Energy terminated more than \$7.5 billion in funding for state-level energy projects, including approximately a million dollars that had been awarded to HSEO for the development of resilient charging infrastructure through the Ride and Drive program. The department had approved the grant just four weeks before announcing its cancellation, undermining the financial stability of the state's efforts to expand access to resilient charging infrastructure.

Charging access is especially critical for renters, condominium residents, and low-income households, who often cannot install home chargers and therefore cannot benefit from the cost savings of EV ownership. A robust charging network is necessary to make EVs a viable option for everyone, not just homeowners. Research and policy experience consistently show that charging availability is one of the strongest predictors of EV adoption, as it reduces range anxiety and increases consumer confidence.

Fossil fuel dependence is not just an environmental issue. It is an economic security issue for working families and our state economy. Hawai'i imports most of its petroleum, sending billions of dollars out of the state and exposing residents to volatile global energy prices. Transportation electrification keeps money in the local economy and lowers household transportation costs.

Climate change disproportionately harms Native Hawaiian, low-income, and coastal communities through sea-level rise, extreme weather, and ecosystem degradation. The exploitation of people and the exploitation of the climate are interconnected: extractive industries profit, while frontline communities bear

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the health and financial burdens, which exacerbate the social determinants of gender violence and exploitation. Investing in EV infrastructure is thus a public health, economic equity, and climate justice strategy, not merely a technology upgrade.

Finally, the Legislature should view HB 1620 in the broader context of Hawai‘i’s barrel tax on imported petroleum, which was designed to internalize the public costs of fossil fuel dependence and fund the transition to clean energy. The barrel tax recognizes that oil extraction and combustion impose significant costs on communities through climate change, air pollution, public health impacts, and economic volatility, while profits flow to multinational corporations.

Directing barrel tax revenues toward EV charging infrastructure is a concrete way to shift resources from extractive industries to community benefit, accelerate decarbonization, and ensure that the transition away from fossil fuels is financed by those who have historically contributed most to climate and human exploitation.

This bill recognizes that previous funding for EV charging incentives must dramatically increase to meet growing infrastructure needs. It supports affordability, livability, and economic resilience by reducing fossil fuel imports and expanding access to clean transportation. Expanding EV charging infrastructure is one of the most effective actions we can take to reduce emissions, lower the cost of living, and break the cycle of climate and economic exploitation.

With aloha,

*Kris Coffield*

President, Imua Alliance



To: The Honorable Representative Nicole Lowen, Chair, the Honorable Amy Perruso, Vice Chair, and Members of the Energy and Environmental Protection Committee.

From: Climate Protectors Hawai'i (by Ted Bohlen)

Re: **Hearing HB1620 RELATING TO ENERGY**

Hearing: Thursday January 29, 2026 9:30 a.m.

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Energy and Environmental Protection Committee!

The Climate Protectors Hawai'i seeks to educate and engage the local community in climate change action, to help Hawai'i show the world the way back to a safe and stable climate.

The Climate Protectors Hawai'i **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** HB1620!

Transitioning to electric vehicles from fossil fuels is critical to Hawaii achieving carbon neutrality by 2045 per the State's legal target (statewide sequestering more atmospheric carbon than emitted within the State as quickly as practicable, but no later than 2045, HRS Sec. 225P-5).

Achieving that target is critical to the future safety and welfare of Hawai'i. Climate heating is especially dangerous for a tropical island state subject to stronger storms (hurricanes, rain bombs), wildfires, drought, death of our protective coral reefs, and sea level rise.

Even without federal subsidies, electric vehicles will be less expensive than internal combustion vehicles, especially when considering much lower electric vehicle maintenance costs. With ample sun, warm temperatures, and shorter driving distances, electric vehicles will just make sense for Hawaii. Many more Hawaii drivers will want electric vehicles. To serve the current and future markets for electric vehicles, Hawaii needs to develop its electric vehicle charging infrastructure now. This should be a very high priority for Hawai'i.

This bill will help development of electric vehicle charging and serve the public interest by appropriating additional funding for the electric vehicle charging system account in the environmental response, energy, and food security tax.

**Please pass this bill!**

Mahalo!

Climate Protectors Hawai'i (by Ted Bohlen)

**Hawaii Electric Vehicle Association**

hawaiiev.org  
info@hawaiieva.com



Jan. 27, 2026

Distinguished Members of the Legislature,

The Hawaii Electric Vehicle Association respectfully urges the 2026 Legislature to pass House Bill 1620, which increases the barrel tax funding dedicated to Hawaii's electric vehicle charging system rebate program. This legislation is essential to scaling up charging infrastructure statewide and achieving Hawaii's 100 percent EV sales goal by 2035.

HB 1620 addresses two critical challenges:

**Creating Sustainable Funding for Charging Infrastructure.** The existing EV charging system rebate program, established in 2019, has successfully facilitated the installation of over 450 charging systems across Hawaii. However, that initial one-time funding has been depleted. HB 1620 increases the barrel tax allocation to expand and maintain public charging networks across all islands. This revenue is properly sourced: fossil fuel consumers pay a small tax that directly supports the infrastructure needed to transition away from fossil fuels.

**Supporting Equity and Economic Benefit.** Hawaii's EV adoption is accelerating statewide, yet the lack of charging availability disproportionately affects renters, condominium residents, and lower-income households who cannot install home charging. HB 1620 expands the rebate program to reach these populations, making electric vehicles an affordable, practical choice for all Hawaiians. This also protects Hawaii's economy by keeping energy spending within the state instead of draining funds to pay for imported fossil fuels.

Hawaii is among the leading states in EV adoption rates but ranks near the bottom in charging infrastructure availability. This contradiction will collapse under the weight of accelerating EV sales without dramatic increases in public investment.

HB 1620 provides a practical, fair and sustainable funding mechanism to build the charging networks necessary to support Hawaii's transportation transformation.

We strongly urge you to pass HB 1620 in 2026.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TH".

Tam Hunt  
Board Member and Policy Director  
Hawaii EV Association

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**Hawaii EV Association** is a grassroots non-profit group representing electric vehicle owners in Hawaii. Our mission is to accelerate the electrification of transportation through consumer education, policy advocacy, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure expansion. For more information, please visit [hawaiiev.org](http://hawaiiev.org).

#### **Hawaii EV Board**

Noel Morin, President  
Nanette Vinton, Secretary, and Treasurer  
Jenn Lieu – Director  
Tam Hunt – Director  
Michael Albatrosov – Director  
Rob Weltman – Director

#### **Hawaii EV Clubs**

Big Island EV Association  
Kauai EV  
Maui Nui EV  
Tesla Hawaii Club



REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE E. LOWEN, CHAIR  
REPRESENTATIVE AMY A. PERRUSO, VICE CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1620

Thursday, January 29, 2026, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 325, State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

Dear Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Committee Members:

Earthjustice **strongly supports House Bill 1620**, Relating to Energy. Mahalo for prioritizing this measure for this early hearing in this session. This bill provides a modest increase of 10 cents to the barrel tax and a corresponding increase of the allocation of barrel tax revenues to the existing electric vehicle charging system rebate program. This funding bump is a small but essential step to help expand the EV charging infrastructure that Hawai'i needs to enable consumer savings and pollution reductions for everyone. The EV charging system rebate program is an established program with a successful track record over numerous years, and this bill would build on this program's success and broaden its reach.

As HB 1620 recognizes, Hawai'i is currently among the leading states in the nation in the rate of EV adoption, but among the *last* in the availability of charging infrastructure. According to testimony by the State Energy Office, in contrast to California's recommended ratio of one public charger per seven EVs in operation, Hawai'i had only one public charger per 47 EVs in 2025—which was actually a step backward from the previous year's ratio of one public charger per 38 EVs. In other words, Hawai'i is falling further behind, and the gap between available and necessary infrastructure is widening.

As the legislature has also recognized, EVs are already cheaper than fossil fuel vehicles in total lifetime costs. A recent study by Ulupono Initiative indicated that households with the highest reliance on gasoline spend almost \$14,000 on average per year, or 14 percent of their incomes. Switching to EVs could save these households \$5,300 dollars annually on fuel costs alone, or up to 38 percent savings on their gas bills.

The dearth of charging infrastructure, however, is a major barrier to EV adoption, particularly for renters, apartment and condo residents, and lower-income households and communities. Increasing public funding for EV charging infrastructure is a fundamental

priority for affordability and equity, ensuring that everyone has access to essential facilities and no one is left behind in the transition to a clean transportation system.

Given the budget challenges the State is currently facing, this modest increase in the overall barrel tax to increase funding for this essential program would be revenue-neutral in its impact on the state budget. In the alternative, the legislature could simply increase the allocation of barrel tax revenues to the EV charging system rebate program. Currently, a total of *only 20 cents* of the \$1.05 collected on each barrel—or only 19% of the total tax—is allocated to the purposes for which it was established. Increasing the allocation of barrel tax proceeds to the EV charger program by 10 cents would have a limited effect on the budget and still leave the vast majority (72%) of the proceeds unallocated from the general fund.

Particularly given the problems with the federal government rescinding critical funding support, the State must do what it can to show leadership and provide the beneficial investments today that will enable savings going forward. Now is the time to make bold investments for affordability and safety for Hawai'i's people and not ignore or abandon that responsibility.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need further information.

Isaac H. Moriwake, Esq.  
Managing Attorney  
Earthjustice, Mid-Pacific Office



# HAWAI'I YOUTH TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

HYTC Testimony for the House Committee on  
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
HB 1620 | Thursday, January 29, 2026

**IN STRONG SUPPORT**

**LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.**

**Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Committee Members,**

Mahalo for the chance to testify at today's hearing. HB 1620 is a bill that the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council strongly supports. **Clean energy and reducing carbon emissions are primary goals of the Energy Security and Waste Reduction plan** mandated by the Navahine V. HDOT settlement, the settlement that created our council.

Our inaugural year has been focused on how we can best support, defend, and help achieve these goals, and HB 1620 is right in our crosshairs. This bill expands a tax to allow more electric charging infrastructure to be built across Hawai'i, **giving both rural and urban communities access to more chargers.**

**We cannot expect our Ohana to adopt electric vehicles if we do not provide the infrastructure to support them.** Many families and individuals across Hawai'i, **including many of our own members**, face one EV-related roadblock: **access to chargers.** Families that either don't have the means to install a fast charger at home or use their electric vehicle as their primary commuting vehicle **may rely on our public charging network.** A network, may I add, is **at capacity in many places, or did not have capacity to begin with.**

Additionally, having a **reliable and robust EV charging network can make commuting for working families, students, and our Kapuna more dependable**, for whom public transit is not viable. It also makes older EVs more useful, permitting people more time before having to buy a new car.

In conclusion, on behalf of the entire Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council, I ask that you support HB 1620. Please recognise not just the **environmental impact of electric vehicles**, but also **the affordability they can bring to Hawai'i families** if paired with an **extensive electric vehicle network.**

*Mahalo,*



Derek Takeno  
Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council  
Outreach Chair  
Central Maui Representative

Luca Zev Cuniberti  
Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council  
Policy and Legislation Chair  
O'ahu North Shore Representative



**Testimony in Support of HB1620**  
**Hearing on January 29 2026 at 9:30am**  
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

**LATE**

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Doorae Shin, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Our Children's Trust in strong support of HB1620, which increases the environmental response, energy, and food security tax on imported petroleum and directs additional revenue to Hawai'i's electric vehicle charging system rebate program.

HB1620 addresses one of the most significant barriers to electric vehicle adoption in Hawai'i: the lack of accessible, affordable, and reliable charging infrastructure. While electric vehicle ownership in Hawai'i continues to grow, the state's charging network has not kept pace. As a result, Hawai'i now ranks among the lowest states in the nation for charging availability and continues to fall further behind. This gap disproportionately impacts renters, residents of multi-unit dwellings, rural communities, and lower-income households, many of whom lack access to home charging and are therefore excluded from the benefits of electric transportation.

Transportation is one of the largest household expenses in Hawai'i. Electric vehicles offer substantial savings on fuel and maintenance, but those savings are only attainable if residents can reliably charge where they live, work, and travel. By expanding funding for charging infrastructure, HB1620 directly supports household affordability while advancing Hawai'i's clean energy and climate goals.

HB1620 builds on an existing and proven program. The electric vehicle charging system rebate program was established in 2019 and, despite its modest scale, has already supported the installation of hundreds of charging systems statewide. Demand for this program has consistently exceeded available funding. This bill responds to that demand by increasing the portion of the barrel tax dedicated to charging infrastructure from three cents to thirteen cents per barrel, while increasing the overall barrel tax by ten cents. Importantly, this approach uses an existing tax on imported petroleum to fund solutions that reduce dependence on that very fuel.

The expanded funding enabled by HB1620 will support rebates for the installation of electric vehicle charging systems in multi-unit dwellings, workplaces, and publicly accessible locations. It prioritizes broader geographic coverage and more equitable access across the islands, ensuring that the transition to clean transportation is not limited to single-family homeowners. By focusing on shared and community-based charging, the bill helps ensure that renters and condo residents are not left behind.

HB1620 also strengthens Hawai‘i’s energy security. The state remains heavily dependent on imported petroleum, leaving our communities vulnerable to volatile global fuel prices and supply disruptions. Investing in electric vehicle charging infrastructure helps keep energy dollars in Hawai‘i, supports the use of locally generated renewable energy, and reduces exposure to external economic shocks.

In addition to its economic and equity benefits, HB1620 is directly aligned with Hawai‘i’s legal and policy obligations to reduce transportation emissions. In 2022, thirteen youth plaintiffs filed *Navahine v. Hawai‘i Department of Transportation (HDOT)*, resulting in a settlement that requires HDOT to “take any actions necessary” to achieve zero emissions from ground, marine, and inter-island aviation by no later than 2045. The settlement was agreed to as a means to protect children’s constitutional rights to a life-sustaining climate system and to preserve Hawai‘i’s public trust resources for present and future generations. In 2025, HDOT released its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the settlement agreement, including expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support widespread adoption of zero-emission vehicles. HB1620 is a concrete and necessary step toward fulfilling these obligations.

Reducing emissions from the transportation sector also delivers immediate public health benefits. Increased electric vehicle adoption lowers air pollution, particularly in communities located near high-traffic corridors, ports, and industrial areas. These reductions improve respiratory and cardiovascular health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs, benefits that are especially important for children and other vulnerable populations.

HB1620 represents a pragmatic, equitable, and forward-looking investment in Hawai‘i’s future. It strengthens a successful program, addresses a clear infrastructure gap, reduces household transportation costs, and advances the state’s climate, energy security, and public health goals. By expanding access to electric vehicle charging, this bill ensures that the benefits of clean transportation are shared broadly and fairly across Hawai‘i.

For these reasons, Our Children’s Trust strongly urges your support for HB1620.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,  
Doora Shin  
Our Children’s Trust  
Honolulu, Hawai‘i





# HAWAI'I YOUTH TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

HYTC Testimony for the House Committee on  
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
HB 1620 | Thursday, January 29, 2026

**IN STRONG SUPPORT**

LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

**Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Committee Members,**

Mahalo for the chance to testify at today's hearing. HB 1620 is a bill that the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council strongly supports. **Clean energy and reducing carbon emissions are primary goals of the Energy Security and Waste Reduction plan** mandated by the Navahine V. HDOT settlement, the settlement that created our council.

Our inaugural year has been focused on how we can best support, defend, and help achieve these goals, and HB 1620 is right in our crosshairs. This bill expands a tax to allow more electric charging infrastructure to be built across Hawai'i, **giving both rural and urban communities access to more chargers.**

**We cannot expect our Ohana to adopt electric vehicles if we do not provide the infrastructure to support them.** Many families and individuals across Hawai'i, **including many of our own members**, face one EV-related roadblock: **access to chargers.** Families that either don't have the means to install a fast charger at home or use their electric vehicle as their primary commuting vehicle **may rely on our public charging network.** A network, may I add, is **at capacity in many places, or did not have capacity to begin with.**

Additionally, having a **reliable and robust EV charging network can make commuting for working families, students, and our Kapuna more dependable,** for whom public transit is not viable. It also makes older EVs more useful, permitting people more time before having to buy a new car.

In conclusion, on behalf of the entire Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council, I ask that you support HB 1620. Please recognise not just the **environmental impact of electric vehicles**, but also **the affordability they can bring to Hawai'i families** if paired with an **extensive electric vehicle network.**

*Mahalo,*

Moss Kuon  
Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council  
Press Secretary  
Central Maui Representative

Derek Takeno  
Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council  
Outreach Chair  
Central Maui Representative

Luca Zev Cuniberti  
Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council  
Policy and Legislation Chair  
O'ahu North Shore Representative



**HB-1620**

Submitted on: 1/27/2026 10:28:24 AM

Testimony for EEP on 1/29/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I oppose this bill. Why must our state government or more precisely, Hawaii's taxpayers, pay for said charging stations when the vast majority of residents own fossil fuel vehicles? Perhaps funding for these charging stations should be left to private companies to build.



**LATE**

**HB-1620**

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 7:14:57 PM

Testimony for EEP on 1/29/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kalikookalani Teruya	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Lowen and members of the Committee,

Aloha mai kākou, my name is Kalikookalani Teruya. I am from the westside of Maui and I am a sophomore at Lahainaluna High School. I am writing this testimony in strong support of HB 1620 because I believe it can make a difference.

I have first-hand experience of the effects of climate change. I lost my home to a flood in 2018, and I lost my dad's place in the 2023 fires, both of these natural disasters were made more severe by climate change. These terrible events have only strengthened my resolve to prevent the worst of climate change in Hawai'i. I became a plaintiff in the Navahine vs. Hawai'i Department of Transportation youth-led lawsuit in 2022 that settled with the State in 2024. This historical settlement commits us all to achieving our climate saving goals.

Transportation in Hawai'i is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions, which causes climate change. That is why we need to focus on getting Hawai'i's drivers off of gas cars. In my community we do not have enough charging stations to encourage people to drive EV's. That is why this bill is so important because it increases the number of charging stations across Hawai'i and that is essential to fulfilling the state's promise to decarbonize our economy by 2045.

**LATE**

### **Testimony in Strong Support of HB1620**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Connor Ulene; I am a 14 year old who lives in Makawao on the island of Maui. I am a member of the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council. I am writing in strong support of **HB1620**, the bill to help further the progress made by the State of Hawai'i to push toward a clean 'āina for future generations by providing incentives for EV charger building.

As a youth in Hawai'i, the need for a future with clean energy is clear. Although the federal government may not acknowledge the role of climate change on future generations of youth, the science is clear, global warming has and will have catastrophic effects on the planet and our species. We need to take all actions possible to ensure that all future residents of Hawai'i get to experience the right to a clean environment as shown by the decision in **Navahine v. Hawai'i DOT**. Although the increase in taxation through the Barrel Tax will lead to slightly increased costs for consumers throughout sectors including transportation and electricity generation, this further incentivizes use of electric alternatives to fossil fuel processes and can eventually lead to reduced costs for consumers through investment into electrics which still have a long way to go until they reach their minimum viable price. To me, it is clear that HB1620 provides a stepping stone along the path to a clean future which is why I strongly support this bill.

Sincerely,  
Connor Ulene

**LATE**

**HB-1620**

Submitted on: 1/28/2026 11:34:08 PM

Testimony for EEP on 1/29/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Derek Takeno	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Derek Takeno. I am a member of the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council, University of Hawai'i Student Ohana for Sustainability club, and a sustainability major at UHMC. I would like to share my experience of driving an electric vehicle on Maui, and how this bill would help more people do the same.

One of the most challenging aspects of EV ownership is the range. Older EVs will always have limited range, whether from outdated technology or battery wear after over a decade of use. While this made my EV more affordable, it also restricts the places I can drive to. However, with a better network of chargers, I would be able to greatly expand my range when I am exploring the island. It would also allow me to more easily participate when my friends make last minute plans.

As I finish up my schooling, I will move from school to work. While UHMC has EV charging, I have yet to work at a place with employee charging. I will likely rent a townhouse or apartment when I start to live by myself, most of which do not offer EV charging. This would leave me largely unable to own an EV with the current infrastructure.

The existing infrastructure is in high demand. Every time I have gone to the NEVI fast charger in Kahului, I have had to wait to charge. This bill would make it easier for those of us who want to do our part to take care of the 'aina.