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Testimony of
MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer

before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Friday, February 9, 2024
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 and Videoconference

Providing Comments on
SB 2997

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES.

Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Fukunaga, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers comments on SB 2997 that allows the Public Utilities Commission to convene community outreach workshops to aid electric utilities in the development and implementation of best practices regarding wildfires, requires electric utilities to design and operate in compliance with a risk-based wildfire protection plan approved by the Public Utilities Commission, shields electric utilities from civil liability for acts taken in accordance with a risk-based wildfire protection plan and failing to act in accordance with an item in the draft plan but removed by the Public Utilities Commission, and shields the State, Public Utilities Commission, and its agents from liability for actions taken in the performance of their duties with respect to risk-based wildfire protection plans.

HSEO appreciates the need for a measure that outlines a process for wildfire protection planning, the approval and implementation of plans, with provisions for how costs associated with planning and implementation can be recovered. However, HSEO prefers planning and mitigating against all-hazards. HSEO recently completed a FEMA Advance Assistance project that conducted a risk assessment for critical energy infrastructure on Oahu for all-hazards and has been selected for a FEMA Building

Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) planning grant to complete the same analysis for the rest of the state. While the objectives of the plans identified in SB 2997 go farther in analysis and mitigation actions for fire risk than HSEO's grants given resource constraints, HSEO supports a holistic approach which takes all-hazards into account to better support comprehensive solutions. HSEO also prefers a cost recovery mechanism that includes securitization as it can offer better overall outcomes for ratepayers such as found in HB 2407 and SB 3096.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.