



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
February 7, 2017 at 9:30 a.m.

by
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HB 848 – RELATING TO ENERGY MODERNIZATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Chair Lee, Vice Chair Lowen, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports HB 848, Relating to Energy Modernization at the University of Hawaii. This bill exempts microgrids that promote and serve public higher education institutions from regulation as a public utility by the Public Utilities Commission and adds a definition for "microgrid".

Act 99, Session Laws of Hawaii 2015, established a goal for the University of Hawai'i to become net-zero, with respect to energy use, by producing as much renewable energy as may be needed to support UH campuses by January 1, 2035. This goal is consistent with the State's overall policy goal of achieving a 100 per cent renewable energy portfolio standard by 2045. Microgrids can play a key role in expanding the availability of clean energy to serve persons and buildings in the State that have so far been unable to enjoy its benefits.

Two key barriers to the development of microgrids in Hawai'i include: (1) existing statutes, ordinances, and rules that could prevent or have the effect of preventing the development of microgrids and (2) potential regulation of microgrids as public utilities by the Public Utilities Commission. Microgrids are expected to make the use of renewable energy more readily available to the University and other users.

HB 848 will encourage the facilitation, development and use of microgrids and renewable energy across the University System. This bill, as currently written, establishes initial parameters on the microgrid size and distance from the power source, striking a balance between the University's need to use renewable energy to help achieve a net-zero result and an allowable use of the electric utility's facilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.