WHEREAS, students in Hawaii benefit from a variety of learning experiences; and

WHEREAS, public schools offer a wide array of options for students and families, including career academies; performing-arts programs; farm-to-school programs; and courses in science, technology, engineering, and math; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Education has prioritized a focus on individual school design, which positions each school to provide a unique approach to learning opportunities; and

WHEREAS, despite these educational options within the public schools, families often report frustration with the current system of geographic exceptions, based on a perception that parents with means and connections are able to gain an unfair advantage through the process for their children; and

WHEREAS, additional information is needed to provide greater transparency and display the current and historical use of geographic exceptions, categorized by geography, family demographics, and reasons provided for applications being denied or approved; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2019, the Senate concurring, that the State Auditor is requested to perform an audit of the Department of Education's practices related to the use of geographic exceptions; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the audit include the following:

(1) An analysis of the historical use of geographic exceptions that reaches back at least 10 years from the present school year;

(2) Disaggregated data categorized by schools that gained and lost students; family demographics, such as ethnicity; special education services needed; and the reasons provided for applications that were approved or denied;

(3) A compilation of the dates of submission for geographic exceptions by parents with receipt by school, examining how many days prior to or after the March 1 deadline submissions were received, the number of days within which schools needed to respond, and whether a written appeal was completed or accepted;

(4) How other states administer geographic exception programs; and

(5) A report on equity implications based on the information contained in the audit; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Auditor is requested to submit a report of the Auditor's findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than 20 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2020; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the State Auditor, Chair of the Board of Education, and Superintendent of Education.