

LATE

TESTIMONY OF RANDY IWASE
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND HEALTH

March 22, 2016
9:30 AM

MEASURE: H.B. No. 1851, H.D. 1

TITLE: RELATING TO THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Chair Baker and Members of the Committee:

DESCRIPTION:

This measure would require at least one member of the Public Utilities Commission ("Commission") to be a resident of a county other than the city and county of Honolulu and would provide that commissioner with an unspecified per diem compensation "for the days on which actual service is rendered." This measure would also allow commissioners to attend public hearings held on islands that they do not reside by teleconference or video conference.

POSITION:

The Commission offers the following comments for the Committee's consideration.

COMMENTS:

The Commission is presently composed of only three ("3") members. Given its limited size, the Governor should be given wide discretion in appointing qualified members. Therefore, the Commission prefers the Senate version of this measure, which enables a person's island of residence to be used as a criterion when determining a person's qualification to serve as a commissioner.

The Commission appreciates the intent of providing the Commission with the option to allow a commissioner to attend public hearings held on islands that they do not reside via teleconference or video conference. However, there are certain hearings where all three commissioners should always be physically present. For example, the Commission

believes that all three commissioners should always be physically present at contested case hearings. The Commission also notes that establishing the ability for commissioners to attend hearings via teleconference and/or video conference could be costly, particularly if the service employed would afford a level of functionality and reliability similar to that which could be expected if the commissioner were physically present.

Finally, the Commission notes that providing per diem compensation for commissioners who are residents of a county other than the city and county of Honolulu is fair given the costs associated with working outside one's county of residence. Compensation for lodging and transportation should also be considered.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.