

MAR 09 2021

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS TO
ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP FUNDING SOURCES FOR
RURAL BROADBAND IMPROVEMENTS.

1 WHEREAS, broadband connectivity is the critical
2 infrastructure of the 21st century, and as such the State
3 recognizes robust broadband infrastructure as foundational to
4 Hawaii's economic future and, as importantly, the quality of
5 life of all its residents; and
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7 WHEREAS, in 2012 the state broadband strategic plan was
8 developed to provide information and a framework for the
9 creation of policies and programs to address the challenges
10 faced in meeting both state and national broadband goals. The
11 plan supported grant-seeking at the state and county levels to
12 implement the recommended policies, programs, and activities to
13 advance broadband access and use statewide; and
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15 WHEREAS, the economic and business incentives to deploy
16 broadband infrastructure continue to be insufficient to ensure
17 full access to broadband services in low-density, rural
18 locations, and other unserved and underserved areas of the
19 State; and
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21 WHEREAS, economically feasible deployment of infrastructure
22 for high-speed broadband across the State, especially to low
23 population density areas, presents a formidable challenge
24 because the unit costs of providing broadband service may not
25 provide an adequate return on investment; and
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27 WHEREAS, the unique geography of the State prevents the use
28 of less costly options than broadband services for connectivity
29 by rural areas; and
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31 WHEREAS, in March 2020, the coronavirus disease 2019 was
32 detected in the state, upending all that residents knew as



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1 normal. Governor Ige was joined by the Mayors from all four
2 counties in mandating restrictions and policies on operations,
3 travel between the islands, and work-from-home policies; and
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5 WHEREAS, the drastic and sudden change required leaders and
6 managers in government, business, education, and nonprofits to
7 expeditiously address functions and communications to perform
8 their duties in a virtual mode; and
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10 WHEREAS, the pandemic and its broad adverse economic impact
11 underscored that access to broadband services in unserved and
12 underserved areas of Hawaii would enhance economic development,
13 education, healthcare, public safety, and emergency services in
14 those areas; and
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16 WHEREAS, with thousands in the State forced to function
17 from residences, workers relied on the quality of their internet
18 connections for access to virtual communications; and
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20 WHEREAS, in establishing distance learning procedures,
21 public and private schools soon discovered that pockets of
22 students needed tailored solutions for access to hardware and to
23 Wi-Fi; and
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25 WHEREAS, while nonprofits adjusted annual plans to
26 effectively serve their target populations virtually and the
27 State relied on social media and websites to keep constituents
28 informed on the latest developments and public health
29 procedures, the common thread was broadband access, and the
30 dependence on access to broadband infrastructure; and
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32 WHEREAS, although broadband coverage in the State is
33 widespread, additional investment must be made to respond to the
34 needs of rural and low-income communities to bridge the digital
35 divide; now, therefore,
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37 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
38 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the
39 House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of
40 Business, Economic Development and Tourism is requested to
41 establish a working group to facilitate the development of
42 funding sources to increase broadband infrastructure in unserved



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1 and underserved areas of Hawaii, by identifying and addressing
 2 remaining obstacles to full deployment of broadband
 3 infrastructure to all areas of Hawaii; and
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5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the working
 6 group is urged to consist of:
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- 8 (1) The Director of Business, Economic Development and
 9 Tourism, to serve as the chair;
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- 11 (2) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the
 12 President of the Senate;
- 13
- 14 (3) One member of the House of Representatives, to be
 15 appointed by the Speaker of the House of
 16 Representatives;
- 17
- 18 (4) One representative of the Department of Commerce and
 19 Consumer Affairs Cable Television Division; and
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- 21 (5) At least one representative from Charter Spectrum
 22 Communications, Hawaiian Telcom, or other Hawaii
 23 broadband internet service provider; and
 24

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the rural broadband working
 26 group is requested to submit a report of its findings and
 27 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
 28 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
 29 the Regular Session of 2023; and
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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
 32 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor; Director
 33 of Commerce and Consumer Affairs; and Director of Business,
 34 Economic Development, and Tourism.
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OFFERED BY: 