SENATE RESOLUTION

ESTABLISHING THE SENATE SPECIAL INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE ON COVID-19.

WHEREAS, on March 18, 2020, the President of the Senate established the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 to review state departmental plans and procedures to address the threat of the Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19, pandemic; assess whether those plans and procedures were properly and timely implemented to safeguard public health and safety; and report its findings to the Senate; and

WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor David Ige has issued stay-at-home orders to safeguard the public's health; and

WHEREAS, as a result of these stay-at-home orders, the number of visitors arriving in Hawaii has dropped from approximately thirty thousand daily visitors to approximately three hundred daily visitors; and

WHEREAS, Governor Ige's stay-at-home orders, coupled with the drastic decline in visitors arriving in Hawaii, has caused the closure of many businesses throughout the State, including hotels and restaurants; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused Hawaii's unemployment rate to reach thirty-five per cent, one of the highest unemployment rates in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the high volume of unemployment insurance claims resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed the ability of the State to issue timely payments, leaving some families without any sources of income; and

WHEREAS, to perform its duties, the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 held numerous meetings, all of which were live-streamed by Olelo, to gather information from various
members of Governor Ige's administration and other relevant individuals; and

WHEREAS, members of the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 have received thousands of email messages and telephone calls from residents expressing concerns regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including job losses; and

WHEREAS, the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 proposed to members of Governor Ige's administration and the Incident Commander, Major General Kenneth Hara, numerous ways to ensure the protection of the health, well-being, and finances of Hawaii's residents; and

WHEREAS, by May 11, 2020, the United States had confirmed more than one million three hundred thousand COVID-19 cases and eighty thousand COVID-19-related deaths; and

WHEREAS, nevertheless, many states, including Hawaii, have begun to allow businesses to reopen; and

WHEREAS, allowing businesses to reopen and tourists to continue to arrive in Hawaii during the COVID-19 pandemic increases the risk of a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the State, further endangering the State's economy and the health of its residents; and

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing period of economic recovery, coordination between the State and counties is crucial to safeguard the public health; and

WHEREAS, the State is planning for Hawaii's economic recovery and will be expending federal and state COVID-19 relief funds in accordance with those plans; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2020, that the Senate Special Investigating Committee on COVID-19 is established pursuant to chapter 21, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and Rules 13 and 25 of the Rules of the Senate, and may operate during the 2020 interim to:
(1) Assess and advise the Senate regarding the State of Hawaii's COVID-19 plans and procedures;

(2) Confirm the development of state and county departmental plans and procedures;

(3) Review and assess current state and county departmental plans and procedures;

(4) Review and assess whether state and county departmental plans and procedures are properly and timely implemented to safeguard public health and safety;

(5) Review, assess, and monitor the State's expenditure of federal and state COVID-19 relief funds;

(6) Communicate and disseminate information obtained therefrom; and

(7) Issue subpoenas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the current chair and members of the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 shall also serve on the Senate Special Investigating Committee on COVID-19 in their respective capacities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate Special Investigating Committee on COVID-19 has every power and function allowed to an investigating committee by law, including without limitation the power to:

(1) Adopt rules for the conduct of its proceedings;

(2) Issue subpoenas requiring the attendance and testimony of witnesses and subpoenas duces tecum requiring the production of books, documents, records, papers, or other evidence in any matter pending before the investigating committee;
(3) Hold hearings appropriate for the performance of its duties, at times and places as the investigating committee determines;

(4) Administer oaths and affirmations to witnesses at hearings of the investigating committee;

(5) Report or certify instances of contempt as provided in section 21-14, Hawaii Revised Statutes;

(6) Determine the means by which a record shall be made of its proceedings in which testimony or other evidence is demanded or adduced;

(7) Provide for the submission, by a witness's own counsel and counsel for another individual or entity about whom the witness has devoted substantial or important portions of the witness's testimony, of written questions to be asked of the witness by the chair; and

(8) Exercise all other powers specified under chapter 21, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and the Rules of the Senate, with respect to an investigating committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the President of the Senate may from time to time refer for investigation specific matters that are within the scope of the Senate Special Investigating Committee on COVID-19's jurisdiction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate Special Investigating Committee on COVID-19 submit its written findings and recommendations to the Senate prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2021 and cease to exist upon the adjournment sine die of the Regular Session of 2021 unless extended; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor; Director of Health; Director of Transportation; Director of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; Adjutant General; Attorney General;
Mayor and county council Chair of each county; and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Hawaii Tourism Authority.