

**MESSAGE FROM TROY:**

As we head toward the final weeks of the legislative session in early May, the Maui delegation is working hard to secure funding and support initiatives that strengthen our community. In this newsletter, I want to share a few legislative updates.

I am pleased to share that the State of Hawai'i was recently awarded nearly \$189 million to expand rural healthcare across our islands. This significant investment will strengthen access, support workforce development, and create opportunities for the next generation of healthcare professionals to build their futures here at home.

My father recently reminded me that our island has weathered significant storms before, and our resilience is being tested again following the recent Kona Low. If your home or business sustained damage, I strongly encourage you to submit a damage report directly to the Maui Emergency Management Agency at [crisistrack.juware.com/public/mauiHI/request.html](https://crisistrack.juware.com/public/mauiHI/request.html). While a report does not guarantee direct individual assistance, this data is critical for helping the county document the full scope of the impacts and secure vital state and federal recovery funding for our community.

**NEXT STEPS**

While Hawai'i faces many challenges, I remain committed to finding thoughtful and creative solutions that support our community.

As always, I am here to assist you. If you have any questions, please contact me at (808) 586-7344 or [senhashimoto@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:senhashimoto@capitol.hawaii.gov). Take care!

Mahalo,



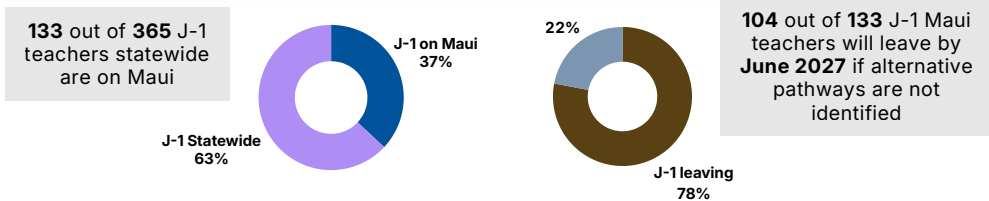
Troy Hashimoto  
State Senator, District 5



**Update from the Legislature: Supporting J-1 Teachers**

*Bill moves through the Legislature to address permit timelines for visiting educators*

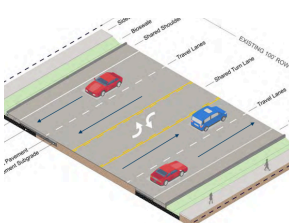
Currently, the State Department of Education relies on roughly 1,000 emergency hires to fill persistent classroom vacancies. These critical positions are primarily filled by a combination of dedicated local emergency hires and international exchange teachers holding J-1 visas. This issue is especially pressing locally, as the Maui-Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kūlanihāko'i complex area has the highest number of emergency hires in the state. Maui also hosts 37 percent of all J-1 teachers statewide. Often, these visiting educators run out of allowable teaching time before completing their local certifications. To keep these educators in the classroom, the State must widen the runway and provide realistic timelines for them to achieve full licensure. Because the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board has not established an independent administrative pathway, the Legislature is stepping in to provide clear statutory direction.



Bills currently advancing through the Legislature, including **House Bill 1840** and **Senate Bill 2125**, provide solutions that potentially help all emergency hires remain in the classroom, while specifically addressing the unique challenges faced by J-1 visa teachers. For visiting educators, these measures aim to align state permits with their five-year federal visas. Because these visiting educators are already licensed professionals here on a short-term cultural exchange, an alternate license is appropriate, and principals always retain the final authority on employment.

This same logic must apply to local emergency hires. Many of these unlicensed educators want to work in local schools for a longer period, but they need adequate time to balance managing a full-time classroom with completing their credential requirements. There remains a strong commitment to policies that build a robust educator pipeline, stabilize the workforce, and keep dedicated teachers in the classroom without lowering rigorous standards.

**Pu'unēnē Avenue Widening Project Near Completion**



Roadway widened to 65' with added travel lanes

The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) expects reopening the lanes on Pu'unēnē Avenue in early April, with full project completion expected this year. Major components, including the primary widening of the roadway have been completed. In the final stages, the crew will focus on surface work and traffic management systems, including final paving, striping, and permanent signage. For questions, call the HDOT Highways Maui Division at (808) 873-3535.

**Draft EIS published for Ho'onani Village Development in Pu'unēnē**



The Maui Planning Commission called for an environmental impact review for the proposed 1,608-unit Ho'onani Village development in Pu'unēnē with **public comments due May 7**. The developer plans to build 100% affordable rentals along Pūlehu and Hansen roads. The master-planned community includes low-rise multifamily residential buildings, retail shops, office spaces, and parks.

Developers plan to construct an onsite wastewater treatment plant, build internal roadways, and modify an existing offsite water system. The review noted concerns regarding impacts on the Kahului aquifer and existing airport noise. To view the draft EIS, visit [https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/The\\_Environmental\\_Notice/2026-03-23-TEN.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/The_Environmental_Notice/2026-03-23-TEN.pdf). Public comments can be submitted to project consultant Emily Ballard at [eballard@pdg-hawaii.com](mailto:eballard@pdg-hawaii.com).

## One year later: An update on Act 278

Last year, the Legislature passed what became Act 278, which provides an avenue for landlords and tenants to engage in early mediation and avoid a lengthy eviction process. The Hawaii State Judiciary contracted with Mediation Centers of Hawaii to create **Hawaii's Pre-filing Eviction Mediation Program (PEMP)**.

1. Landlords must provide a **10-day eviction Notice** to tenants for nonpayment of rent and provide the Notice to their community mediation center.
2. The Tenant must request mediation from the community mediation center **within ten days** from the receipt of the Notice.
3. Mediation must be scheduled within ten days and take place **within thirty days** from the date the mediation center makes contact with the Tenant and the Landlord.
4. Landlords may file for eviction after **twenty calendar days** from when the tenant receives the Notice.
5. Mediation is **FREE**. Landlords and Tenants are responsible for their own attorney's fees and other costs they incur in the mediation process.

\* Scan for additional information

To schedule a mediation, contact:

Mediation Services of Maui  
(808) 344-4255 | (808) 446-0511  
[landlordtenanthelp@mauimediation.org](mailto:landlordtenanthelp@mauimediation.org)



## Hawaii awarded \$188.9 million to transform rural healthcare

Hawaii is poised to receive **nearly \$189 million** in federal funding through the Rural Health Transformation Grant passed by the U.S. Congress to expand health care access in rural and Neighbor Island communities. The award covers federal fiscal years 2026 through 2030.

### Next steps

The State will finalize an updated budget after negotiations with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and begin releasing funds to partner agencies. An oversight team will coordinate across state departments, providers, and community organizations to ensure the plan is implemented on time, within budget, and improves healthcare statewide.

The grant prompted Senator Hashimoto to introduce **SCR27/SR24**, urging Maui Health to work with stakeholders to establish a full-time medical residency program for doctors on Maui, the last major island without a program.



## Education Week at the Capitol

The week of March 16 marked Education Week at the Hawai'i State Capitol, recognizing the dedication of students, teachers, administrators, and education professionals across the State.

Maui was proudly represented, with students from Pōmaika'i and Pu'u Kukui Elementary visiting the Capitol. **Jacquelyn McCandless**, Principal of Maui Waena Intermediate, was honored as the Hawai'i Association of Secondary School Administrators' (HASSA) State Principal of the Year for her outstanding leadership and commitment to student success. **Leka Anitema** of Maui High School was also recognized as the 2025 Hawai'i School Counselor Association (HSCA) Counselor of the Year for her impactful work with students and for launching the county's first Hawai'i-based college fair. Students from UH Maui College also visited the Capitol to engage in advocacy and learn more about the civic process.



Left: Jacquelyn McCandless (Maui Waena), HASSA State Principal of the Year. Right: Leka Anitema (Maui High), HSCA Counselor of the Year.



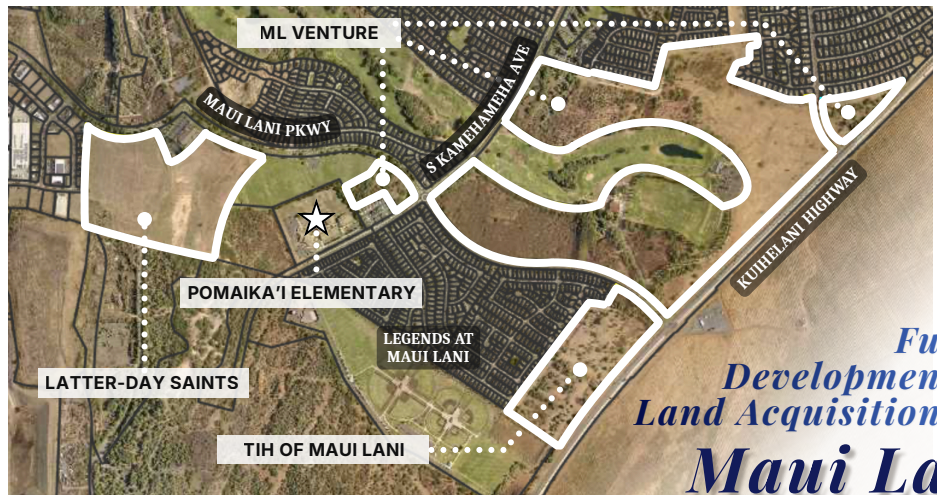
Members of the UH Maui Kabatak Club



Former State Senator Joe Tanaka & family



With students from Pōmaika'i Elementary School



*Future Developments & Land Acquisitions in Maui Lani*

Central Maui continues to evolve, and recent land acquisitions within the Maui Lani area highlight significant future changes for the community.

In December 2025, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation sold four vacant parcels totaling 192 acres in Kahului for \$15 million. Three of the parcels surround The Dunes at Maui Lani Golf Course and were purchased by an entity tied to the Mills Group and Towne Development of Hawaii (ML Venture, LLC). The fourth parcel, bordering east of The Legends at Maui Lani neighborhood, was purchased by an entity solely tied to Towne (TIH of Maui Lani, LLC). Given the acute housing shortage on the island, this land holds immense potential for the residential development of affordable housing for the local workforce. Because the transaction included water meter credits, a primary infrastructure hurdle for future development has been addressed.

Additionally, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently purchased 46 acres in the same immediate area next to their current church for \$20 million. This location will serve as the site for the first Temple on Maui, a 19,000-square-foot facility that will support their congregation.

## JCCM ANNUAL SHINNEKAI

Senator Troy Hashimoto joined the Japanese Cultural Society of Maui for its annual Shinnenkai celebration to welcome the New Year and recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to preserving Japanese culture and history in the community. This year's Nihon Bunka Award



MELANIE AGRABANTE



KAREN M. WASANO

recipients, **Melanie Agrabante** and **Karen M. Wasano** (Fujima Saemitsu), were honored for their outstanding dedication and service. Agrabante was recognized for her tireless work as Archive

Director at the Nisei Veterans Memorial Center, helping preserve the legacy of Hawai'i's Nisei veterans. Wasano was also celebrated for more than four decades of teaching Nihon Buyo, or traditional Japanese dance, on Maui.

## KAHULUI WELCOMES COUNCILMEMBER BATANGAN

On January 1, 2026, Councilmember Kauanoe Batangan assumed office to fill the Maui County Council seat for the Kahului residency area, following the passing of Councilmember Natalie "Tasha" Kama. Councilmember Batangan most recently served as Executive Director of the Maui Metropolitan Planning Organization and previously as Deputy Director of the Maui County Department of Transportation, bringing extensive experience in transportation and regional planning.



With Councilmember Kauanoe Batangan on his swearing-in day

A lifelong Maui resident, he is committed to working collaboratively and prioritizing the wellbeing of

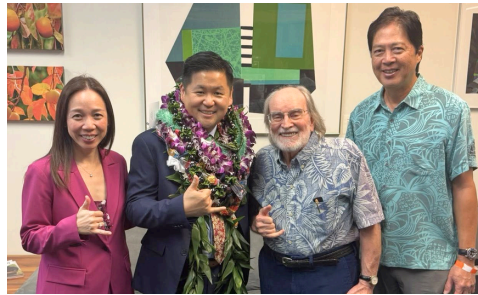
our community. For County-related concerns, Councilmember Batangan can be reached at (808) 270-5501 or [kauanoe.batangan@mauicounty.us](mailto:kauanoe.batangan@mauicounty.us).

## OPENING DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE



The 2026 Legislative Session convened on Wednesday, January 21, marking the start of the second half of the legislative biennium. Opening Day at the State Capitol is always energizing, bringing together legislators, community leaders, and residents from across Hawai'i. During the opening ceremonies, the Senate Majority outlined its key priorities for the year ahead.

Housing and affordability remain top priorities, with a focus on expanding the supply of housing through more efficient development processes. One proposal is **SB2544 SD2**, which proposes a 5-year Hawai'i Builds Pilot Program within the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation to support housing development using Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund financing and expedited interagency review to speed up project delivery. The goal is to cut the development time by half.



With UH Board of Regents members Lauren Akitake, former Governor Neil Abercrombie, and Gabriel Lee

The Senate will also prioritize workforce development and economic diversification, including initiatives such as Enterprise Zone expansion, advanced manufacturing, and technology-driven industries as seen in **SB2816 SD1** and **SB2360 SD1**. These efforts aim to support local entrepreneurship, expand opportunities, and create quality jobs across the state.

Strengthening the connection between education and real-world career pathways is also a key focus. **HB2171 HD1** reaffirms the University of Hawai'i's authority to engage in enterprise-related activities for educational purposes, including programs like the UH Maui College Hotel Lab, which provides students with hands-on hospitality training and practical workforce experience.



With Maui Economic Opportunity Executive Director Debbie Cabebe, Maggie Batangan, and members

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With Councilmember Yuki Lei Sugimura and Michele Yoshimura on Opening Day

## SECONDARY STUDENT CONFERENCE

In early February, student leaders from Maui High School and H.P. Baldwin High School visited the Hawai'i State Capitol as part of the three-day Secondary Student Conference.



During a talk-story session with Senator Hashimoto

During the conference, students engaged directly with the legislative process by meeting with legislators and participating in sessions on researching bills, writing testimony, and debating current issues facing the state. The experience provided students with valuable insight into public policy and civic engagement.



Maui High School student leaders





SENATOR

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Kahului Public Library Updates



The Kahului Public Library reopened on July 12, 2025 with upgraded facilities, including improved air-conditioning, interiors, furniture, and signage.

Additional exterior improvements, such as new fencing, reroofing, photovoltaic system replacement, and parking lot repaving, are now in the works and will be done without a prolonged closure. Programs have also resumed, including Family Game Night and Keiki Playtime-Storytime. The library is also launching a new Seed and Seedling Library to promote sustainable food practices and support community growing efforts.

For more information and to view upcoming events, visit their website at https://www.librarieshawaii.org/branch/kahului-public-library/.

FUNDING RELEASES FROM THE GOVERNOR

Generally paid for with borrowed bond funds, projects must be large-scale renovations, repair, or new construction.

CIP

New Central Maui Elementary and Middle School (NCMS) - \$1,210,573 for land acquisition of additional land. In total, over \$74 million has been appropriated for this project.

Previous appropriations toward NCMS:

- \$500,000 for ground improvements
\$20 million for all campus and community-related improvements
\$19 million for construction, equipment and appurtenances
\$35 million for acquisition and design

Grants-in-Aid

Arc of Maui County - \$200,000 for electrical system modernization of four group homes serving special needs adults.

Maui Arts & Cultural Center - \$600,000 for construction of community stage support spaces and dressing rooms.

Hawaiian Islands Land Trust - \$100,000 for restoring a historic structure to use as a cultural education center at their Waihe'e property.

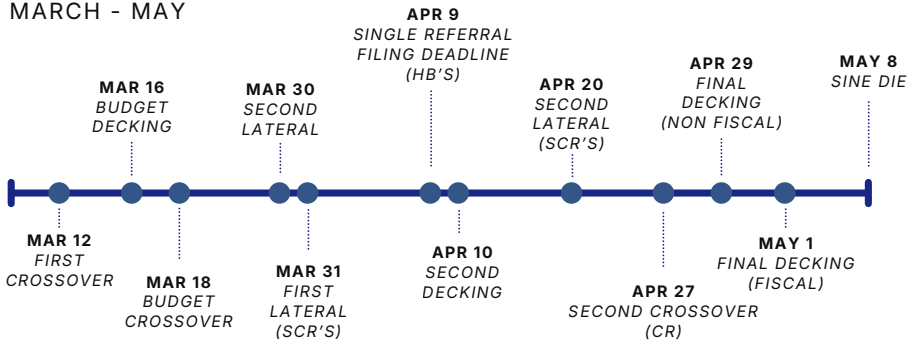
Mental Health Kokua - \$500,000 for property acquisition to be used as transitional housing for homeless adults.

Hale Makua Health Services - \$800,000 for planning and design of their one-story rehabilitation center.

IMPORTANT DATES

Table with 2 columns: Date and Event. Includes dates for Tax Day, Mother's Day, graduations, Memorial Day, and Seabury Hall Graduation.

LEGISLATIVE TIMELINE: MARCH - MAY



UPCOMING DEADLINES

APRIL:

- 9th - Resolutions must receive their required reading to move to the other chamber.
10th - Bills approved by the second chamber must be formally filed with the clerk to continue moving forward.
16th - Bills that were amended in the second chamber must pass a final vote there to return to the original chamber.
27th - Amended concurrent resolutions must pass the second chamber to return to the originating chamber.
29th - Bills that do not involve state spending (non-fiscal) must receive final approval from both chambers.

MAY:

- 1st - Bills involving funding, taxes, or financial impacts must receive final approval from both chambers.
8th - "Sine die" means the Legislature adjourns without setting another meeting date, marking the official end of the legislative session.

MAKE SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD.

Register or update your voter information at: olvr.hawaii.gov

E-Updates: Subscribe to our bi-weekly newsletter for community and legislative updates at linktr.ee/sentroyhashimoto or email SenHashimoto@capitol.hawaii.gov.