
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION TO CONSIDER EFFORTS TO MITIGATE HIGH ENERGY BURDENS FOR LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME CUSTOMERS AND INVESTIGATE HOW TO INTEGRATE CONSIDERATIONS OF ENERGY EQUITY AND JUSTICE ACROSS ITS WORK.

1 WHEREAS, many households in Hawaii have difficulty paying
2 energy bills and suffer energy insecurity, in which they are
3 faced with difficult choices, such as whether to sacrifice food
4 or medicine to be able to pay for energy; and

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6 WHEREAS, the Department of Business, Economic Development,
7 and Tourism found that "household electricity burden - the
8 percentage of household income spent on electricity bills - is
9 one of the key elements contributing to a household's energy
10 insecurity, especially for low-income households"; and

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12 WHEREAS, consequently, households with lower incomes are
13 faced with higher levels of energy insecurity; and

14
15 WHEREAS, forty-two percent of households in the State live
16 below the ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed)
17 threshold, meaning that almost half of all families in Hawaii
18 are struggling to make ends meet, even though they are employed;
19 and

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21 WHEREAS, additionally, nine percent of these ALICE families
22 are living in poverty, and this trend has progressively worsened
23 in recent years due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic;
24 and

25
26 WHEREAS, rising temperatures and humidity due to climate
27 change has caused increased need for air conditioning, resulting
28 in the need for more electricity and further exacerbating the
29 situation of energy insecurity for residents; and
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1 WHEREAS, Hawaii's electricity rates are the highest in the
2 nation, at close to three times the national average; and
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4 WHEREAS, although the federal Low Income Home Energy
5 Assistance Program is available for bill assistance, an average
6 of only twenty percent of qualifying households actually receive
7 benefits, leaving an obvious unmet need for bill assistance or
8 rate relief to those in privation; and
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10 WHEREAS, the State's electric utilities do not offer
11 utility specific low- to moderate-income discount rates and have
12 limited, if any, bill assistance options; and
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14 WHEREAS, in recognition of these and other disparities
15 contributing to high electricity burdens, some state utilities
16 in Arizona, California, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts,
17 Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island,
18 and Vermont are authorized to offer lower rates to low- and
19 limited-income customers to reduce residential electricity
20 burden and ensure continued access to electrical power; and
21

22 WHEREAS, when comparing electricity burden maps in the
23 Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism's
24 electricity burden report to the Hawaii Statewide Energy Project
25 Directory provided by the Hawaii State Energy Office, a
26 substantial amount of the current and planned energy project
27 locations are in or near areas that have higher electricity
28 burdens; and
29

30 WHEREAS, the communities that serve as geographic hosts for
31 major energy projects receive the same project benefit of secure
32 provision of service as all other ratepayers, yet must live with
33 the burdens associated with hosting those projects and are
34 neither offered compensation for doing so nor are generally
35 meaningfully engaged in the planning process; and
36

37 WHEREAS, the burdens host communities have shouldered
38 include high concentrations of particulate air emissions, loss
39 of open space, loss of other land uses, environmental concerns,
40 and projects that are maligned with the host community's
41 localized needs and priorities for provision of electrical
42 service; and



1
2 WHEREAS, without intentional and informed planning,
3 progression toward the State's clean energy goals may therefore
4 come at the expense of already burdened communities; and
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6 WHEREAS, current circumstances necessitate an explicit
7 focus on energy and climate justice to ensure that the benefits
8 and burdens of energy infrastructure development in the face of
9 climate change are equitably distributed; now, therefore,
10

11 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
12 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
13 of 2022, that the Public Utilities Commission is requested to
14 consider efforts to mitigate high energy burdens for low- and
15 moderate-income customers and investigate how to integrate
16 considerations of energy equity and justice across its work; and
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18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission
19 is requested to examine:
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- 21 (1) Low- and moderate-income rate discounts, bill credits,
22 and direct payments and whether these would be
23 appropriate in the State;
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- 25 (2) Expanded availability of utility bill assistance
26 programs and whether adequate payment plan
27 arrangements are available to low- and moderate-income
28 customers who are facing economic challenges, such as
29 loss of employment;
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- 31 (3) Measures to protect low- and moderate-income
32 households, senior citizens, and households with
33 infants from service disconnections, including
34 reporting requirements for all utilities on the number
35 of customers annually disconnected due to non-payment;
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- 37 (4) The advantages and disadvantages of rate design,
38 program offerings, and the requirements of community
39 benefits agreements to address energy burden, energy
40 insecurity, and environmental and energy justice
41 concerns related to energy projects and programs; and
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1 (5) Other customer-centric solutions to lessen the energy
2 burden on low- and moderate-income customers and
3 determine appropriate benefits above and beyond those
4 accrued to the overall electric grid for communities
5 that serve as geographic hosts to utility scale energy
6 projects; and
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8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission
9 is requested to establish the necessary proceeding or
10 proceedings to conduct this examination; and
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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Public Utilities Commission
13 is requested to submit a report to the Legislature of its
14 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
15 legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
16 the Regular Session of 2023; and
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18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
19 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Public
20 Utilities Commission.
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OFFERED BY: *Maile E. Lowen*

MAR - 9 2022

