
SENATE CONCURRENT 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 food security by
17 encouraging the consumption of locally produced agricultural
18 goods, developing county-provided services to agricultural
19 producers or processors at economically viable rates, and
20 producing other programs to encourage and more fully develop
21 this important industry on Hawaii island; and
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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
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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



1 in a centralized location for the purpose of improving
2 production and distribution; and
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4 WHEREAS, the one hundred seventy-nine acre Keahole
5 Agricultural Park is in consonance with state policy and
6 complements the existing rural environment, provides employment,
7 and stimulates the agricultural economy in the area; and
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9 WHEREAS, due to constraints in water availability in the
10 Kona area, the agricultural park has been implemented in phases
11 and one hundred-plus acres of state-owned land immediately mauka
12 of the agricultural park remain undeveloped and unproductive;
13 and
14

15 WHEREAS, the close proximity of the Palamanui Campus of
16 Hawaii Community College to the Keahole Agriculture Park offers
17 opportunities for courses in landscape agriculture and
18 engineering; and
19

20 WHEREAS, energy and ocean-related research, education, and
21 commercial aquaculture is centered at the Natural Energy
22 Laboratory of Hawaii Authority (NELHA) on three hundred twenty-
23 two acres at Keahole Point. NELHA provides an opportunity to
24 expand production of fresh aquaculture food products, promote
25 marketing of locally grown aquaculture products, provide stable
26 cash flow for aquaculture farmers, and create a varied and large
27 market for local aquaculture; and
28

29 WHEREAS, currently, the County of Hawaii hauls its west
30 side green waste to Hilo for processing. Instead, nutrient rich
31 waste products produced by NELHA should be mixed with the County
32 of Hawaii's abundant green waste to produce a nitrogen-rich and
33 valuable compost for agricultural park farmers, who struggle to
34 operate on volcanic lands; and
35

36 WHEREAS, for the last decade, the Kealakehe Wastewater
37 Treatment Plant treats and disposes of sewage collected from the
38 North Kona Sewerage system, which extends across the greater
39 Kailua-Kona region. Current discharge, rich in nitrogen and
40 phosphorus, from the plant are approximately 1.8 million gallons
41 per day and dumped into an open sump from whence it migrates
42 through groundwater and delivered directly above Honokohau



1 Harbor and through the adjacent porous shorelines, thereby
2 resulting in West Hawaii's coastal waters being rated as
3 impaired by the Department of Health. Treating and reusing the
4 water to irrigate the Keahole Agricultural Park, NELHA, and
5 resorts and homes in between the two locations can reduce the
6 demand for freshwater which will help relieve high demand on
7 high elevation wells and reduce irrigation costs; and

8
9 WHEREAS, prior to the start of the coronavirus disease 2019
10 pandemic, the Department of Transportation's Keahole Airport had
11 its own wastewater treatment plant that produced an excess of
12 recycled water to irrigate its airport facilities and was usable
13 to irrigate neighboring state facilities, including the Keahole
14 Agricultural Park; and

15
16 WHEREAS, a 2015 report by the Department of Business,
17 Economic Development, and Tourism titled "Measuring Housing
18 Demand in Hawaii, 2015-2025" projected that Hawaii County's
19 population will grow by twenty-nine per cent by 2025, creating a
20 forecasted demand for 18,610 additional housing units, which is
21 approximately thirty per cent of the total projected demand of
22 64,700 housing units needed across the state; and

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

33
34 WHEREAS, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands owns six
35 hundred acres in the Keahole Agricultural Park area. Four
36 hundred vacant acres are zoned for residential development. One
37 hundred acres are zoned for agricultural development and one
38 hundred acres are zoned for commercial development. Development
39 in this area can contribute to creating a significant number of
40 homes for Hawaiians on Hawaii island and development in
41 agricultural and commercial zoned properties will also generate



1 new and additional revenues for the Department of Hawaiian Home
2 Lands; and

3
4 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Opportunity Zones Program provides
5 incentives for investors to re-invest realized capital gains
6 into Opportunity Funds in exchange for temporary tax deferral
7 and other benefits. The Opportunity Funds are then used to
8 provide investment capital in certain economically distressed
9 communities called Opportunity Zones. The Kona area is home to
10 Opportunity Zones 215.4 and 216.1. The Opportunity Zones
11 designation makes them extremely attractive to private investors
12 so these opportunities do not necessarily require state funding
13 to be realized due to the presence of federal infrastructure
14 development financing; now, therefore,

15
16 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
17 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the
18 House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of
19 Agriculture is urged to form an inter-governmental Kona Area
20 agricultural working group to help navigate opportunities of
21 agriculture, affordable housing, and economic development
22 consisting of members of relevant county departments and
23 agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the
24 Kona area; and

25
26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested
27 to develop a framework to:

- 28
29 (1) Improve communication to increase efficiency and
30 strengthen partnerships between Hawaii County, the
31 agriculture industry, landowners, and the Hawaii
32 island community;
33
34 (2) Increase profitability of Hawaii Island's agricultural
35 businesses through cost reduction strategies and
36 greater market share for local products;
37
38 (3) Increase the availability and quality of agricultural
39 education on Hawaii island;
40



- 1 (4) Secure affordable land with long-term tenure for
- 2 farming and ranching and allow for the production of
- 3 residential units on Hawaiian home lands;
- 4
- 5 (5) Provide adequate and affordable agricultural water for
- 6 farmers, livestock producers, and food processors;
- 7
- 8 (6) Reduce the cost of energy and fuel for agricultural
- 9 producers;
- 10
- 11 (7) Maximize transportation infrastructure resources and
- 12 minimize transporting green waste within the Kona
- 13 area;
- 14
- 15 (8) Promote environmental conservation and minimize
- 16 discharges of wastewater;
- 17
- 18 (9) Facilitate practical, applied research that will
- 19 assist farmers in crop and livestock production using
- 20 sustainable techniques and establish Hawaii island as
- 21 a center for tropical agricultural research; and
- 22
- 23 (10) Promote investment opportunities in areas in the
- 24 federal Opportunity Zone designation and maximize on
- 25 realizing federal infrastructure development; and
- 26

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group's membership
28 consist of the following members or their designees:

- 29
- 30 (1) The Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture who should
- 31 serve as the chair of the task force;
- 32
- 33 (2) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the
- 34 President of the Senate;
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- 36 (3) One member of the House of Representatives, to be
- 37 appointed by the Speaker of the House of
- 38 Representatives;
- 39
- 40 (4) One representative of the Department of Business,
- 41 Economic Development, and Tourism;
- 42

- 1 (5) One representative of the Department of Hawaiian Home
- 2 Lands;
- 3
- 4 (6) One representative of the Department of Health;
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- 6 (7) One representative of the Department of
- 7 Transportation;
- 8
- 9 (8) One representative of the University of Hawaii System
- 10 (Hawaii Community College);
- 11
- 12 (9) One representative of the Office of the Mayor of the
- 13 County of Hawaii;
- 14
- 15 (10) One representative of the Hawaii County Department of
- 16 Environmental Management; and
- 17
- 18 (11) One representative of the County of Hawaii Department
- 19 of Water Supply.
- 20

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group, with the
 22 administrative assistance of the Department of Agriculture, is
 23 requested to submit a report of its findings and
 24 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
 25 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
 26 the Regular Session of 2022; and

27
 28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
 29 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the
 30 Board of Agriculture; Director of Business, Economic
 31 Development, and Tourism; Director of Health; Chairperson of
 32 Hawaiian Homes Commission; Director of Transportation; President
 33 of the University of Hawaii System; Mayor of the County of
 34 Hawaii; Director of the Department of Environmental Management;
 35 and Manager of the Department of Water Supply for the County of
 36 Hawaii.

