
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO ESTABLISH A KONA
AREA AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURE,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND HOUSING.

1 WHEREAS, a thriving and sustainable agriculture industry
2 serves as a critical component of Hawaii County's rural
3 lifestyle, character, and economy by producing food, fiber,
4 energy, and ornamentals for local consumption and export; and
5

6 WHEREAS, Hawaii island agriculture will continue to be a
7 stabilizing foundation of the local economy for the foreseeable
8 future; and
9

10 WHEREAS, agriculture exports to outer island and the North
11 American and Asia continents provide a critical infusion of
12 money originating off-island; and
13

14 WHEREAS, the agriculture industry on the island of Hawaii
15 would greatly benefit from the availability of services that are
16 not currently being provided, such as improving the food
17 security by encouraging the consumption of locally produced
18 agricultural goods, developing county provided services to the
19 agriculture producers or processors at economically viable
20 rates, and other programs to encourage and more fully develop
21 this important industry on Hawaii island; and
22

23 WHEREAS, the Kona area provides a plethora of singular
24 ventures that can improve the agriculture, economic development,
25 and housing opportunities by working together with state and
26 county agencies; and
27

28 WHEREAS, the construction of the Keahole Agricultural Park
29 was intended to strengthen diversified agriculture through a
30 plan that consolidates and concentrates agricultural activities
31 in a centralized location for the purpose of improving
32 production and distribution; and
33

34 WHEREAS, the one hundred seventy-nine acre Keahole
35 Agricultural Park is in consonance with state policy and



1 complements the existing rural environment, provides employment,
2 and stimulates the agricultural economy in the area; and

3
4 WHEREAS, due to constraints in water availability, the
5 agricultural park has been implemented in phases and one
6 hundred-plus acres of state-owned land immediately mauka of the
7 agricultural park remain undeveloped and unproductive; and

8
9 WHEREAS, the close proximity of the Palamanui Campus of
10 Hawaii Community College to the Keahole Agriculture Park offers
11 opportunities for courses in landscape agriculture and
12 engineering; and

13
14 WHEREAS, energy and ocean-related research, education, and
15 commercial aquaculture is centered at the Natural Energy of
16 Hawaii Authority (NELHA) on three hundred twenty-two acres at
17 Keahole Point and NELHA provides an opportunity to expand
18 production of fresh aquaculture food products, promote marketing
19 of locally grown aquaculture products, provide stable cash flow
20 for aquaculture farmers, and create a varied and large market
21 for local aquaculture; and

22
23 WHEREAS, currently, the County of Hawaii hauls its west
24 side green waste to Hilo for processing. Instead, these
25 nutrient rich waste products can be mixed with West Hawaii's
26 abundant green waste to produce a nitrogen-rich and valuable
27 compost for agricultural park farmers, who struggle to operate
28 on volcanic lands; and

29
30 WHEREAS, for the last decade, the Kealakehe Wastewater
31 Treatment Plant treats and disposes of sewage collected from the
32 North Kona Sewerage system, which extends across the greater
33 Kailua-Kona region. Current flows, rich in nitrogen and
34 phosphorus, to the plant are approximately 1.8 million gallons
35 per day migrating through groundwater and delivered directly
36 above Honokohau Harbor and through the adjacent porous
37 shorelines, thereby resulting in West Hawaii's coastal waters
38 being rated as impaired by the Department of Health. Treating
39 and reusing the water to irrigate the Keahole Agricultural Park,
40 NELHA, and resorts and homes in between the two locations can
41 reduce the demand for freshwater which will help relieve high
42 demand on high elevation wells and reduce irrigation costs; and



1
2 WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation's Keahole Airport
3 has its own wastewater treatment plant that produces an excess
4 of recycled water to irrigate its airport facilities and may
5 also be usable to irrigate neighboring state facilities,
6 including the Keahole Agricultural Park; and
7

8 WHEREAS, a 2015 report by the Department of Business,
9 Economic Development, and Tourism titled "Measuring Housing
10 Demand in Hawaii, 2015-2025" projected that Hawaii County's
11 population will grow by twenty-nine per cent by 2025, creating a
12 forecasted demand for 18,610 additional housing units, which is
13 approximately thirty per cent of the total projected demand of
14 64,700 housing units needed across the state; and
15

16 WHEREAS, the County of Hawaii lacks a comprehensive plan
17 that defines strategies and target deadlines to create more
18 housing over the short- and long-term, as well as the kind of
19 housing that is needed and its location, how to fund critical
20 infrastructure, ways to foster public-private partnerships,
21 recommendations to leverage state and federal policy tools and
22 funding streams, and policy changes to reduce barriers and
23 obstacles to address the island's housing crisis with a clearly
24 defined purpose, vision, and values; and
25

26 WHEREAS, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands owns six
27 hundred acres in the Keahole Agricultural Park area. Four
28 hundred vacant acres are zoned for residential development. One
29 hundred acres are zoned for agricultural development and one
30 hundred acres are zoned for commercial development. Development
31 in this area can contribute to creating a significant number of
32 homes for Hawaiians on Hawaii island; and
33

34 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Opportunity Zones Program provides
35 incentives for investors to re-invest realized capital gains
36 into Opportunity Funds in exchange for temporary tax deferral
37 and other benefits. The Opportunity Funds are then used to
38 provide investment capital in certain economically distressed
39 communities called Opportunity Zones. The Kona area is home to
40 Opportunity Zone 215.4 and 216.1. The Opportunity Zone
41 designation makes them extremely attractive to private investors
42 so these opportunities do not necessarily require state funding



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1 to be realized due to the presence of federal infrastructure
2 development financing; now, therefore,

3
4 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
5 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
6 of 2021, that the Department of Agriculture is urged to form an
7 inter-governmental Kona Area agricultural working group to help
8 navigate opportunities of agriculture, affordable housing, and
9 economic development consisting of members of relevant county
10 departments and agencies to develop and implement a
11 comprehensive plan for the Kona area; and

12
13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested
14 to develop a framework to:

- 15
16 (1) Improve communication to increase efficiency and
17 strengthen partnerships between Hawaii County, the
18 agriculture industry, landowners, and the Hawaii
19 island community;
20
21 (2) Increase profitability of Hawaii Island's agricultural
22 businesses through cost reduction strategies and
23 greater market share for local products;
24
25 (3) Increase the availability and quality of agricultural
26 education on Hawaii island;
27
28 (4) Secure affordable land with long-term tenure for
29 farming and ranching and allow for the production of
30 residential units on Hawaiian home lands;
31
32 (5) Provide adequate and affordable agricultural water for
33 farmers, livestock producers, and food processors;
34
35 (6) Reduce the cost of energy and fuel for agricultural
36 producers;
37
38 (7) Maximize transportation infrastructure resources and
39 minimize transporting green waste within the Kona
40 area;
41



- 1 (8) Promote environmental conservation and minimize
2 discharges of wastewater;
- 3
- 4 (9) Facilitate practical, applied research that will
5 assist farmers in crop and livestock production using
6 sustainable techniques and establish Hawaii island as
7 a center for tropical agricultural research; and
8
- 9 (10) Promote investment opportunities in areas in the
10 federal Opportunity Zone designation and maximize on
11 realizing federal infrastructure development; and
12

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group's membership
14 consist of the following members:

- 15
- 16 (1) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the
17 President of the Senate;
- 18
- 19 (2) One member of the House of Representatives, to be
20 appointed by the Speaker of the House of
21 Representatives;
- 22
- 23 (3) One representative of the Department of Agriculture;
- 24
- 25 (4) One representative of the Department of Business,
26 Economic Development, and Tourism;
- 27
- 28 (5) One representative of the Department of Hawaiian Home
29 Lands;
- 30
- 31 (6) One representative of the Department of Health;
- 32
- 33 (7) One representative of the Department of
34 Transportation;
- 35
- 36 (8) One representative of the University of Hawaii System
37 (Hawaii Community College);
- 38
- 39 (9) One representative of the Office of the Mayor of the
40 County of Hawaii;
- 41



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1 (10) One representative of the Hawaii County Department of
2 Environmental Management; and

3
4 (11) One representative of the County of Hawaii Department
5 of Water Supply.
6

7 The Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture shall serve as
8 the chair of the task force; and
9

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group, with the
11 administrative assistance of the Department of Agriculture, is
12 requested to submit a report of its findings and
13 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
14 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
15 the Regular Session of 2022; and
16

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
18 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
19 Agriculture; Director of Business, Economic Development, and
20 Tourism; Director of Health, Chairperson of Hawaiian Homes
21 Commission; Director of Transportation; President of the
22 University of Hawaii System; Mayor of the County of Hawaii;
23 Director of the Department of Environmental Management; and
24 Manager of the Department of Water Supply for the County of
25 Hawaii.
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OFFERED BY: *Nicole E. Love*

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