A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that plastic marine debris is fouling Hawaii’s iconic beaches and the ocean, harming recreation and the State’s largest industry: tourism. Most of this debris comes not from Hawaii, but from around the world, transported by ocean currents and accumulated in the State from the North Pacific Gyre, also known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Plastic marine debris is essentially indestructible. It does not go away over time but breaks down into smaller and smaller fragments, especially on beaches where it is exposed to sunlight and wave action. Both larger and smaller pieces of plastic marine debris have significant negative impacts on the environment and contribute to the potential death of marine animals and bird populations through ingestion. The smaller fragments, referred to as microplastics (less than five millimeters, or about the size of a sesame seed and smaller), are much more difficult to remove. Therefore, it is important,
where feasible, to remove plastic marine debris before it breaks down into smaller fragments.

Harmful substances attached to plastic marine debris pose a risk to the marine environment and humans. Persistent bioaccumulative and toxic ("PBT") chemicals or substances resist degradation and are biomagnified up the food web, leading to toxic effects. This poisonous plastic food chain impacts many ocean species, including birds, whales, turtles, seals, corals, small organisms, the fish that form the foundation of the local fishing industry, and potentially even humans that eat fish. It is estimated that by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish by weight in the world's oceans.

The legislature further finds that plastic marine debris is creating unsanitary conditions and public nuisances and that removal of plastic marine debris from beaches is critical to Hawaii's economy and environment. However, the legislature finds that removal of plastic marine debris has been hampered by disagreement over which agencies have responsibility and jurisdiction. Whichever agencies or groups remove the plastic marine debris, specialized equipment will be needed to remove the debris effectively and efficiently from beaches and
shorelines. Funding is needed for research and development of equipment that can most effectively and efficiently remove the debris.

The purpose of this Act is to enhance Hawaii's environment and economy by appropriating funds for the University of Hawaii water resources research center to research and develop specialized equipment for effectively and efficiently removing plastic marine debris from beaches and shorelines. For purposes of this Act, "plastic marine debris" means any discarded or abandoned plastic found on any shore, beach, or any beach right-of-way.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for the University of Hawaii water resources research center to research and develop specialized equipment for effectively and efficiently removing plastic marine debris from beaches and shorelines. The University of Hawaii water resources research center may contract with other entities as needed.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the University of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.
SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.

INTRODUCED BY:

[Signatures]
Report Title:
Plastic Marine Debris; University of Hawaii; Appropriation

Description:
Appropriates funds for research and development of specialized equipment for effectively and efficiently removing plastic marine debris from beaches and shorelines.

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