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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
State of Hawaii
State Capitol, Room 446
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Written Comments

HCR184/HR174

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM; DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES; AND UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ECONOMIC RESEARCH ORGANIZATION, TO CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON ESTABLISHING A GUARANTEED UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME PROGRAM FOR WORKING FAMILIES IN HAWAII.

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi, Director
Legislative Reference Bureau

Presented to the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Wednesday, April 1, 2026, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference

Chair Lisa Marten and Members of the Committee:

Good morning, Chair Marten and Members of the Committee, my name is Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi, and I am the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau (Bureau). Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written comments on H.C.R. No. 184/H.R. No. 174, Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau, in Consultation with the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; Department of Human Services; and University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization, to Conduct a Feasibility Study on Establishing a Guaranteed Universal Basic Income Program for Working Families in Hawaii.

The purpose of these measures is to:

- (1) Request the aforementioned feasibility study;
- (2) Further request that the Bureau include in the feasibility study:
 - (A) Potential program structures and eligibility criteria for working families;

- (B) Estimated program costs and possible funding sources;
 - (C) Potential impacts on poverty reduction, economic stability, and workforce participation;
 - (D) Lessons learned from guaranteed income pilot programs implemented in other states and municipalities; and
 - (E) The feasibility of implementing a pilot program in Hawaii to evaluate the effectiveness of guaranteed income; and
- (3) Request that the Bureau submit to the Legislature a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2027.

Although the Bureau takes no position on the merits of these measures, we have very serious concerns regarding our ability to serve as the lead agency on the proposed requested study and submit the following comments for your consideration.

The Bureau lacks the capabilities to perform the study requested in those measures. The Bureau does not have any of the necessary expertise in state budgets, economics, economic development, finance, fiscal policy, fiscal analysis, human services, or universal basic incomes.

The Bureau notes that the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization (UHERO) "conducts rigorous, independent economic research on issues that are both central to Hawai'i and globally relevant" and that its "faculty and fellows conduct frontier research on Hawai'i's economy, environment, and communities," as stated on its website.¹

If the Bureau were to be the lead agency responsible for conducting the feasibility study, as proposed by these measures, the Bureau anticipates that it would need to rely almost exclusively on the economic and other experts at UHERO to provide the necessary analysis and modeling for this project.

For this reason, the Bureau respectfully suggests that it would be far more practical, efficient, and useful for UHERO to serve as the lead agency responsible for conducting the feasibility study and drafting the corresponding report, and that the measures be amended accordingly. The Bureau also respectfully requests that the Bureau's participation in the study be limited to finalizing any proposed legislation, with the understanding that UHERO submit its request for proposed legislation to the Bureau no later than Monday, November 2, 2026.

¹ *About Us*, UNIVERSITY HAW. ECON. RSCH. ORG, <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/about/> (last visited Mar. 30, 2026).

If the measures are amended as requested, the Bureau believes that the Bureau's amended responsibilities would be manageable, provided that the Bureau's interim workload is not adversely impacted by too many other additional responsibilities, such as conducting studies, writing or finalizing reports, drafting legislation, or any combination of these for the Legislature or for other state agencies, task forces, or working groups that may be requested or required under other legislative measures.

Thank you again for your consideration.



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Apr 1, 2026

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We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

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The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: HCR184 – Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau, in Consultation with the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; Department of Human Services; and University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization, to Conduct a Feasibility Study on Establishing a Guaranteed Universal Basic Income Program for Working Families in Hawaii.

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) **supports the intent of HCR184** and offers comments to ensure the proposed feasibility study fully considers the impacts on disabled workers and families.

AILH is a Center for Independent Living serving people with all types of disabilities statewide. Many of the people we serve are working or want to work but remain in deep poverty because wages do not keep pace with the cost of living and because federal and state benefit rules often penalize increased earnings.

Economic Security and Disability

The resolution recognizes that Hawaii is among the most expensive states in the nation, with high housing, food, childcare, transportation, and other basic costs, and that many working families remain financially insecure despite employment. Disabled workers are overrepresented in low-wage and part-time jobs, and often face additional disability-related expenses



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(personal assistance, transportation, medical care) that are not fully covered by existing programs.

HCR184 notes that the Legislature previously convened the Basic Economic Security Working Group to explore universal basic income and related policies, and that more recent guaranteed income pilots in other jurisdictions have shown potential benefits such as improved financial stability, reduced stress, and better ability to meet essential needs. For disabled workers and caregivers in Hawaii, these outcomes are directly tied to the ability to live independently and avoid institutionalization.

Independent Living Lens for the Study

AILH supports requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau, in consultation with DBEDT, DHS, and UHERO, to conduct a feasibility study on a guaranteed universal basic income program for working families. The resolution appropriately calls for analysis of program structures and eligibility, cost and funding sources, impacts on poverty reduction and economic stability, lessons from other pilots, and feasibility of a Hawaii pilot program.

From an Independent Living perspective, the study must explicitly examine:

- How a guaranteed income would interact with SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, housing subsidies, and other disability-related benefits.
- Risks of “benefits cliffs” if guaranteed income counts as income and causes disabled workers to lose essential health care or long-term services and supports.
- How to include working disabled people who rely on part-time, gig, or intermittent work due to disability, as well as unpaid family caregivers.

Without this analysis, a well-intended program could inadvertently worsen economic insecurity for some disabled families.

Recommendation



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Aloha Independent Living Hawaii supports HCR184 and respectfully requests that the Committee:

1. Clarify in the committee report that the feasibility study should include a specific section on impacts to disabled workers, family caregivers, and people receiving disability-related benefits.
2. Encourage LRB and its partners to consult with disability organizations, including Centers for Independent Living, when designing scenarios and modeling program interactions with existing benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Roxanne Bolden
Executive Director