



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
S.B. NO. 2579, RELATING TO WATER.**

**BEFORE THE:
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

DATE: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 **TIME:** 3:01 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 224

TESTIFER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
John E. Cole, or Christopher J.I. Leong, Deputy Attorneys General

Chair Wakai and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill requires the Hawaii State Energy Office to establish and administer a temporary three-year Water-Energy Resilience Competitive Grant Program in the County of Maui.

This bill does not appear to contain legally sufficient standards for grants of public money, as required by article VII, section 4, of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii, which provides that "[n]o grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law." Therefore, we recommend that this bill be amended to insert appropriate statutory standards for the issuance of grants. Examples of existing statutes that provide standards for administrative grants are part II of chapter 9, and sections 10-17, 210D-11, and 383-128, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

For the Committee's consideration, we have attached sample grant standards to this testimony as a starting point. These standards could be inserted on page 4, line 8, as a new subsection (f), with subsequent subsections re-lettered as appropriate. Additionally, we are available to work with the Committee to develop more tailored standards consistent with the goals of the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

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POSSIBLE STANDARDS FOR THE GRANTS IN THIS BILL

(f) Applications for grants shall be submitted to the department of business, economic development and tourism and shall contain information as required by rules adopted to administer the grant program. At a minimum, the applicant shall:

- (1) Be licensed or accredited, in accordance with federal, state, or county statutes, rules, or ordinances, to conduct the activities or provide the services for which a grant is sought;
- (2) Provide a detailed plan outlining the scope, objectives, and projected impact of the project or projects, including a clear breakdown of how grant funds will be expended;
- (3) Agree to use state funds exclusively for the purposes authorized under this program;
- (4) Indicate the capability to carry out the proposed project and properly administer grant funds.
[Specific applicant qualifications should be described for the different types of grants.];
- (5) Comply with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law;
- (6) Agree not to use state funds for purposes of entertainment or perquisites;
- (7) Comply with any additional requirements prescribed by the department;
- (8) Comply with all applicable federal, state, and county statutes, regulations, rules, and ordinances;
- (9) Agree to indemnify and save harmless the State of Hawaii and its officers, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims arising out of or resulting from activities carried out or projects

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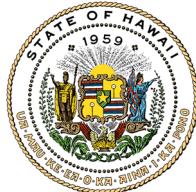
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undertaken with grant funds provided hereunder and procure sufficient insurance to provide this indemnification if requested to do so by the department.

- (10) Agree to make available to the department all records the applicant may have relating to the grant, to allow state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with this section.

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
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
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KAHOOLawe ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
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STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
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**Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

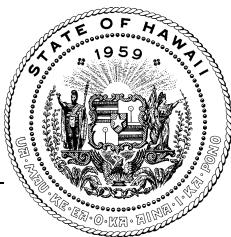
**Tuesday, February 3, 2026
3:01 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2579
RELATING TO WATER**

Senate Bill 2579 requires the Hawai'i State Energy Office to implement and administer a temporary Water-Energy Resilience Competitive Grant Program in the County of Maui in collaboration with the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity, and County of Maui. The bill mandates reports to the Legislature and allocates funds. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this measure and offers the following comments.**

The Department's mission is to enhance, protect, conserve and manage Hawai'i's unique and limited natural, cultural and historic resources held in public trust for current and future generations of the people of Hawai'i nei, and its visitors, in partnership with others from the public and private sectors. Accordingly, the Department values the opportunity to serve in a supporting role to the Hawai'i State Energy Office in the implementation of the bill's proposed grant program.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



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

before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Tuesday, February 3, 2026
3:01 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Videoconference

Providing Comments on
SB 2579

RELATING TO WATER.

Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) is providing comments on SB 2579, which would establish a Water-Energy Resilience Competitive Grant Program in Maui County to support the conversion of critical water pumping and irrigation facilities to renewable energy microgrids. The purpose of this bill is to reduce electricity costs associated with the delivery of essential water resources by improving the resilience of critical lifelines from water wells to water distribution infrastructure during planned and unplanned grid outages and extreme weather events.

HSEO supports the intent of this measure and the associated opportunity to address the intersection of renewable energy, water system reliability, and water and energy resilience for rural and agricultural communities in Maui County and throughout the state. While HSEO supports this bill, we respectfully suggest a few modifications to ensure effective implementation and coordination across stakeholder groups.

First, HSEO recommends that the program be phased, with an initial phase consisting of a desktop analysis to compile and assess existing information on groundwater pumping, irrigation energy use, facility conditions, land availability, and associated solar feasibility, security requirements, and grid vulnerability. This upfront

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analysis would allow the State and County to prioritize sites with the greatest resilience and cost-reduction benefits, ensure limited funds are deployed strategically, and reduce implementation risk. A second implementation phase could include a grant program or alternative financing mechanisms, informed by the results of the feasibility analysis.

If supported by the committee, HSEO would need to engage further with both the County and private water users to gather the necessary information and conduct technical feasibility analysis, recognizing that certain facilities may not have sufficient land availability to meet water pumping requirements. Such analysis is critical to accurate estimation of deployment costs that would vary based on volume, distance, slopes and other factors. HSEO would welcome the opportunity to work with affected or relevant agencies to develop alternative bill language that reflects the phased approach described above.

The ideas and purpose behind this bill reflect a growing recognition that energy policy, water reliability, and climate resilience are deeply interconnected. SB 2579 provides a valuable pilot framework that can demonstrate how distributed renewable energy solutions can strengthen essential infrastructure while supporting local communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2579
Relating to Motion Picture, Digital Media, and Film Production

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

My name is Kobe Benn, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of SB2579.

I am a creative professional working in film and digital media, and I currently live and work in Hawai'i. Legislation that supports the motion picture and digital media industry is critical to sustaining local jobs, developing local talent, and strengthening Hawai'i's creative economy.

Film and digital media productions create meaningful employment opportunities for Hawai'i residents, including production assistants, crew members, drivers, security staff, editors, and many other support roles. These productions also provide vital revenue for small businesses such as hotels, restaurants, rental companies, and local vendors across the islands.

Policies like SB2579 help ensure that Hawai'i remains competitive with other states and countries that actively incentivize film and digital media production. Without continued legislative support, productions may choose to film elsewhere, resulting in lost jobs, lost training opportunities, and reduced economic activity for local communities.

SB2579 represents an important investment in Hawai'i's workforce, creative talent, and long-term economic diversification. Supporting this measure helps ensure that local residents can build sustainable careers in the creative industries without being forced to leave the state.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB2579.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and continued support of Hawai'i's creative economy.

Respectfully submitted,
Kobe Benn
Hawai'i Resident & Creative Professional

SB-2579

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:41:32 AM
Testimony for EIG on 2/3/2026 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelsey Miguel	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of SB 2579, Relating to Water

Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

Aloha Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Chang, and Committee Members,

My name is Chelsey Miguel, and I am a sophomore at King Kekaulike High School on Maui. I am testifying in strong support of SB 2579

I experienced the Lahaina fires firsthand and saw how power outages disrupted water access across parts of Maui, threatening firefighting, agriculture, and basic household water security. That experience showed me how vulnerable our infrastructure is, and how pairing water systems with renewable energy microgrids could make our communities safer and more resilient for us as the people and future of Hawai'i. It personally hit close to home with how small we, as Maui are. It's your community and friends, all of them being affected in some way.

The problem SB 2579 addresses

- High electricity costs: Water facilities can spend an estimated 20–40% of their operating budgets just on electricity for pumping.
- Disaster vulnerability: When the grid goes down during wildfires, storms, or other failures, pumps can stop and people lose access to water right when they need it most.
- Agricultural pressure: High water-energy costs make it hard for local farmers and ranchers to stay viable.
- Aging infrastructure: Rural water systems need investment but often lack the resources to upgrade.

It is designed to:

- Cut electricity costs for pumping by an estimated 40–60%, allowing savings to be reinvested in infrastructure or used to relieve pressure on rates.
- Improve resilience by keeping water flowing during grid outages.
- Build local capacity by training 6–10 local technicians in installation, operation, and maintenance.

- Test before scaling by collecting real performance and cost data before any decision on expansion to other sites or counties.
- Support agriculture by lowering one of the major input costs for farmers and ranchers who rely on pumped water.

As a student/youth, I have been meeting with agencies and community members to shape this proposal. Through those conversations, I have heard interest in the concept and valuable feedback about implementation details, including funding levels, engineering feasibility work, and site selection. One of the ideas such as implementing an engineering study phase, detecting the best areas for impact, cost approximation and more.

This is feasible because around the country, similar projects have shown that pairing water infrastructure with renewable generation and storage can significantly reduce electricity costs while maintaining service during outages. It allows Hawai‘i to:

- Focus on communities that are already facing high energy costs and disaster risk.
- Start with 2–3 sites, rather than a statewide mandate.
- Use an engineering/feasibility phase to right-size each system and avoid over-prescribing technical details in statute.
- Report back to the Legislature with transparent data before any expansion.

After Lahaina, we know that losing power and water at the same time can be devastating. We cannot wait for the next disaster to begin testing solutions that directly strengthen critical infrastructure. For Maui communities that already host renewable energy projects but often see limited direct benefit, this is a concrete way to show how clean energy can serve local water, agriculture, and safety needs.

I also understand there may be concerns about cost, scope, and uncertainty around the exact technical design. In that case, SB 2579 should be written as a small, time-limited pilot program so the State can start with only two to three sites, collect real data, and then decide whether it should continue or expand. The bill relies on an engineering and feasibility process, rather than locking detailed specifications into statute, so that experts can right-size each microgrid and avoid wasting money. I am very open to amendments that refine the appropriation, narrow the site selection, or clarify reporting, as long as the core goal remains: testing whether solar-plus-battery microgrids can reduce water-energy costs and improve outage resilience for rural Maui communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to PASS SB 2579 and work with the Hawai‘i State Energy Office and stakeholders to refine the it's scope, funding, and implementation as needed.

Sincerely,

Chelsey Miguel

Sophomore, King Kekaulike High School

