



HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE STATE OF HAWAII

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

MARK B. GLICK
CHIEF ENERGY OFFICER

235 South Beretania Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804

Telephone: (808) 587-3807
Web: energy.hawaii.gov

Testimony of
MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEES ON
ENERGY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM
AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

Thursday, February 9, 2023
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Providing COMMENTS on
SB 781

RELATING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY.

Chairs DeCoite and McKelvey, Vice Chairs Wakai and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers comments on SB 781.

HSEO supports the intent to streamline the permitting of solar distributed energy resource systems and looks forward to working with county and state authorities having jurisdiction on methods to improve permitting processes, including facilitating the adoption of SolarAPP+ or a functionally equivalent online automated permitting platform.

HSEO understands SolarAPP+ has several appealing features, including its intended nation-wide availability¹ and its development by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, as well as some limitations, including at the moment, lacking the capability to handle the addition of batteries to existing systems (a target installation under Hawaiian Electric's Battery Bonus program). We understand that this is planned to be added as a feature of SolarAPP+ in the future.² It is possible that if Hawai'i jurisdictions were to use

¹ "Currently, 27 communities are using SolarAPP+, with over 10,270 permits issued [and] 59,350 kilowatts approved" https://solarapp.nrel.gov/adoption_at_a_glance, current as of 9/19/22.

² National Renewable Energy Laboratory. SolarAPP+ Pilot Analysis: Performance and Impact of Instant, Online Solar Permitting. 2022. <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy22osti/81603.pdf>

SolarAPP+, the urgency of upgrading the app to accommodate Hawai'i's needs could spur the development of the software more quickly. Another approach could be to create a requirement that is conditioned upon the availability of desired features.

It is important to ensure that Hawai'i's projects are not further delayed by diversion of time and resources from current and upcoming efforts of permitting agencies to improve processes and reduce backlogs.

HSEO recognizes that individual permitting agencies are already taking steps to improve the permitting for solar photovoltaic and battery installations, such as a recent statement that the City and County of Honolulu Department of Planning and Permitting has implemented artificial intelligence (bots) in its online permitting system to automate prescreen reviews of permit plans by checking for basic formatting prior to code review by plan examiners. Kauai County's Building Permit Processing Policy prioritizes permit reviews for renewable energy projects, as well.

HSEO defers to the authorities having jurisdiction on the potential for a self-certification process for solar distributed energy resource systems.

HSEO's strategy on renewable energy deployment will be to continue to explore cost- and time-efficient approaches, tools and financial resources (including grants) to support Hawai'i's urgent and groundbreaking efforts to enable abundant, locally-available solar energy to power Hawai'i's homes, communities, and vehicles.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.