HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL

KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

No. 26-261

RESOLUTION

URGING THE HAWAIIAN ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC., IN COORDINATION WITH THE HAWAIʻI PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM TO DISTRIBUTE PORTABLE GENERATORS AND PORTABLE BATTERY POWER STATIONS TO ELIGIBLE RESIDENTS BEFORE A STORM WHEN PROLONGED POWER OUTAGES ARE ANTICIPATED.

WHEREAS, the Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc. ("HECO"), the sole electric public utility company for the island of Oʻahu, supplies electricity to over 300,000 customers in the City and County of Honolulu via its islandwide electrical grid; and

WHEREAS, HECO's stated mission is to empower its communities and customers with "safe, reliable, resilient, affordable, clean energy"; and

WHEREAS, HECO is overseen by the Hawaiʻi Public Utilities Commission ("PUC"), which regulates all public utility companies in the State of Hawaiʻi ("State") and must approve any changes to a utility company's rates or practices; and

WHEREAS, the PUC's stated goal is to be "innovative, equitable, and engaged" in ensuring that the State's public utility consumers have access to essential utilities and services, delivered in safe, reliable, and resilient ways; and

WHEREAS, the recent widespread power outages following the Kona Low storms in March 2026 and Tropical Storm Lala in August 2026, which reportedly affected almost two-thirds of HECO's customers on Oʻahu and in some cases lasted for several days, highlighted potential vulnerabilities in HECO's infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, there have also been concerns that power outages unrelated to extreme weather have become more frequent on Oʻahu in recent years, raising larger questions about the underlying reliability and resilience of the electrical grid; and

WHEREAS, while disruptions in electrical service are an inconvenience for all affected communities, for individuals who depend on electrically-powered medical equipment such as oxygen concentrators or mechanical breathing devices, or for those who have special heating or cooling needs due to a medical condition, a power outage can quickly become a health- or life-threatening emergency; and

WHEREAS, for these vulnerable individuals, having access to a source of backup electricity during a power outage is essential; and

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WHEREAS, technological advances have expanded the range and availability of backup power sources to include not only conventional fuel-powered generators, but also power stations that rely on rechargeable batteries, which do not emit toxic exhaust and are suitable for indoor use; and

WHEREAS, in October 2025, HECO proposed a two-year pilot program that would help qualifying customers, including those with special medical needs, purchase backup power equipment such as a portable generator or a portable battery power station; and

WHEREAS, the HECO proposal, which has not yet been approved by the PUC, would limit assistance only to those customers who live in wildfire risk areas subject to preemptive power shutoffs, and would pay for the assistance program by adding a surcharge to the electricity bills of its O'ahu customers, who already pay some of the highest electricity rates in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the City Council believes there is a need to support access to emergency backup power beyond the limited geographic areas envisioned by the HECO proposal, especially for those individuals for whom a power outage would present a serious health or safety risk, and that expanded access to emergency backup power would provide an additional layer of resilience and peace of mind for some of the most vulnerable members of our community and their families; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu ("Council") that it urges the Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc., in coordination with the Hawai'i Public Utilities Commission and the Department of Emergency Management, to develop a program to distribute portable generators and portable battery power stations to eligible residents before a storm when prolonged power outages are anticipated; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council urges that the highest priority be given to those individuals for whom a prolonged power outage presents a serious risk to health or safety, such as those with special medical needs who depend on electrically-powered equipment, or individuals who have special heating or cooling requirements due to a medical condition; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council urges that additional backup power sources be stationed at designated community resilience hubs so that residents who are not able to safely operate generators at home, or who need additional assistance, have an alternative way to access electricity; and

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BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc.; the Chair of the Hawai'i Public Utilities Commission; the Mayor; the Managing Director; and the Director of Emergency Management.

INTRODUCED BY:

Tony Wa

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

NOV 9 2026

Honolulu, Hawai'i

Councilmembers

Report Title:
Portable Generator; Portable Battery Power Station; Backup Power; Electricity; Power Outage; Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc. ("HECO"); State Public Utilities Commission ("PUC"); Department of Emergency Management ("DEM")

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.