
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii's electricity
2 rates are among the highest in the nation, at close to three
3 times the national average, and vary based on availability of
4 renewable resources, power plants, fuel costs, and pricing
5 regulations. The 2024 report commissioned by the Aloha United
6 Way, "ALICE in Hawaii: 2024 Facts and Figures", states that two
7 in five households, or forty per cent, in the State live below
8 the ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed)
9 threshold, meaning that almost half of all families in Hawaii
10 are struggling to make ends meet, even though they are employed.
11 The number of electric utility customers in arrears and facing
12 disconnection is higher than before the coronavirus disease 2019
13 (COVID-19) pandemic, with thousands of customers collectively
14 owing millions of dollars. In addition, electricity needs are
15 expected to increase due to rising climate temperatures and
16 associated home cooling needs.



1 In 2022, the legislature adopted Senate Concurrent
2 Resolution No. 242, S.D. 1 (2022), which requested the public
3 utilities commission, in collaboration with the department of
4 commerce and consumer affairs' division of consumer advocacy, to
5 convene a working group to create a Hawaii low-income home
6 energy assistance program. As noted in a December 2022 report
7 to the legislature submitted by the public utilities commission,
8 the federal low-income home energy assistance program funded by
9 the United States Department of Health and Human Services and
10 administered by the department of human services, a program
11 designed to provide energy assistance to families, served fewer
12 than nine thousand households in Hawaii in 2020, or about two
13 per cent of the State's population potentially eligible for
14 energy assistance based on income. The State received the
15 lowest amount of federal funding for the federal low-income home
16 energy assistance program of all states in fiscal year 2021-
17 2022. According to estimates from the National Energy and
18 Utility Affordability Coalition, Hawaii received 0.14 per cent
19 of federal low-income home energy assistance program funds in
20 fiscal year 2021-2022, roughly half of the next-lowest state.
21 Funding for states is determined based on a formula developed in



1 1984, which inherently favors states with large heating needs
2 and does not consider specific electricity prices within states.

3 The legislature further finds that, in addition to the
4 limited financial assistance available from the federal low-
5 income home energy assistance program, the public benefits fee
6 administrator of the public utilities commission plays a vital
7 role in ensuring that all available state and federal benefits
8 and rebate programs are being utilized by providing
9 opportunities and solutions for Hawaii residents and businesses
10 to save money and energy. The legislature also finds that the
11 State must commit to providing assistance to low-income
12 households that are directly impacted due to the high cost of
13 electricity.

14 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to provide eligible
15 households with assistance related to energy costs by:

16 (1) Establishing a Hawaii home energy assistance program
17 within the department of human services and
18 authorizing the department of human services to assist
19 eligible households with the payment of costs
20 associated with meeting their home energy needs; and



6 SECTION 2. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
7 amended by adding a new section to part II to be appropriately
8 designated and to read as follows:

9 "S346- Hawaii home energy assistance program;

10 established. (a) There is established within the department

11 the Hawaii home energy assistance program. Subject to the

12 availability of program funds, the program may assist eligible

13 households with payment of costs associated with meeting an

14 eligible household's home energy needs.

15 (b) Any person who is in need of public assistance may
16 submit an application on a form prescribed by the department
17 that includes, at a minimum, documentation to prove that the
18 person:

19 (1) Is a resident of the State;

20 (2) Has an active utilities account in the State; and

11 (d) The department shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter
12 91 for purposes of this section."

13 SECTION 3. Section 269-123, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
14 amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

15 "(b) The public benefits fee administrator's duties and
16 responsibilities shall be established by the public utilities
17 commission by rule or order, and may include:

18 (1) Identifying, developing, administering, promoting,
19 implementing, and evaluating programs, methods, and
20 technologies that support energy-efficiency and
21 demand-side management programs;





1 (7) Submitting, to the public utilities commission for
2 review and approval, a multi-year budget and planning
3 cycle that promotes program improvement, program
4 stability, and maturation of programs and delivery
5 resources; [and]

6 (8) Educating and training appliance manufacturers,
7 distributors, and retailers of appliances covered
8 under part VI of chapter 196 about the appliance
9 efficiency standards established under that part to
10 improve compliance[-]; and

11 (9) Providing information and technical assistance about
12 available energy efficiency programs to recipients of
13 the Hawaii home energy assistance program established
14 pursuant to section 346-, including an energy audit
15 if requested by the recipient, and assisting the
16 recipients with implementation of energy efficiency
17 improvements."

18 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
19 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
20 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for



1 the purposes of implementing the Hawaii home energy assistance
2 program established pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

3 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
4 human services for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
6 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

7 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

DHS; PUC; Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program within the Department of Human Services to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills. Requires the Public Utilities Commission Public Benefits Fee Administrator to provide certain information and assistance to recipients of the program. Appropriates funds to implement the program. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

