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SENATE COMMITTEES ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
& AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Tuesday, March 11, 2025 — 3:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative strongly supports HB 1020 HD 1, Relating to a Program to Characterize Carbon Sequestration Potential and Underground Water Resources Statewide.

Dear Chair Wakai, Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy and clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono strongly supports HB 1020 HD 1, which establishes a Carbon Sequestration and Underground Water Resource Characterization Program via slim hole bores and requires a related statewide environmental assessment.

Hawai'i needs all viable forms of renewable energy to meet the 100% renewable portfolio standard by 2045. New data underscores the widespread support among residents for this transition. Between October 2023 and January 2024, Ulupono Initiative partnered with Anthology Research to conduct a statewide public opinion survey on energy in Hawai'i involving 1,985 surveys across all four counties. With a margin of error +/- 2.21%, this is arguably the most extensive and comprehensive study on the topic to date. The findings are compelling.

A staggering 91% of respondents expressed their support for the expansion of renewable energy resources throughout the islands. Moreover, the importance of developing Hawai'i's own energy resources was emphasized across all counties by the residents. This resounding endorsement from the community validates the strong support for continued investment and advancement in renewable energy solutions to meet our collective energy goals.

This bill is a forward-looking initiative that prioritizes scientific research and environmental stewardship. By identifying geothermal and carbon sequestration resources, this measure supports Hawai'i's broader goals of achieving energy resilience and combating climate change. Resource characterization through slim-hole bores offers a minimally invasive method for

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gathering critical data, ensuring that these activities are conducted responsibly and with minimal environmental disruption. This approach reflects a commitment to balancing energy development with environmental protection.

The bill also emphasizes robust community engagement, which is essential for building trust and ensuring that local concerns and priorities are considered throughout the program. Engaging with counties, individuals, and civic organizations allows for the incorporation of valuable insights, ensuring the program aligns with community needs and aspirations. This commitment to collaboration can foster public support, create opportunities for education about renewable energy and carbon sequestration, and pave the way for sustainable resource management. Effective community engagement has been shown to enhance the success of similar initiatives by promoting transparency and inclusivity.

Finally, the legislation's provision for progress and final reports to the legislature, as well as making findings publicly accessible, highlights its dedication to accountability and knowledge-sharing. The use of mapping software and publicly available data ensures that the information gathered will be a resource for policymakers, researchers, and the public. This transparency will strengthen public confidence in the program and provide a foundation for informed decision-making. The proposed funding and staffing allocations are essential to make certain that the program is adequately supported, enabling Hawai'i to advance its renewable energy and sustainability goals effectively for the benefit of its residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Attachment

Beneath the Surface: Support for Geothermal Energy Emerges as Residents See Direct Benefits

For Hawai'i to provide secure, resilient and sustainable electricity for its residents and businesses, we need a diverse mix of renewable energy sources. Geothermal energy can play a greater, vital role in helping our state achieve our renewable and decarbonization goals.

Geothermal Benefits

RELIABLE

Unlike other renewables like solar and wind, geothermal provides firm power – meaning it can generate electricity consistently, day or night, regardless of weather conditions. This reliability makes it invaluable in ensuring a stable and continuous energy supply, especially since the electric grids serving each island are not interconnected.

SMALL FOOTPRINT

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a geothermal facility is much smaller in size than a fossil-fuel coal plant or a solar farm. For a land-constrained place like Hawai'i, the footprint of a structure significantly affects its community and residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Over its lifetime, a modern geothermal plant produces among the lowest greenhouse gas emissions of any energy source and typically uses less water compared to most other power generation technologies.

Geothermal in Hawai'i

With only one geothermal energy plant on Hawai'i Island, the state's geothermal potential remains largely untapped, highlighting the need for increased exploration, funding, and communication efforts to understand this resource. In addition, investing in locally produced geothermal energy can ensure that the economic benefits of this sustainable power source remain within the state, contributing to a more resilient and self-sufficient energy future.



Public Perception of Geothermal

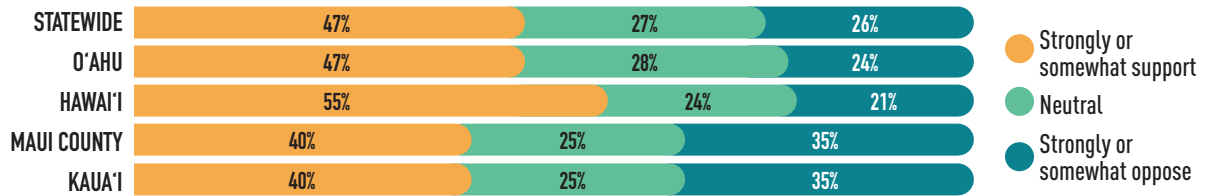


In 2023, Ulupono Initiative commissioned what is believed to be the most extensive and complete public opinion survey on the topic of energy in Hawai'i. The survey was designed to rank how residents perceive various forms of energy technologies, including geothermal.

Overall, 91% of respondents say they support the expansion of renewable energy resources in Hawai'i. Below are some highlights from the geothermal-specific survey questions.

QUESTION: *In general, how do you feel about a utility-scale geothermal power plant as a way to generate electricity on ...?*

- 47% of respondents say they strongly or somewhat support geothermal energy
- Hawai'i Island is the most supportive of utility-scale geothermal plant in their town



QUESTION: *How would you feel about a utility-scale geothermal power plant being built in your town/community if it meant your electricity bill would be, at least \$30/\$65/\$98 lower each month?*

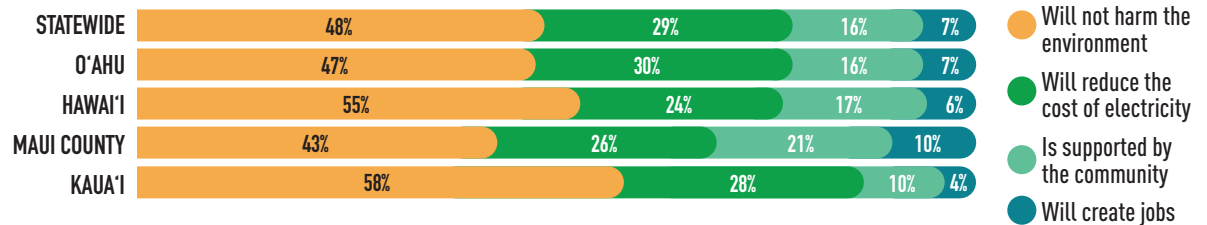
- Support for geothermal rises dramatically when potential electricity bill savings increase

SUPPORT PERCENTAGE INCREASE

	STATEWIDE	O'AHU	HAWAI'I	MAUI COUNTY	KAUA'I
\$30	+19%	+36%	+21%	+18%	+21%
\$65	+30%	+29%	+32%	+30%	+31%
\$98	+35%	+36%	+40%	+34%	+40%

QUESTION: *Which one of the following is most important to you in deciding whether to support a utility-scale geothermal plant in your town/community?*

- Environmental impact was the most important factor in support of geothermal



Resources

To learn more about Ulupono Initiative's Energy Survey and geothermal, see below:

Ulupono Initiative's Energy Survey

ulupono.com/project-list/statewide-energy-survey/



Scan QR code for link to survey results online.

Hawai'i State Energy Office

energy.hawaii.gov/what-we-do/energy-landscape/renewable-energy-resources/

U.S. Department of Energy

www.energy.gov/eere/geothermal/geothermal-basics