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SUGESTIONS FOR PARTICIPATING AT A PUBLIC HEARING

From time to time the Hawaii Public Utilities Commission (PUC or commission) will hold a public hearing to assist them in determining the best course of action with regards to a rate increase or some other request from a utility company. To assist affected ratepayers and the general public interested in participating in this process, the Consumer Advocate (DCA or Division) offers the following tips to ensure a pleasant and productive experience at a public hearing.

Where to Find Hearing Information: You can access information on monthly hearings from many sources. These include government notices in local newspapers, the DCA Web Site (www.dcca.hawaii.gov/dca), and the PUC Web Site (puc.hawaii.gov/).

Your Participation is Important: A public hearing is your opportunity to raise any concerns you might have that relate to the purpose for the hearing as set forth by the Commission. For example, if the hearing focuses on a company's request to increase your monthly bill, you will want to focus your comments on how you feel this will affect you and your community. Your input, whether as an individual, business, or community organization, assists the division in its efforts to represent ratepayers, and helps the commission make a more informed decision.

Preparing For the Hearing: Reading the hearing notice is a good way to acquaint yourself with some of the basic issues that will be raised during the public hearing. You also have the option of contacting the Division directly with your questions or referring to our web site.

Preparing Your Testimony: The Division highly recommends that you consider the following ideas to ensure that your comments are heard and fully considered.

- If appropriate, back up the issues you raise with personal experiences.
- Do not be afraid to raise or refer to the same issues that others have raised in their testimony, this adds emphasis.
- Put your testimony or comments in writing. It does not matter whether your testimony is hand or type written, but a written document ensures that your comments will become part of the record. (You may wish to use the "Testimony Template" available on the DCA web site.)
- If possible, bring five (5) additional copies of your testimony to the public hearing. One copy will go to each commissioner (3), one copy to their attorney, and one copy to DCA. Please write DCA in the upper right hand corner of this copy. You should turn copies of your testimony in at the information table when you sign up to testify.

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- You are more than welcome to read your testimony at the hearing when called upon to speak. Should your testimony be lengthy (exceeding three or four pages), it is recommended that you paraphrase your comments to allow sufficient time for others to offer their comments. Also, speak slowly and clearly.

Arrive Early: Arriving at the hearing early will allow you time to find a seat and hear any instructions that the Commission might have at the beginning of the hearing. For this reason, you should plan to arrive at the hearing 10 to 15 minutes before it begins.

Sign In If You Are Going to Testify: Upon arrival at the hearing, report to the information table and sign up to testify or offer comments to the Commission. Individuals are usually called in the order that they have signed up to testify.