



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
KA 'OIHANA PILI KĀLEPA
335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310
P.O. BOX 541
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809
Phone Number: 1-844-808-DCCA (3222)
Fax Number: (808) 586-2856
cca.hawaii.gov

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

NADINE Y. ANDO
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

DEAN I HAZAMA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, March 4, 2026
10:31 a.m.
Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
S.B. 3103, S.D. 1, RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Michael Angelo, and I am the Executive Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Division of Consumer Advocacy. The Department supports this administration bill.

The purpose of this bill is to: (1) establish the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program within the Department of Human Services to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills; and (2) require the Public Benefits Fee Administrator of the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to provide certain information and assistance to recipients of the program.

As recognized in this bill, Hawaii's electricity rates are amongst the highest in the nation and the number of electric utility customers in arrears and facing disconnections have grown since prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, given that the federal low-income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP) is based on a formula that is not

tailored to the needs of Hawaii utility customers, so much so that in fiscal year 2021-2022 Hawaii received only 0.14% of federal LIHEAP funds, the Department fully supports the establishment of a state home energy assistance program as envisioned by this bill.

The Department especially appreciates that this state program is intended to be funded through a general fund appropriation and not through fees assessed on utility customers. Assessing fees on utility customers would increase utility bills for all customers and thereby exacerbate the energy burden for low- to moderate-income households, the very problem that this program is seeking to alleviate. As currently drafted, this measure avoids placing an additional financial burden on those households that this bill would assist. Furthermore, the Department fully supports the provisions of the bill that requires the Public Benefits Fee Administrator of the Commission, in conjunction with the Department of Human Services, to provide information and technical assistance to recipients of the state energy assistance program and assist them with implementing energy efficiency improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we respectfully ask the Committee to pass this administration bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 3, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 3103 SD1 – RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE.**

Hearing: Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 10:31 a.m.
Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill, provides comments, and defers to the Public Utilities Commission.

The purpose of this measure is to establish the Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program within DHS to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills, and to require the Public Utilities Commission Public Benefits Fee Administrator to provide certain assistance to program recipients.

DHS currently contracts with agencies in each county to conduct intake and eligibility determinations for applications to the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program (H-HEAP), federally referred to as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The total for the four contracts is just over \$500,000.

With rising utility costs, Hawai'i households are often forced to prioritize expenses, forgoing utilities in favor of rent or food. For over 40 years, H-HEAP has assisted vulnerable Hawai'i households with electric and gas utility assistance payments through energy crisis

intervention or energy credits. These funds prevent or restore service disconnection or provide credit to help offset the household's energy burden.

Each year, funding is subject to Congressional appropriation with decreasing allotments in the years leading up to FFY 2020. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Congressional action and supplemental funding from various federal acts allowed DHS to increase income limits to serve more households with record-high energy credits, increase energy credit payments, provide a supplemental crisis payment in 2021, and implement the complete erasure of utility arrears in FFY 2022 and 2023 for eligible households.

In FFY 2023, DHS received the largest LIHEAP appropriation in program history. In total, \$10.6 million was disbursed to nearly 8,300 Hawai'i households through direct payments to utility companies.

In FFY 2025, the appropriation was \$8.7 million, serving 9,007 households. Of these households, 6,973 contained a vulnerable family member: a disabled adult, an adult aged 60 or older, or a child under 5.

For the FFY 2026, the current appropriation is \$7.7 million. Without further funding, eligible households will have a lower benefit than in the past, despite facing up to a 30% increase in utility costs. Establishing and funding this proposed program would provide a vital, stable resource for H-HEAP to better serve households, including our most vulnerable families, facing rising energy costs.

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

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR



Hawaii Green Infrastructure Authority

An Agency of the State of Hawaii

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
CHAIR

GWEN S YAMAMOTO LAU
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Testimony of
Gwen Yamamoto Lau
Executive Director
Hawai'i Green Infrastructure Authority
before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 10:31 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211
in consideration of
Senate Bill No. 3103, SD1
RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB3103, SD1, relating to energy assistance. The Hawai'i Green Infrastructure Authority (HGIA) **supports** this bill, which establishes the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program to assist low-income households with payment on home energy costs, and to require the Public Utilities Commission Public Benefits Fee Administrator to provide certain information and assistance to program recipients.

This program complements HGIA's mission of providing affordable and accessible clean energy financing to underserved ratepayers by helping low-income households lower their energy costs. HGIA's Green Energy Money Saver (GEM\$) program aims to reduce low- and moderate-income households' energy bills through clean energy improvements such as solar photovoltaic systems and energy storage systems.

However, not all ratepayers can install solar, such as renters in multi-family projects or households with energy bills too small for solar to be cost-effective. This program provides an important alternative for those households to manage their energy burden. While the Federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program serves a similar purpose, unfortunately, while Hawaii residents pay the highest electricity rates in the nation, our state receives the lowest amount in federal funding for this program due to outdated formulas that rely on heating needs, but not energy prices.

While HGIA's participants typically see energy savings due to shifts to renewable energy production, this program complements our efforts by encouraging savings from reduced energy use. The requirement for information and technical assistance related to

energy efficiency, as well as energy audits and the implementation of energy efficiency improvements will enable recipients to consume less energy from the grid and pay lower bills. This will expand on HGIA's efforts to promote energy literacy among our participants.

Furthermore, the program will support the state's transition to 100% renewable energy. Despite the long-term benefits, when households are struggling to pay their electric bills, investing in clean energy technologies becomes a low priority due to upfront costs and financial risks. By addressing the energy burden, SB3103, SD1, can help create the financial stability needed to participate in the clean energy transition.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments and testify in support of SB3103, SD1.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



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

JON S. ITOMURA
CHAIR

NAOMI U. KUWAYE
COMMISSIONER

COLIN A. YOST
COMMISSIONER

Telephone: (808) 586-2020
Facsimile: (808) 586-2066

Website: puc.hawaii.gov
E-mail: puc@hawaii.gov

Testimony of the Public Utilities Commission

To the
Senate Committee on
Ways & Means

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
10:31 a.m.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Measure: S.B. No. 3103, S.D. 1
Title: RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE.

Position:

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

Comments:

The Commission supports the intent of this measure to assist households in paying their energy bills by creating a Hawaii home energy assistance program. This aligns with our core mission of ensuring safe, reliable, and affordable utility services for Hawaii residents. Importantly, this measure addresses a critical and growing energy affordability crisis in Hawaii.

Considerations for affordability and equity in energy policy are actively being explored by the Commission through several current dockets and initiatives. In December 2022, the Commission opened Docket No. 2022-0250 on "Energy Equity and Justice" to examine achieving equity in both social and economic participation in the energy system. Amid this broader equity investigation, the Commission identified a need to explore the equity implications of utility disconnections due to nonpayment, which disproportionately affect low-income households. The Commission subsequently opened Docket No. 2025-0284 in June 2025 to examine current electric utility disconnections and to consider whether disconnection policy revisions are appropriate. Similarly, in response to 2022 legislative resolutions S.C.R. 242, S.D. 1, S.R. 133, S.D. 1, and H.R. 43, H.D. 1, the Commission and the Consumer Advocate established a Working Group in September 2022 focused

on creating a Hawaii home energy assistance program¹ which is aligned closely with the intent of S.B. 3103, S.D.1.

Hawaii households face significant energy burden. In 2024, over 20 percent of households in Hawaii reported foregoing critical expenses such as food or medicine to pay their energy bill in full.² Hawaii ranked 5th in the nation for highest average household electricity burden and, on top of that, households living below the Federal Poverty Level spent approximately 20 percent of their income on electricity costs, over nine times higher than the State average.³ Relatedly, disconnections rates more than doubled from approximately 5,900 in 2018 to roughly 12,800 in 2023.⁴

The current federal program for Low Income Home Energy Assistance (“LIHEAP”) remains woefully inadequate for Hawaii’s needs. Despite having the nation’s highest household electricity costs (about 63 percent more than the national average),⁵ Hawaii receives the lowest LIHEAP funding nationwide.⁶ The program’s 1984 funding formula heavily favors states with high heating needs while ignoring electricity price differences and Hawaii’s unique energy challenges. The National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition reports that Hawaii received just 0.14 percent of federal LIHEAP funds in fiscal year 2021-2022 – about half of the next-lowest state.⁷ Furthermore, an average of less than 11 percent of state income-eligible Hawaii households have received LIHEAP assistance over the past several years.⁸

The establishment of a Hawaii home energy assistance program is not just important; indeed, it is urgent. As more families face disconnection, the gap between federal assistance and actual need continues to widen. Without state-level intervention, more Hawaii families will face impossible choices between paying for electricity and other basic necessities.

Given these challenges and federal funding inadequacies, the Commission strongly supports establishing a Hawaii home energy assistance program as written in S.B. 3103, S.D.1. The measure will provide immediate relief to struggling Hawaii families, create a more equitable energy assistance framework, and reduce utility disconnections and their associated societal costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

¹ State of Hawaii Public Utilities Commission, “Report to the 2023 Legislature” (Dec 2022).

² RMI, “Pathways to Disconnection Reform in Hawaii” (Aug 2024).

³ Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT), “Electricity Burdens on Hawaii Households: 2022 Update” (Jan 2025).

⁴ RMI, “Pathways to Disconnection Reform in Hawaii” (Aug 2024).

⁵ DBEDT, “Electricity Burdens on Hawaii Households: 2022 Update” (Jan 2025).

⁶ LIHEAP Clearing House, “FY24 releases and reallocation awards to states and territories.”

⁷ National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition, “State Utility Assistance Program Options Prepared for Hawaii Working Group” (Nov 2022).

⁸ LIHEAP Performance Management: Data Warehouse <https://liheappm.acf.gov/datawarehouse/>

OFFICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY
KE KE'ENA LOLI ANIAU MĀLAMA 'ĀINA A ME KE OLA LOA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

650 SOUTH KING STREET, 11TH FLOOR • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
PHONE: (808) 768-2277 • EMAIL: resilientoahu@honolulu.gov • WEBSITE: resilientoahu.org

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



KEALOHA FOX, Ph. D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR &
CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER
PO'O HO'OKŌ & KAHU OLA LOA

VACANT
DEPUTY DIRECTOR &
DEPUTY CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER
HOPE PO'O & HOPE KAHU OLA LOA

TESTIMONY OF KEALOHA FOX, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY AND
RESILIENCY AND CHIEF RESILIENCE OFFICER

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 10:31 AM
Conference RM 211 and Via Videoconference

TO: Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair, Sen. Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

RE: SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 3103 SD1, RELATING TO ENERGY
ASSISTANCE

The City and County of Honolulu's ("City") Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency ("Resilience Office") **supports** Senate Bill 3103 SD1, which establishes the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills.

Energy affordability is an increasingly urgent issue for O'ahu residents. As temperatures continue to rise as a result of climate change, and Hawai'i's electricity rates remain among the highest in the nation, households are facing higher cooling needs and utility expenses. These burdens fall disproportionately on low-income households, increasing the risk of utility disconnection and undermining household health and stability.

This measure addresses a critical gap in the energy assistance landscape, as the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program funding fails to recognize Hawai'i's unique challenges and provide sufficient support. Without additional assistance, many of O'ahu's households are forced to make difficult trade-offs between essential needs like food, healthcare, and energy. Ensuring that households can afford electricity is foundational to Hawai'i's clean energy transition. Energy-secure households are better able to participate in energy efficiency and clean energy programs, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and remain safe during extreme heat and climate-related disruptions.

This measure supports the City's Climate Action Plan and resilience goals while providing immediate relief to those most impacted. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **support** of SB3103 SD1.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NALANI BRUN, DIRECTOR



DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Testimony of Christina Kaser

Energy Coordinator, Office of Economic Development
County of Kaua'i

Before the

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

March 4, 2026; 10:31 a.m.

Conference Room 211 & Via Videoconference

In consideration of

Senate Bill 3103 SD1

Relating to Energy Assistance

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The County of Kaua'i is in **support** of Senate Bill 3103 SD1, which establishes the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program within the Department of Human Services to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills; Requires the Public Benefits Fee Administrator of the Public Utilities Commission to provide certain information and assistance to recipients of the program.

The County is committed to working towards Hawai'i's state-wide goal of 100% carbon neutrality by 2045, noting the significance of contributions from the energy sector, and appreciates the Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative's integration of renewable energy sources into the energy portfolio.

Due to the nature of our islands' geographic isolation, coupled with reliance on imported fuels and costs to maintain independent infrastructure, residents face a high energy burden relative to the rest of the nation, and devote a large proportion of monthly income to cost of living. Hawaii ranked 5th in the U.S. for highest average household electricity burden [according to a 2025 report from DBEDT](#), and households living below the Federal Poverty Level spent ~20% of their income on electricity costs, over 9x higher than the average Hawaii household. Despite these challenges, Hawaii received the [lowest amount of federal LIHEAP funding amongst the United States](#).

The County suggests that there is great value in developing the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program ("HIHEAP"), especially as support is inadequate at the federal level. We anticipate the proposed state-wide funding would provide immense relief to our vulnerable populations, as power disconnections create ripple effects throughout communities - endangering vulnerable residents' health, hampering students' ability to learn, and trapping families in cycles of financial hardship through reconnection penalties. State support through HIHEAP would help prevent Hawaii families from having to choose between power and other basic necessities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of SB 3103 SD1.



Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

By Scott Sato
Government Affairs & Energy Services Manager
Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative
4463 Pahe'e Street, Suite 1, Līhu'e, Hawai'i, 96766-2000

Wednesday, March 4, 2026; 10:31 am
Conference Room #211 & Videoconference

Senate Bill No. 3103, Senate Draft No. 1 – RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE

To the Honorable Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

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

KIUC supports this measure.

KIUC is committed to providing safe, reliable, clean electricity to its customers at the lowest possible rates. Since becoming an electric cooperative 23 years ago, KIUC's rates have gone from being the highest in the state – roughly 70% higher than rates on O'ahu – to often being the lowest rates in the state since 2022. KIUC has achieved this remarkable turnaround using a variety of strategies including cost control measures (e.g., reduced staffing levels), debt restructuring, and replacing oil-fired generation with lower-cost renewables at fixed prices.

KIUC recognizes that some of its customers struggle to make ends meet, and that electricity bills contribute to the relatively high cost of living that has been prevalent in the State of Hawai'i for decades. KIUC offers numerous financial assistance programs, such as the federally-funded H-HEAP program, to members who meet qualification requirements. H-HEAP subsidizes income-qualified members' utility payments by a total of \$300,000-\$400,000 per year. In addition, the KIUC Charitable Foundation, a separate, not-for-profit entity, provides assistance to members in financial need through grant funds administered by Kaua'i Economic Opportunity and Catholic Charities of Hawai'i. KIUC will also conduct home energy audits to assist members in reducing their energy use, which results directly in bill savings.

We support the establishment of the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program in order to expand the assistance options available to utility customers in financial need throughout the state.

Thank you for your consideration.



**Hawaiian
Electric**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS**

**SB 3103, SD1
Relating to Energy Assistance**

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
10:31 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

Hawaiian Electric is submitting written testimony in **support** of SB 3103, SD1, Relating to Energy Assistance.

The purpose of this bill is to establish the Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program (“HIHEAP”) within the Department of Human Services to extend funding for qualifying households in need of financial assistance for utility bills. The Hawaii Home Energy Assistance Program would complement the current Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, known as LIHEAP in providing critical fiscal aid for low- to moderate-income families. This bill cites Aloha United Way’s 2024 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Report, which notes 40% of Hawai’i households live below the ALICE threshold and struggle to pay their bills, and primarily focuses on electric utility arrears and disconnections. The 2024 ALICE in the Crosscurrents Report shares a 2022 Household Survival Budget¹ that lists “Housing – Utilities” as \$310 out of \$8,983 per month for a family of four, or 3.5% of the total sample monthly budget. Comparatively, food, rent and childcare for a family of four may cost \$1,757 (19.6%), \$1,716 (19.1%), and \$1,690 (18.8%), respectively per month.

¹ [ALICE in the Crosscurrents: An Update on Financial Hardship in Hawai’i](#)

While electric bills can add up every month, they are a small percentage of annual income compared to other essentials like housing, food, childcare, transportation, and healthcare. Hawaiian Electric's electricity rates are at their lowest level in three years and among the most stable in the United States. With current rates down 15% since the start of the Russia/Ukraine War in Q3 2022, Hawai'i's average residential bill is down 3% whereas the average U.S. residential bill is up 6%. When all forms of energy spending are accounted for including electricity, gas, and other fuels, Hawai'i ranks 35th in the U.S. for household energy burden at 2.3% with the national average boasting the same percentage according to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism's ("DBEDT") 2025 Electricity Burdens on Hawai'i Households: 2022 Update report². Due to ongoing collections efforts and improved customer payments, Hawaiian Electric's older past due balance arrears for O'ahu and Hawai'i customers have reached pre-pandemic levels. In comparison, the continuing moratorium on disconnections for Maui customers has led to a steep increase in long-term arrears balances greater than 90 days, which will be difficult for customers to pay once the moratorium ends.

Hawaiian Electric supports this bill as it would establish and appropriate funds to our most vulnerable community members in the form of financial assistance and energy efficient efforts. The benefits of such a program extend far beyond immediate financial relief. By providing financial assistance, we can significantly improve the quality of life for low-income families, enabling them to allocate their limited resources toward other essential needs as mentioned in the sample ALICE survival budget in the report referenced above. Moreover, this program will contribute to the overall economic stability of our communities. When residents can manage their energy costs effectively,

² [Electricity Burdens on Hawai'i Households Jan 2025.pdf](#)

it reduces the likelihood of arrears and debt accumulation, fostering a more resilient and financially healthy community.

The bill notes that the Public Utilities Commission Public Benefits Fee administrator may offer information and assistance to encourage more energy efficient homes, which would also positively impact energy usage and costs. Hawaiian Electric supports funding for HIHEAP chartered by general revenues of the State of Hawai'i instead of seeking additional fees or moneys from ratepayers, which could further increase customers' financial burdens.

Accordingly, Hawaiian Electric **supports** SB 3103, SD1. Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAI'I

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3103 SD1: RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE

TO: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawai'i
Hearing: Wednesday March 4, 2026; 10:31 AM; CR 211 & Videoconference

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members, Committee on Ways and Means:

I am Betty Lou Larson from Catholic Charities Hawai'i. We **strongly support SB 3103**, which establishes the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance program within the Department of Human Services (DHS) to help qualifying households to pay their energy bills.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawai'i for over 78 years, assisting over 40,000 individuals statewide each year. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy to the most vulnerable of the people in Hawai'i. We participate in the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) initiative and other initiatives to assist our local residents as they face the high cost of living in Hawai'i.

Hawai'i residents face incredibly high energy bills. For the 11% of households living below the Federal Poverty Line, electricity expenses consume **nearly 20% of their income**—more than nine times the state average. In addition, nearly half of Hawai'i's households are ALICE families: employed, yet still struggling just to cover basic necessities.

This growing financial strain has led to a huge surge in utility shutoffs. By 2023, these had shot up to 12,000 disconnects/year—double the pre-COVID average. Along with the large increase in the cost of living, there are limited resources to help families stay current on their bills.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i urges your support for the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program to help residents **manage their high electricity costs, including assisting recipients with implementation of energy efficient improvements.** The Program would provide much-needed relief, preventing families from having to choose between keeping the lights on and meeting other essential needs. Swift action is necessary to protect our most vulnerable households, particularly as climate change continues to place additional burdens on our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your leadership in addressing Hawai'i's growing energy affordability crisis.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at (808) 527-4813.





Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Re: **SB3103 SD1 – Relating to Energy Assistance**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
March 4, 2026, 10:31 AM

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB3103 SD1**. This bill establishes the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program within the Department of Human Services to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills and also requires the Public Benefits Fee Administrator of the Public Utilities Commission to provide certain information and assistance to recipients of the program.

This program would help qualifying households pay their energy bills and promotes the well-being of children and families across Hawai'i. When families struggle to keep up with energy bills, they can face impossible choices — like cutting back on food or medical care so they can pay power bills.

A reliable energy assistance program helps keep lights on, homes comfortable, and families stable — all of which are critical for a child's healthy development. Energy support also helps ensure children can live and learn in safe, temperature-controlled homes.

High energy costs can also lead to housing instability. By reducing the burden of utility costs, this bill can help keep families housed and children in school.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy



MARCH 4, 2026

SENATE BILL 3103 SD1

CURRENT REFERRAL: WAM

808-679-7454
kris@imuaalliance.org
www.imuaalliance.org
@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

Imua Alliance supports SB 3103 SD1, relating to energy assistance, which establishes the Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program within the Department of Human Services to assist qualifying households in paying their energy bills; and requires the Public Utilities Commission Public Benefits Fee Administrator to provide certain information and assistance to recipients of the program.

Imua Alliance is a Hawai'i-based organization dedicated to ending sexual exploitation and gender violence, and combating all forms of systemic exploitation in our society, including that of our planet.

We must do more to offset the energy costs incurred by working families. Currently one out of every four households in Hawai'i reports that they are "doubling up" or are three paychecks or less away from being homeless, per the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. Additionally, over 60 percent of households are severely cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, a number that rises to over 80 percent of extremely low-income households.

Moreover, a recent survey conducted by the Holomua Collective found that 60 percent of residents face worries about not being able to pay a monthly bill; 63 percent face difficulties in saving money from their paychecks for future emergencies, retirement, or other expenses; and 82 percent say that the state needs to do more to increase access to energy savings for homeowners and renters. A staggering 70 percent of middle-class respondents to Holomua's survey say they will—or are unsure if they will have to—relocate in the coming years. As Holomua Collective states in its report on the findings, "These are the very workers powering Hawai'i's economy, now on the brink of leaving their homes behind."

In 2022, the legislature adopted SCR 242, requesting The Public Utilities Commission, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' Division of Consumer Advocacy, to convene a working group to create a low-income home energy assistance program to assist low-income households with paying for their energy costs.

In response, the PUC's working group found that over 20 percent of households in our state report foregoing critical expenses, such as food or medicine, to pay their energy bills and that Hawai'i ranked 5th in the nation for highest average household electricity burden. In its *"Electricity Burdens on Hawai'i Households: 2022 Update*, DBEDT analysts noted that households living below the federal poverty level spend approximately 20 percent of their income on electricity costs, over nine times higher than the state average. The report also highlights our state's exorbitant electricity costs: 63 percent more than the national average.

According to the LIHEAP Clearing House, a mere 6 percent of federally income-eligible households in Hawai'i have received LIHEAP heating assistance over the past four years. As the price of electricity continues to rise—along with all other expenses, like food and housing—we must take action to prevent energy costs from exacerbating electricity disconnections and out-migration.

Access to energy is essential to uplifting economic resilience and public health for our community. Developing equity-based policy interventions is a matter of utter importance for residents who are living on the cusp of financial precarity, barely able to make ends meet.

With aloha,

Kris Coffield

President, Imua Alliance

SB-3103-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 4:50:56 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/4/2026 10:31:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support w/comment CLIENTS MUST LEARN TO REDUCE ENERGY AND/OR A ONE FLAT RATE AMOUNT FROM THE PROGRAM. EXAMPLE \$200-300 FOR A HOUSEHOLD OF 2.

3103 SB RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE.

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Committee on Ways and Means

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: March 3, 2026

RE: Senate Bill 3103 SD1
Measure Title: RELATING TO ENERGY ASSISTANCE.
Report Title: DHS; PUC; Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program;
Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 3103 SD1. Your consideration is most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore