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SENATE COMMITTEES ON WAYS & MEANS AND JUDICIARY
Thursday, March 28, 2024 — 9:45 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 2453 HD1 SD1, Relating to Water Infrastructure.

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Rhoads, 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, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono supports HB 2453 HD1 SD1, which authorizes the Governor or a state official with authorization from the Governor to transfer federal capitalization grant funds between the Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and the Drinking Water Treatment Revolving Fund (DWSRF), in accordance with title 40 Code of Federal Regulations section 35.3530(c).

The DOH currently administers these two low-interest loan programs for the improvement of public drinking water systems and wastewater treatment and distribution systems in Hawai'i. These loan programs are funded principally by capitalization grants provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

HB 2453 does not require any state funding. Rather, it provides the Governor, or a state official authorized by the Governor, the authority to transfer up to 33% of any year's capitalization grants between the CWSRF and the DWSRF, allowing the State to direct loan monies more efficiently towards the drinking water or wastewater infrastructure, according to community needs across the islands. This provides DOH and the State of Hawai'i with another tool to respond to a crisis, such as the Red Hill fuel spill or the Maui fires.

This measure would also bring the state program in line with the Code of Federal Regulations, which already allows this transfer authority.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i