



# Representation of Bengkulu Provincial DPRD Members in Supporting the Government's "Help the People" Policy

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## Abstract

Regional legislative bodies (DPRD) play a strategic yet underexamined role in ensuring welfare-oriented policies genuinely benefit the public. This study analyzes the representation of Bengkulu Provincial DPRD members in supporting the "Bantu Rakyat" policy, addressing a gap in existing literature that examines DPRD functions generically without linking them to specific pro-people programs at the provincial level. Employing Hanna Pitkin's (1967) Theory of Representation encompassing formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive dimensions as its analytical framework, this study uses a qualitative library research method supplemented by purposive in-depth interviews with members of Commission I of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD. Findings reveal that all four representational dimensions are present, though with varying effectiveness. Formalistic representation is evident in active APBD deliberation and policy approval; descriptive representation emerges through members' diverse socioeconomic backgrounds enabling articulation of constituents' needs; symbolic representation appears in public communications that strengthen public trust. Most critically, substantive representation the highest indicator of representational quality is reflected in supervisory activities including field visits, evaluation sessions, and recommendations to improve benefit distribution transparency, though constrained by limited inter-agency coordination and institutional capacity. This study contributes theoretically by applying Pitkin's framework to a provincial legislative context in Indonesia, and practically by providing a diagnostic basis for strengthening the DPRD's substantive role in welfare policy delivery.

**Keywords:** Representation, DPRD, Public Policy, Supporting The Government

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## INTRODUCTION

Public policies oriented towards community welfare are one of the main indicators of successful regional government. Government programs that carry the spirit of “Help the People” are a manifestation of the state's commitment to improving social protection, strengthening the community's economy, and ensuring access to basic services. At the local level, the success of these policies is determined not only by the executive government, but also by the role of local legislative bodies in supporting, guiding, and overseeing their implementation (Hm & Dewi, 2019). Therefore, synergy between local governments and Regional Representative Councils (DPRD) is an important factor in ensuring that policies truly have an impact on the community (Sari & Aurelia, 2025).

In Indonesia's regional government system, the Regional Representative Council (DPRD) holds a strategic position as a representative body that performs legislative, budgetary, and supervisory functions as stipulated in Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government. These functions make the DPRD not only a partner of the regional government, but also a political representation of the community in the region (Ria et al., 2025). In the context of the “Help the People” policy in Bengkulu Province, the Regional Representative Council plays a role in discussing and approving budgets, supervising program implementation, and channeling community aspirations so that the policy is on target and in line with public needs (Di et al., 2024).



Figure 1. Members of the Bengkulu Provincial Legislative Council for the 2024-2029 term

As a representative body, the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) does not merely perform administrative functions, but also bears political responsibility to fight for the interests of the people it represents (Pratama et al., 2025). Political representation is an important aspect in assessing the quality of the DPRD's role. The concept of representation put forward by Hanna Pitkin (1967) explains that representation is not only formal through the mandate of general elections, but also includes descriptive, symbolic, and substantive dimensions (Rene et al., 2018). This means that DPRD members are expected not only to have electoral legitimacy, but also to be able to deliver policies that truly reflect and fight for the interests of the people in a tangible way.

However, in practice, DPRD support for pro-people policies often faces various challenges, such as internal political dynamics, limited oversight capacity, and potential differences in interests between the executive and legislative branches (Wahyudiono, 2025). In addition, public perception of the DPRD's performance also affects the legitimacy of its representation. Therefore, it is important to examine the extent to which members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD carry out their representative functions in supporting the “Help the People” policy, as well as what form of

representation is most dominant in this practice. Although numerous studies have been conducted on the role of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in regional policy, there remains a significant research gap that needs to be addressed. Previous studies, such as those by Wahyudiono (2025), Di, Manado, and Pinangkaan (2024), as well as Hm and Dewi (2019) tend to discuss the functions of the DPRD in general terms whether in the domains of legislation, budgeting, or oversight without specifically linking them to pro-people policy programs such as "Bantu Rakyat" at the provincial level. This situation creates a clear analytical gap between the institutional functions of the DPRD and the concrete impacts that should result for the community. On the other hand, although Rene et al. (2018) have comprehensively established the theoretical foundation of Pitkin's representation framework, no study has yet applied this framework empirically to evaluate the DPRD's representational practices within the context of specific local policies, particularly in Bengkulu Province. This indicates an unbridged gap between representation theory and local legislative practice.

Furthermore, studies addressing dimensions of substantive representation, such as those by Pratama et al. (2025) and Ria et al. (2025), remain confined to the normative-legal level, thus, they have not yet been able to answer empirical questions regarding whether the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) has truly moved beyond formal representation toward a form of representation that genuinely advocates for the people's interests in the context of regional welfare programs. Collectively, these three gaps form the basis for both the urgency and the novelty of this study, which applies Pitkin's representational framework to the practices of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD in supporting the "Bantu Rakyat" policy an approach never previously undertaken by prior research.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to provide a comprehensive overview of the representation of members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD in supporting the "Bantu Rakyat" policy based on Hanna Pitkin's Representation Theory framework. This approach was carried out through a review of various scientific sources, official documents, and relevant policy references to obtain a systematic and academically-based analysis. Through this literature study approach, it is hoped that it can be determined more objectively whether the representation carried out by members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD in supporting the "Help the People" policy is predominantly formal and symbolic, or has reached the stage of substantive representation that truly fights for the interests of the community in a real way.

## METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature review approach (library research). This approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the representation of members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD in supporting the "Bantu Rakyat" policy based on conceptual studies and empirical findings that have been published. Literature studies allow researchers to examine various theoretical perspectives and relevant secondary data without conducting direct data collection in the field (Adlini et al., 2022).

In order to strengthen the analysis of the representation of members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD in supporting the government's "Help the People" policy, this study purposively selected key informants from Commission I of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD. This selection was based on the relevance of the duties and authorities of Commission I, which is in charge of law and governance and has a strategic supervisory function over the implementation of local government policies.



In addition to considerations of relevance and authority, Commission I of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD also expressed its willingness to serve as an informant in this study. This willingness demonstrates institutional support for the development of academic studies, while also opening up space for clarification and in-depth analysis related to the implementation of representative functions in supporting the “Help the People” policy.

As a dean's office that performs legislative, budgetary, and supervisory functions, Commission I plays an important role in ensuring that the “Help the People” policy is implemented in accordance with the principles of accountability and public interest. In the context of budget oversight, Commission I oversees the preparation of the Budget Implementation Document (DPA) to ensure that it is in line with the joint agreement of the local government and does not deviate from public welfare priorities. This is part of the substantive representation of DPRD members in fighting for the interests of the people through budgetary policies (Firdaus & Si, 2014).

In addition, Commission I also evaluated policy implementation by demanding transparency in budget use and monitoring the efficiency of civil servant official travel (SPPD) within the Council Secretariat. This oversight reflects formalistic and substantive representation efforts, whereby DPRD members carry out their institutional mandate while ensuring that policies truly benefit the community (Ayuh & Lendriyono, 2024).

In supporting the implementation of the “Help the People” policy, Commission I has established partnerships with relevant agencies such as BKPSDM and the Regional Liaison Agency to encourage the optimization of government performance. This commission also monitors government issues, including civil servant transfer policies within the Bengkulu Provincial Government, as the stability and professionalism of the civil service affects the effectiveness of government program implementation. With these authorities, Commission I is considered to have the relevant capacity, authority, and understanding of regional policy dynamics, making it an appropriate source of information in analyzing how members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD represent the interests of the community in supporting the “Bantu Rakyat” policy.

The research data was obtained through a search of various secondary sources, such as scientific journals, academic books, research reports, official local government documents, DPRD meeting minutes, laws and regulations, and online media reports related to the “Bantu Rakyat” policy and the role of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD. These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and connection to the research focus, thereby supporting a comprehensive and well-referenced analysis of political representation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on a literature review of regional policy documents, DPRD meeting minutes, laws and regulations, as well as various academic studies and media reports, the representation of Bengkulu Provincial DPRD members in supporting the “Bantu Rakyat” policy can be analyzed through four dimensions of representation according to Hanna Pitkin, namely formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. This is also linked to field data from interviews with members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD.





Figure 2. Interview with Members of the Bengkulu Provincial Legislative Council

It was found that in terms of formalistic representation, the DPRD's support was evident in the implementation of its legislative and budgeting functions. A number of documents discussing the APBD showed the DPRD's involvement in approving budget allocations related to social protection programs, community economic assistance, and improvements to basic services. Approval of these budget policies reflects the formal legitimacy of the DPRD as an institution with constitutional authority to determine regional policy direction. In addition, the mechanisms of plenary meetings and discussions at the commission level show that, procedurally, the DPRD has carried out its mandate in accordance with the provisions of the law.

In terms of descriptive representation, the study shows that the composition of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD members comes from various electoral backgrounds and diverse socioeconomic conditions. Theoretically, this diversity allows for the representation of the aspirations of various sectors of society, such as farmers, fishermen, small business owners, and low-income communities. In a number of reports on recess activities and the submission of aspirations, it can be seen that the issues raised by council members are directly related to the basic needs of the community, such as business capital assistance, agricultural subsidies, and improvements to village infrastructure. Furthermore, in terms of symbolic representation, the DPRD acts as a symbol of support for the community through its statements of support for the "Help the People" policy and its participation in various public forums. Media reports show that DPRD members often express their commitment to ensuring that policies are on target. Their presence at social events and community dialogue forums reinforces the image of the DPRD as representatives of the people who are responsive to public needs (Putra et al., 2025). This dimension confirms that public perception of the DPRD is greatly influenced by political communication and attitudes displayed in the public sphere.



Figure 3. Interview with a member of the Bengkulu Provincial Legislative Council

In terms of substantive representation, the literature review shows that the role of the DPRD is not limited to approving budgets, but also includes overseeing policy implementation. Several evaluation documents and oversight reports indicate that the DPRD has made recommendations for improving the aid distribution mechanism to make it more transparent and targeted. This demonstrates the DPRD's efforts to ensure that the “Bantu Rakyat” policy truly provides tangible benefits to the community. However, a number of studies also note that the effectiveness of oversight is still influenced by factors such as inter-agency coordination and institutional capacity.



Figure 4. Interview with members of the Bengkulu Provincial Legislative Council

Based on the results of research obtained through literature studies and field data in the form of interviews with members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD, the representation of DPRD members in supporting the “Bantu Rakyat” policy can be analyzed through four dimensions of representation proposed by Hanna Pitkin, namely formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation. These four dimensions provide an analytical framework for understanding how the role of the DPRD is not only limited to its formal authority as a regional legislative body, but also reflects a broader process of representation in fighting for the interests of the community. The results of the study show that the practice of representation by the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD in supporting the “Bantu Rakyat” policy has reflected these four dimensions, although each dimension has a different level of emphasis in practice.

In terms of formalistic representation, the findings show that the DPRD carries out its role through institutional mechanisms that are regulated in the regional government system. Based on interviews with members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD, it is known that support for the “Bantu Rakyat” policy is realized through the involvement of the DPRD in the process of discussing and approving regional policies, particularly those related to programs oriented towards community welfare. In this process, the DPRD has the authority to discuss and approve the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD), including budget allocations for social assistance programs, community economic empowerment, and improvements in public services (A. Ismail et al., 2025).

Several informants said that in budget discussions, DPRD members try to make sure that programs put together by local governments can directly benefit the community, especially economically vulnerable groups. This shows that formally, the DPRD carries out its legislative and budgeting functions as a way to support policies that focus on the interests of the people. This process is carried out through various stages of discussion, such as commission meetings, budget committee meetings, and plenary meetings, which serve as the official decision-making forum. Thus, the formalistic dimension of DPRD representation can be seen in the institutional legitimacy of the DPRD to determine the direction of regional policy through processes that are regulated in legislation.

In terms of descriptive representation, the results of the study show that the diversity of the backgrounds of the members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD is one of the factors that enables the representation of various community interests in the policy-making process. DPRD members come from various electoral districts with different socioeconomic conditions, so they have diverse experiences and understandings of the issues faced by the communities in their respective regions. Based on the interview results, several informants said that the aspirations of the community that they brought to the DPRD forum were mostly obtained through recess activities and direct meetings with the community in their electoral districts. Recess activities are an important mechanism in the representation process because through these activities, DPRD members can directly listen to the needs and complaints of the community (M. Ismail, 2023). The aspirations that emerged during these activities were generally related to the basic needs of the community, such as support for the agricultural sector, assistance for small and medium-sized businesses, and the development of infrastructure that supports community economic activities. These findings indicate that the social background and closeness of DPRD members to the community in their constituencies play a role in shaping their sensitivity to community needs.

However, the results of the study also show that the diversity of DPRD members' backgrounds does not automatically guarantee that all community aspirations can be realized in the form of policies. This is due to various factors, such as limited regional budgets, local government development priorities, and political dynamics in the decision-making process in the legislative body. Therefore, the dimension of descriptive representation needs to be supported by a strong policy commitment so that the aspirations of the community conveyed by DPRD members can be truly accommodated in public policy. Furthermore, in terms of symbolic representation, the results of the study show that DPRD members strive to build an image as representatives of the people who side with the interests of the community through various forms of political communication. Based on the interview results, informants stated that support for the "Help the People" policy was not only demonstrated through the decision-making process in the legislative body, but also through public statements, participation in social activities, and involvement in various dialogue forums with the community. Through these various activities, DPRD members strive to demonstrate their commitment to overseeing policies that are oriented towards the welfare of the community. In this context, the symbolic dimension plays a role in shaping public perception of the DPRD as an institution that represents the interests of the people. The presence of DPRD members in various community activities is also a way to strengthen the relationship between representatives and constituents. Thus, symbolic representation is not only related to formal actions in the policy process, but also to how DPRD members build public trust through their attitudes and communication in the public sphere.

However, the results of the study also show that symbolic legitimacy is highly dependent on consistency between the statements made by DPRD members and their actual actions in the policy process. If support for policies that favor the people is only conveyed in the form of statements without being followed by concrete efforts to oversee policy implementation, then the symbolic dimension has the potential to become mere political rhetoric. Therefore, it is important for DPRD members to maintain consistency between the commitments they convey to the public and the actions they take in carrying out their legislative functions. In terms of substantive representation, the results of the study show that DPRD members not only play a role in the policy approval process, but also in overseeing the implementation of these policies so that they can provide tangible benefits to the community. Based on the interview results, informants said that the DPRD conducted various forms of oversight of the implementation of the "Bantu Rakyat" policy, including through evaluation meetings with local governments, field visits, and the submission of recommendations for improvements to the implementation of assistance programs for the community. Several informants also said that the DPRD strives to ensure that assistance provided to the community is



distributed appropriately and in accordance with the needs of the community in the region. This is done by requesting program implementation reports from local governments and conducting direct checks on program implementation in the field. This shows that the supervisory function of the DPRD is an important instrument in ensuring the effectiveness of policies aimed at improving community welfare.

However, the results of the study also show that the DPRD still faces several challenges in carrying out its supervisory function. One of the challenges faced is the limited coordination between the DPRD and the local government in the policy implementation process. In addition, the political dynamics that occur in the legislative body can also affect the effectiveness of oversight of public policy. This condition shows that substantive representation does not only depend on the commitment of individual DPRD members, but is also influenced by institutional factors and political dynamics that occur in the local government system. Overall, the results of this study show that the representation of Bengkulu Provincial DPRD members in supporting the “Bantu Rakyat” policy is not only reflected in the formal authority of the legislative body, but also in the efforts of council members to absorb the aspirations of the community, build communication with the public, and oversee the implementation of policies so that they can provide tangible benefits to the community. The four dimensions of representation proposed by Hanna Pitkin show that the quality of representation is not only determined by formal legitimacy as representatives of the people, but also by the ability of DPRD members to integrate their roles as absorbers of aspirations, symbols of community representation, and guardians of public policy.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research obtained through literature studies and interviews with members of the Bengkulu Provincial DPRD, it can be concluded that the representation of DPRD members in supporting the “Help the People” policy is reflected through four dimensions of representation according to Hanna Pitkin, namely formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation. These four dimensions show that the role of the DPRD as a representative institution is not only limited to formal authority in the decision-making process, but also includes efforts to absorb the aspirations of the community, build political communication with the public, and oversee the implementation of policies oriented towards the welfare of the community.

In the formalistic dimension, the DPRD demonstrates its role through involvement in the discussion and approval of regional policies, particularly in the budgeting process related to social assistance and protection programs for the community. Meanwhile, the descriptive dimension can be seen from the diversity of the DPRD members' backgrounds, who come from various electoral districts, thus enabling the representation of various community interests in the policy-making process. In the symbolic dimension, DPRD members strive to build an image as representatives of the people who side with the community through public communication, participation in social activities, and statements of support for policies oriented towards the interests of the people. In the substantive dimension, the DPRD carries out its supervisory function over policy implementation by providing input and recommendations to the regional government so that the programs carried out can be more effective and on target. Overall, this study shows that the quality of representation of Bengkulu Provincial DPRD members in supporting the “Bantu Rakyat” policy is not only determined by formal legitimacy as a regional legislative body, but also by consistency in actions to fight for the interests of the community. Effective representation requires integration between



institutional authority, the ability to absorb community aspirations, political communication that builds public trust, and continuous monitoring of policy implementation. Thus, the success of the “Bantu Rakyat” policy is greatly influenced by the extent to which the DPRD is able to comprehensively carry out its representative function in fighting for the welfare of the community

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