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Testimony of
MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer

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

Thursday, March 14, 2024
3:45 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

In Support of
HB 2614, HD1

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) supports HB 2614, HD1, that requires government entities in the State that issue building permits to implement SolarAPP+ or a functionally equivalent online automated permitting platform by 1/1/2025. The measure also requires government entities in the State that issue building permits in areas served by an investor-owned electric utility to adopt a self-certification process for solar distributed energy resource systems that are not SolarAPP+ compatible.

HSEO notes that SolarAPP+ has several appealing features, including its development by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, nation-wide availability, significant improvements in capabilities since just last year, and partnerships with standards bodies, code councils, and at least one nationally recognized testing laboratory. But, HSEO appreciates the flexibility provided in the measure of the option to use a functionally equivalent online permitting platform.

HSEO appreciates the efforts underway by individual permitting agencies to improve the permitting for solar photovoltaic and battery installations and is working with the University of Hawai'i at Manoa on a strategy to dedicate personnel to augment those efforts. Importantly, HSEO understands that the SolarAPP+ requirement is compatible and complementary to those efforts to streamline permitting and renewable energy project approvals.

HSEO looks forward to working with the authorities having jurisdiction on Section 2 of the bill, which is consistent with existing statutory responsibilities of HSEO and of the Chief Energy Officer, including those set forth in Section 196-72 (d):

- (2) Identify, track, and report key performance measures and milestones related to the State's energy and decarbonization goals;
- (3) Provide technical assistance to state and county agencies to assess and implement projects and programs related to energy conservation and efficiency, renewable energy ... and related measures;

And also

- (15) Facilitate the efficient, expedited permitting of energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean transportation, and energy resiliency projects.

Regarding the self-certification section of the bill, HSEO notes the efficiency of the concept and looks forward to supporting the authorities having jurisdiction as they “establish a self-certification process” (page 4, lines 12-13) to allow residential and commercial on-site solar distributed energy resource systems to **begin** construction, with the understanding (based on discussions on a similar bill introduced last year) that final compliance review and approval will take place at the time of final inspection by the authority having jurisdiction (i.e. permitting agency).

HSEO recommends edits and additions for clarity. Regarding item (2) on page 5, lines 1-6, other testifiers previously pointed out that engineers and architects are not approved installers of systems. The following is a recommended re-wording of this item:

- (2) The [~~duly licensed architect, duly licensed engineer, duly licensed electrician, or duly licensed plumber, as applicable, who intends to install the solar distributed energy resource system~~] projects' relevant licensed professionals in their respective fields that the plans for installation of the system comply with all applicable codes and laws.

Also, to make it clear that although the self-certification processes described by the bill will enable an expedited start of construction, it is not expected that a permit would be closed, or certificate of occupancy issued, without completion of a final inspection. The following is provided for the committee's consideration for page 5, lines 16-19:

(c) If the requirements of subsection (a) are satisfied, the applicable government entity in the State that issues building permits shall issue the building permit number [~~and close the permit~~] within thirty days of submittal.

(d) Final inspections shall be required prior to permit closing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.