



HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE STATE OF HAWAII

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Testimony of
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before the
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

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**SUPPORT
SCR 94, SD1
REQUESTING THE HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE TO ENGAGE THE UNITED
STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT PRESENCE
WITHIN THE STATE OF HAWAII.**

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Marten, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) supports SCR 94, SD1, which requests the Hawai'i State Energy Office to engage the United States Department of Energy (USDOE) to establish a permanent presence within the State of Hawai'i. SCR 94, SD1 is substantively similar to HCR 46, which this Committee passed on March 24, 2022.

As noted in HSEO's testimony on HCR 46, the USDOE has been a critical partner to the State of Hawai'i in achieving its clean energy goals and economic transformation. The Legislature designated HSEO as the lead agency for the Hawai'i Clean Energy Initiative, a partnership between the USDOE and State of Hawai'i. The Legislature further tasked the Chief Energy Officer to "Coordinate the State's energy programs with those of the federal government, other territory and state governments, the political subdivisions of the State, departments of the State, and governments of nations with interest in common energy resources." 196-72(d)(4), HRS.

Since the re-establishment of HSEO as an independent attached agency to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), HSEO has pursued its statutory responsibilities diligently in a way to increase public support of and

confidence in Hawai'i's renewable energy transition and US leadership on renewable energy and climate change mitigation.

A permanent USDOE presence in Hawai'i would accelerate the leadership and transformation of Hawai'i toward a resilient, clean energy economy. In addition to the policy leadership cited in SCR 94, SD1, Hawai'i is leading in innovative project development and execution. Hawai'i's unique geography and discrete energy systems serve as models for testing and demonstrating effective policies and technologies. For example, O'ahu now has more distributed rooftop solar generation than produced by any one power plant. Through the Powering Past Coal Task Force, Hawai'i is pioneering the level of coordination needed to reliably retire Hawai'i's last coal plant and replace it with renewable energy projects. Kaua'i has achieved approximately 70% renewable energy for electricity eight years ahead of its 2030 target and is currently planning an innovative pumped storage hydroelectric project to achieve the next 20% of its target. Moloka'i has a grassroots community-led renewable energy transition underway. Many of these initiatives have received support from the USDOE through its various offices, programs, and national labs. A permanent presence in Hawai'i would deepen and further integrate these collaborations.

Concurrent with the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 Initiative, HSEO has been intentionally including an equity viewpoint in its office, structure, planning, programming, and projects. As HSEO works to more equitably advance Hawai'i's clean energy and climate goals, a successful path to a clean-energy and carbon-free economy requires green economic development innovation that creates living-wage jobs while enhancing environmental and social justice. To this end, HSEO partnered with other state and county agencies to establish the Energy Equity Hui focused on creating energy equity and justice programming outcomes.

As an example of practice, this is also the second year that three full-time AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) service members are contributing to HSEO's efforts to make clean energy and clean transportation more accessible and affordable for all Hawai'i residents. The VISTAs, part of the Climate Ready Hawai'i VISTA-AmeriCorps cohort coordinated by the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and

Adaptation Commission, were selected for their ability and commitment to help strengthen HSEO's capacity to serve vulnerable and under-represented communities.

The HSEO has also launched a new Clean Energy Wayfinder program through the Kupu 'Āina Corps program, which the Legislature funded in Act 181 last year, and in partnership with Hawai'i community and energy industry stakeholders. The purpose of the program is to advance Hawai'i's clean energy goals and create jobs for a new generation of clean energy leaders while addressing inequities in vulnerable communities. Increasing vocalized community concerns about energy projects' benefits and impacts on host communities have made it clear that a deliberate and more intentional effort must be made to reach out to and include everyone in Hawai'i to more effectively, efficiently, and equitably achieve our 100% clean energy and carbon free economy goals. The Wayfinders serve as liaisons between communities and energy industry stakeholders by working with host community organizations, especially those in low-to-moderate income (LMI), asset limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE), or under-resourced communities with existing or planned renewable energy projects. The Wayfinders co-create strategies for sharing information, providing referrals to resources, and facilitating community input on energy efficiency and renewable energy policy, program, and project development. This increases energy conservation and efficiency, lowers monthly energy utility bills, increases access to clean transportation and renewable energy resources, and promotes green career training and employment.

Lastly, Hawai'i, as a US State centered in the Pacific, regularly engages in international diplomatic relations. Hawai'i's clean energy leadership has resulted in partnerships directly with countries and islands across the Pacific. The Biden-Harris Administration has identified clean energy and climate technology, investment, and policymaking as critical tools for the Indo-Pacific National Security Strategy. As Hawai'i is also the home to the Department of Defense's presence in the Indo-Pacific region, having a permanent USDOE presence in Hawai'i would enhance not only Hawai'i's engagement and support for the Biden-Harris Administration's objectives, but collaboration between the USDOD and USDOE on national security.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.