

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMISSION
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR

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March 4, 2024

The Honorable Rick Blangiardi, Mayor
530 South King Street, Room 300
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

AND

The Honorable Tommy Waters,
Chair and Presiding Officer
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Mayor Blangiardi, Council Chair Waters, and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: Climate Change and Social Equity - Guidance Document Update

Pursuant to the Revised Charter of Honolulu ("RCH") Section 6-107(h), the City and County of Honolulu (City) Climate Change Commission (Commission) is charged with gathering the latest science and information on climate change impacts on Hawaii. The Commission provides advice and recommendations to the Mayor, City Council, and executive departments as they look to draft policy and engage in planning for future climate scenarios as well as reduce Honolulu's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions.

The Commission initially adopted a Climate Change and Social Equity guidance document on December 8, 2020, and subsequently updated the guidance on July 29, 2022. Additionally, the Commissioners then established and signed an Equity Pledge in January 2023. This communication formally transmits both the updated guidance and the Commission's Equity Pledge.

Climate change is a cross-cutting threat that is exposing weaknesses in all societal systems. All areas of the community will be impacted, including but not limited to education, energy, employment, healthcare, housing, mobility, transportation, and public spaces. The lack of meaningful citizen engagement among potentially affected groups in the decision-making process may result in a "double injustice," where disadvantaged groups who contributed the least to global carbon emissions are simultaneously excluded from the benefits of climate adaptation and mitigation policies and resources.

For example, initiatives promoting renewable energy (a climate mitigation measure) have the potential to benefit high-income households but not low-income households, if additional specific support is not provided. Given the uncertainty of federal funding for disasters and

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climate change, as well as the uninsurance or underinsurance of property nationwide, the inequality gap is likely to widen without immediate implementation of intentionally equitable, well-planned, and well-funded climate adaptation and mitigation projects. As such, the Commission makes the following recommendations for the City (please see attachment for additional details):

Based on research, the Commission recommends the following:

1. **Center Social Equity in All City Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plans.** Analyze the distributional impacts of all climate policies and articulate how such policies will benefit all. In coordination with the City's Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency (CCSR) Climate Resilience and Equity Program, continue to improve facilitating access, agency, and advocacy with communities to increase participation and representation in programs, projects, and policies throughout and between City initiatives, and provide equity training for City departments.
2. **Identify frontline communities that potentially have, are, or will be experiencing chronic climate or socioeconomic stressors that could worsen the impact of climate change-induced shocks.** Some frontline communities may include communities that reside or work in high-risk areas. Collect comprehensive data that demonstrates the conditions that create or exacerbate vulnerabilities and can identify communities of concern.
3. **Review O'ahu's Ola Resilience Strategy to determine areas that include equity components and where additional focus on equity is needed** using the Resolution 20-206 definition of "Frontline Communities" to include "people with disabilities".
4. **Collaborate with communities to share resources and information about community risks, needs, and abilities.**
5. **Expand accessibility options and provide information** in the preferred format and languages of the island's diverse communities.
6. **Equity pledge that has been signed by all members of the Climate Change.** We will hold in-person meetings in different areas of the island of O'ahu so that a diversity of communities can participate; integrate social equity considerations into all our publications; and provide diverse platforms and opportunities to prioritize communities/groups that have historically been marginalized or underrepresented.

The Commission acknowledges that climate change is still viewed as primarily an environmental issue, and thus needs to be reframed as a human issue that is a core challenge for sustainable development with powerful economic, social, and environmental implications. The Commission acknowledges the need to understand the different ways that people are vulnerable to the consequences of climate change events by their geographic locations,

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livelihoods, asset holdings, historical contexts, and social positioning. If you have any questions, please contact us at ccc@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,



Rosanna 'Anolani Alegado, Ph.D.
Chair



Victoria Keener, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair

Attachments: Climate Change and Social Equity – Guidance Document
Climate Change Commission Pledge Towards Equity