JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIAʻĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIAʻĀINA

STATE OF HAWAIʻI | KA MOKUʻĀINA ʻO HAWAIʻI
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA ʻOIHANA KUMUWAIWAI ʻĀINA
P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKAʻOLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKAʻOLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Thursday, February 5, 2026
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1984
RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

House Bill 1984 proposes to require government entities in the State that issue building permits to establish a self-certification process for behind-the-meter, customer-sited solar distributed energy resource systems that deems permit applications approved and allows applicants to proceed to build solar distributed energy resource systems immediately. This bill also proposes to require government entities in the State that issue building permits to develop guidance for determining specific conditions when a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) -mandated No-Rise Certification is not required for a solar distributed energy resource system located in a regulatory floodway. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this measure and offers the following comments.**

The State and counties are participating communities in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and are subject to compliance with federal regulations set forth with the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. §§4001).

The Department worked with the Hawaii Solar Energy Association (HSEA) and FEMA to ensure the language in this bill is consistent with NFIP regulations set forth in Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 1, Subchapter B. FEMA stipulates that only licensed architects, engineers, and land surveyors (not landscape architects) are allowed to certify floodplain development documentation necessary for NFIP compliance.

Therefore, the Department recommends the following amendments to subparagraph (A), on page 3, lines 16-17:

(A) An attestation from a licensed design professional, excluding landscape architects, that the proposed project is not

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Hawaii Solar Energy Association
Serving Hawaii Since 1977

Testimony of the Hawaii Solar Energy Association (HSEA) Regarding HB1984, Relating to Renewable Energy, Before the House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection

Thursday, February 5, 2025

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and committee members,

The Hawaii Solar Energy Association (HSEA) **strongly supports HB1984**, which reduces administrative barriers to the deployment of customer-sited solar and energy storage systems by establishing a permitting self-certification framework and by providing critical clarity regarding the application of FEMA No-Rise Certification requirements in regulatory floodways.

HSEA is a non-profit trade association founded in 1977, representing local solar contractors and clean energy companies as well as global cleantech companies, equipment manufacturers, and other service providers doing business in Hawaii.

HB1984 is an updated and improved version of a self-certification bill considered last year. Importantly, it incorporates **key refinements developed in consultation with Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) staff**, Hawaii's designated administrator of the State's floodplain management program under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). These updates directly address concerns raised last session while preserving full compliance with federal, state, and county floodplain requirements.

Addressing Permitting Barriers to Achieve Hawaii's Clean Energy Goals

Hawaii's statutory commitment to achieving a **100% renewable portfolio standard by 2045** under Act 97 (2015) requires the rapid, cost-effective deployment of distributed energy resources (DERs), particularly rooftop solar paired with energy storage. However, permitting delays and inconsistent review processes continue to add significant time, cost, and uncertainty for homeowners and local contractors.

HB1984 provides a pragmatic solution by requiring permitting authorities to establish a **self-certification pathway** for behind-the-meter, customer-sited solar and energy storage systems, allowing qualified projects to proceed immediately while maintaining strong professional accountability and code compliance.

Lowering Costs While Maintaining Safety and Accountability

By allowing self-certification by **duly licensed design professionals**, HB1984 significantly reduces administrative burdens without sacrificing public health or safety. The bill includes multiple guardrails, including:

- Exclusion of projects located in **Special Flood Hazard Areas** from self-certification eligibility;
- Required attestations by licensed professionals confirming compliance with all applicable codes and laws, including confirmation that a project is not located in a FEMA-designated floodway;
- Submission of FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) panel information; and
- Use of commercially available software and documented inspections, including offline field reports.

These provisions modernize permitting workflows while preserving accountability and transparency.

Reducing Soft Costs to Mitigate the Loss of Federal Section 25D

The scheduled expiration of the federal **Section 25D residential solar tax credit** will materially increase out-of-pocket costs for Hawaii homeowners seeking to invest in rooftop solar and energy storage. Reducing non-hardware "soft costs" is one of the most effective tools available at the state and county level to mitigate this impact.

Lengthy permitting timelines, redundant reviews, and administrative uncertainty add real costs to projects through extended labor, financing carry costs, and lost installation capacity. By enabling immediate construction through self-certification and establishing predictable, modernized review processes, HB1984 directly lowers project soft costs, shortens installation timelines, and provides meaningful cost relief to residents while supporting local solar businesses and clean energy jobs.

Clarifying FEMA No-Rise Certification Requirements in Regulatory Floodways

A critical improvement in HB1984 is the requirement that permitting authorities develop **FEMA-accepted guidance** identifying specific conditions under which a **No-Rise Certification is not required** for solar distributed energy resource systems located in regulatory floodways.

This language was developed **in consultation with DLNR staff**, recognizing DLNR's role as Hawaii's NFIP administrator. The bill does not create a blanket exemption from floodplain regulations. Instead, it provides clarity for a narrow set of projects that are installed on existing structures, do not create additional obstruction within the floodway, and comply with all applicable federal, state, and county floodplain management laws.

Conclusion

HB1984 is a carefully balanced, forward-looking measure that removes unnecessary administrative barriers while preserving safety, professional accountability, and full compliance with codes regulations. By reducing soft costs at a time of significant federal policy change, and by incorporating lessons learned from last year in coordination with DLNR, this bill strengthens Hawaii's ability to deploy rooftop solar and energy storage at the scale and pace required to meet our clean energy, affordability, and resilience goals.

HSEA respectfully urges the Committee to **pass HB1984**.

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:25:59 PM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathryn Troyan	Alternate Energy Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB1984, which would establish a solar permitting self-certification pathway for customer-sited rooftop solar and energy storage projects.

Lengthy and unpredictable permitting timelines add real costs to solar projects and make it harder for Hawaii residents and businesses to invest in clean energy, especially as the federal Section 25D tax credit is scheduled to expire. Reducing permitting-related soft costs is one of the most effective tools available at the state and county level to keep solar affordable.

HB1984 appropriately maintains safety and accountability by relying on licensed design professionals and includes important clarifications regarding FEMA flood zone requirements that were developed in consultation with DLNR. This balanced approach will help reduce delays, lower costs, and support local solar businesses while maintaining full compliance with applicable codes and laws.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1984.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kathryn Troyan
Project Manager
Alternate Energy Inc.

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:35:17 PM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
PAUL OREM	Photonworks Engineering	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB1984, which would establish a solar permitting self-certification pathway for customer-sited rooftop solar and energy storage projects. This is critially needed at this time to facilitate the number of commercial installations needed before the investment tax credit deadline for installation. without this manmy projects will simply not get done at all leasving both customes and copmies like mine in a dire situation having invested capital and resources inly to missout on these critically inportant incentives to make thse projects happen.

Lengthy and unpredictable permitting timelines add real costs to solar projects and make it harder for Hawaii residents and businesses to invest in clean energy, especially as the federal Section 25D tax credit has already expired. Reducing permitting-related soft costs is one of the most effective tools available at the state and county level to keep solar affordable.

HB1984 appropriately maintains safety and accountability by relying on licensed design professionals and includes important clarifications regarding FEMA flood zone requirements that were developed in consultation with DLNR. This balanced approach will help reduce delays, lower costs, and support local solar businesses while maintaining full compliance with applicable codes and laws.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1984.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kauaʻi Island Utility Cooperative
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Testimony Before the House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
By Scott Sato
Government Affairs and Energy Services Manager
Kauaʻi Island Utility Cooperative
4463 Paheʻe Street, Suite 1, Līhuʻe, Hawaiʻi, 96766-2000

Thursday, February 5, 2026; 9:00 am
Conference Room #325 & Videoconference

House Bill No. 1984 – RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

To the Honorable Chair Nicole E. Lowen, Vice Chair Amy A. Perruso, and Members of the Committee:

Kauaʻi Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) is a not-for-profit utility providing electrical service to more than 34,000 commercial and residential members.

KIUC opposes this measure.

Over the past 10 years, KIUC has significantly increased its renewable generation. In 2010, KIUC's energy mix included 10% renewable. Renewable production now stands at roughly 50%. For the past five years, KIUC has operated the Kauaʻi electric grid at 100% renewable for thousands of hours on sunny days. KIUC's renewable mix currently includes biomass, hydropower, utility-scale solar, utility-scale paired with battery energy storage systems, and distributed (rooftop) solar.

This bill seeks to streamline permitting for residential and commercial solar and energy storage systems by requiring a self-certification process that allows immediate construction. In general, KIUC supports providing a variety of options for managing energy use to our members.

KIUC supports the continued expansion of customer-sited solar and energy storage systems and recognizes their important role in helping Hawaiʻi achieve its renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals. KIUC has a strong track record of facilitating the interconnection of distributed energy resources (DERs) while maintaining system reliability, safety, and resilience. HB 1984 raises significant concerns related to public safety, grid integration, and the erosion of appropriate local permitting authority.

HB 1984 would require government entities to establish a self-certification process that deems certain building permit applications approved immediately, allowing construction to proceed without prior review by the

applicable permitting authority. While streamlining permitting can be beneficial, mandatory self-certification removes a critical layer of independent oversight that helps ensure compliance with building codes, electrical standards, and site-specific safety considerations. This would also eliminate KIUC's need to review and approve of systems connecting to its grid, which is currently standard practice and required by the County of Kauaʻi before a permit is issued.

From a utility operations perspective, adequate permitting review plays an important role in ensuring that customer-sited solar and energy storage systems are designed and installed in a manner that supports safe and reliable grid integration. Improperly designed or installed DER systems can result in voltage regulation issues, reverse power flow, protection coordination challenges, islanding risks, and equipment overloading—particularly on small, isolated island grids such as Kauaʻi's. These impacts are often location-specific and may not be fully addressed through standardized self-certification alone.

In addition, the growing penetration of inverter-based resources requires careful coordination to ensure compliance with interconnection requirements, including ride-through settings, anti-islanding protections, communications capabilities, and compatibility with advanced grid management systems. Insufficient review at the permitting stage increases the likelihood of downstream corrections, delays in interconnection approval, or operational constraints that ultimately affect both the utility and other customers.

HB 1984 imposes a one-size-fits-all mandate on counties, limiting their ability to tailor permitting processes to local conditions, staffing capabilities, hazard profiles, and grid configurations. Counties and utilities are best positioned to balance efficiency with safety and reliability, and their discretion should not be constrained by statutory requirements that eliminate meaningful review.

Aside from these concerns, KIUC's interconnection and utility service upgrade process has been designed to be as streamlined and "user friendly" as possible. When the applicant provides all necessary information and materials up front, the process can usually be completed within 30 days. This process ensures that KIUC can thoroughly review application materials and electrical drawings to ensure that the system can safely be connected to the grid. While extended timelines for approvals and application processing delays may be routine on Oʻahu, that is not the case on Kauaʻi.

If this bill is to be approved, KIUC would like to respectfully ask that this bill not apply to a member-owned electric cooperative as it could have a potentially significant impact on our relatively small grid. We offer the following amendments for consideration:

Page 6. Line 6: Insert the following:

(e) This section shall not apply to a member owned electric cooperative.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure. Mahalo for your consideration.

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 HB1985 RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY**

Hearing: Thursday February 5, 2026 9:00 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 **SUPPORTS** HB1985.

Development of distributed solar power resources must continue to expand. This bill will save consumers money, improve the stability of the electricity grid, and reduce the State’s greenhouse gas emissions, as will be required to reach the State’s net zero legal target by 2045. This bill would help by streamlining solar permitting with a self-certification process for customer-sited distributed energy resources that will eliminate barriers.

Please pass this bill!

Mahalo!

Climate Protectors Hawai‘i (by Ted Bohlen)

To: The House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection (EEP)
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Thursday, February 5, 2026, 9am

In strong support of HB1984

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and members of the EEP committee,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org is in **strong support of HB1984** which requires government entities in the State that issue building permits to establish a self-certification process for behind-the-meter, customer-sited solar distributed energy resource systems that deems permit applications approved and allows applicants to proceed to build solar distributed energy resource system immediately. This measure further requires government entities in the State that issue building permits to develop guidance for determining specific conditions when a Federal Emergency Management Agency-mandated No-Rise Certification is not required for a solar distributed energy resource system located in a regulatory floodway.

HB1984 addresses permitting issues that impede progress on Hawaii's renewable energy and climate resilience goals. This bill offers common-sense measures that will streamline solar permitting ***without compromising on safety***. Addressing these permitting issues is essential if Hawaii is to achieve its decarbonization goals, reduce costs for residents, and become more resilient.

Bottom line: If a duly licensed design professional certifies that a solar project's plans are compliant with all applicable laws and codes, the project should not be delayed from proceeding to construction. The final compliance review and approval can occur at inspection. This will speed up the overall process and significantly enhance current efforts at the municipal level.

With the highest electrical rates in the country and the impacts of climate change already being felt, we need to move forward on smart solutions that will help to stimulate our economy and make us more resilient. The current system for processing permits is untenable and a detriment to Hawaii achieving our clean energy goals. This measure will remove unnecessary barriers and move us to the clean-energy economy we need.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** for this very important legislation.

Sherry Pollack
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org

GRASSROOT INSTITUTE OF HAWAII

1050 Bishop St. #508
Honolulu, HI 96813
808-864-1776
info@grassrootinstitute.org

Removing barriers to Hawaii's prosperity

Feb. 5, 2026, 9 a.m.
Hawaii State Capitol
Conference Room 325 and Videoconference

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

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

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1984 — RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

Aloha chair, vice chair and other committee members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **supports** HB1984, which would require each county establish a self-certification process for the approval of certain solar energy systems and change certain flood zone rules for solar energy systems.

Self-certification programs allow qualified architects and engineers to approve permits without review from county building departments. Mandating that self-certification be an option for individuals interested in installing solar panels on their homes or businesses would streamline the process.

As Grassroot identified in its 2024 report "Seven low-cost ways to speed up permitting in Hawaii," solar applications often make up a large part of county building permit reviews. According to the report:

> "Obtaining building permits to install new solar panels and solar-plus-storage systems can be a lengthy process. This is due in part to the sheer volume of building permits filed for solar panels. In Hawai'i County, for example, almost one-third of permits issued between November 2024 and March 2024 — about 1,300 — were for residential solar panels.

During that time, Hawai'i County had an average approval time of 33 days for residential solar projects, provided the permits were not returned to the applicants for corrections. Non-residential solar permits had a 45-day average approval time."[1]

Honolulu County already offers a self-certification process and an online permitting tool for solar panels; however, the county's implementation has hit a few snags and is not yet as fast as it could be. Still, Honolulu has been issuing solar permits faster than other building permits.

For example, between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, 47% of permits issued in Honolulu were tagged as "solar" or "solarPVinstallation." The wait time for these permits, from application to issuance, averaged 38 days, compared to 239 days for all other permits.[2]

The Honolulu City Council adopted a self-certification process for solar projects in 2024,[3] so the other counties will have a model to follow if this bill advances.

This legislation would also require the counties to create guidelines for how and when the Federal Emergency Management Agency's "no-rise/no-impact" rules for flood zones shall apply to certain solar projects.

These flood-zone rules are intended to discourage construction in areas with higher flood risks; however, there is no reason solar panels on a home in a flood zone would increase the home's risk for flooding, so streamlining this process makes sense.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas
Director of Strategic Campaigns
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

[1] Jonathan Helton, "Seven low-cost ways to speed up permitting in Hawaii," Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, October 2024, p. 7.
[2] Calculations performed using: "Building Permits - January 1, 2005 through June 30, 2024," Data.gov, July 13, 2024.
[3] Honolulu City and County Ordinance 24-30.

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:54:43 PM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The installation of a residential solar energy system in Hawaii costs roughly 3X what a comparable system costs in Australia and many other countries. The largest part of that price differential is to permitting and related regulatory hurdles & delays. In other U.S. states and other countries this problem has been solved via the use of Solar APP+ and similar self-certification systems that ensure safety without all the delay and expense of waiting for government inspections. Allowing self-certification would allow greatly increased adoption of renewable energy systems in Hawaii, benefitting residents, over-tasked county employees, the general public, and solar contractors alike. HB1984 provides a win/win/win/win solution to the current bottlenecks+ situation. I am speaking as a homeowner that had a new solar + battery system installed in Dec. 2025, just in time to qualify for expiring federal tax credits, and am still waiting for inspections in Feb. 2026. Please pass HB1984.

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:41:11 PM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
wei lian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB1984, which would establish a solar permitting self-certification pathway for customer-sited rooftop solar and energy storage projects.

Lengthy and unpredictable permitting timelines add real costs to solar projects and make it harder for Hawaii residents and businesses to invest in clean energy, especially as the federal Section 25D tax credit is scheduled to expire. Reducing permitting-related soft costs is one of the most effective tools available at the state and county level to keep solar affordable.

HB1984 appropriately maintains safety and accountability by relying on licensed design professionals and includes important clarifications regarding FEMA flood zone requirements that were developed in consultation with DLNR. This balanced approach will help reduce delays, lower costs, and support local solar businesses while maintaining full compliance with applicable codes and laws.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1984.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Wei Lian

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/3/2026 1:47:22 PM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roy Skaggs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB1984, which would establish a solar permitting self-certification pathway for customer-sited rooftop solar and energy storage projects. This is a common sense Bill.

Lengthy and unpredictable permitting timelines add real costs to solar projects and make it harder for Hawaii residents and businesses to invest in clean energy, especially as the federal Section 25D tax credit is scheduled to expire. Reducing permitting-related soft costs is one of the most effective tools available at the state and county level to keep solar affordable.

HB1984 appropriately maintains safety and accountability by relying on licensed design professionals and includes important clarifications regarding FEMA flood zone requirements that were developed in consultation with DLNR. This balanced approach will help reduce delays, lower costs, and support local solar businesses while maintaining full compliance with applicable codes and laws.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1984.

Mahalo!
Roy Skaggs

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:16:41 PM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/4/2026 5:39:07 AM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Lennard	Green Power Projects LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB1984, which would establish a solar permitting self-certification pathway for customer-sited rooftop solar and energy storage projects.

Lengthy and unpredictable permitting timelines add real costs to solar projects and make it harder for Hawaii residents and businesses to invest in clean energy, especially as the federal Section 25D tax credit is scheduled to expire. Reducing permitting-related soft costs is one of the most effective tools available at the state and county level to keep solar affordable.

HB1984 appropriately maintains safety and accountability by relying on licensed design professionals and includes important clarifications regarding FEMA flood zone requirements that were developed in consultation with DLNR. This balanced approach will help reduce delays, lower costs, and support local solar businesses while maintaining full compliance with applicable codes and laws.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1984.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Alan Lennard

HB-1984
Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:13:43 AM
Testimony for EEP on 2/5/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Virginia Tincher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lowen and members of the House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection,

I strongly support this bill as it will help reduce administrative barriers to the deployment of energy generation and storage technology
systems.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testifyl.

Virginia

Honolulu