



Senator Joy San Buenaventura

Senate District 2, Puna

- Chair, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
- Senate Committee on the Judiciary

@sensenbuenaventura

April 2026 E-Newsletter

APRIL 2026 UPDATE FROM THE LEGISLATURE

Aloha:

Happy Easter and Happy Merrie Monarch. As we enjoy the festivities, be aware your surroundings in Craft fairs and increased traffic from our neighbor island guests.

The State Senate recently passed the “Double Referral” deadline for House bills and will now begin preparing for the upcoming “Second Crossover” deadline. The most recent deadline was a very crucial period in the session as subject matter committees had to vet hundreds of House bills within a matter of days and bring them for a vote before the “Second Lateral” deadline. This process requires us to identify priorities and carefully map out the hearing schedule while also coordinating joint hearings with other committee chairs. To be as efficient as possible, I have made it a point to work with my colleagues in the House to ensure that we do not waste precious hearing time scheduling duplicative measures, measures that currently have no viable means of being funded, and/or bills that have already received opposition from the public and the executive office. This allows us to prioritize bills that address our community’s most urgent needs and provides the committee members and I more time to research the bills being brought for a vote.

If you have any questions about the legislative process, have any comments on a specific bill, and/or would like help navigating the Hawaii State Legislature website, please do not hesitate to contact my office: (808) 586-6890 or email j.honda@capitol.hawaii.gov

Joy San Buenaventura



Senator Joy San Buenaventura met with students of Kea’au Elementary, who proudly shared their projects and engaged in meaningful conversations about their learning and ideas for the future. Mahalo to the students, teachers, and school communities who helped make this inspiring day possible!



**Replacement SNAP Benefits
available if you lost food
during the power outages**

IS YOUR HOUSEHOLD RECEIVING SNAP ?

**REPORT YOUR FOOD LOSSES TO
RECEIVE REPLACEMENT BENEFITS FOR
THE AMOUNT OF FOOD LOST WITH A
MAXIMUM OF ONE MONTH'S SNAP
ALLOTMENT AMOUNT.**

1

Report loss of food that was purchased within 10 days of when the outage from the storm started.

2

Families may request replacement benefits over the phone, in person at their local processing center, or by email.

3

There is an optional form that families may use for documentation.
For additional information, please contact the Processing Center or call the Public Assistance Information Line: 1-855-643-1643.



<https://bit.ly/FormForSNAP>

***This is different from Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP)**



HAWAI'I ISLAND STORM RECOVERY RESOURCES

- **Aloha United Way:**
Call: 2-1-1 or (808) 275-2000
- **Hawai'i County Civil Defense Agency Damage Report:**
<https://hawaii-county-civil-defense-agency-hawaiicountygis.hub.arcgis.com/pages/disaster-recovery>
- **Vibrant Hawaii:**
<https://form.jotform.com/260738343231049>
- **Hawai'i Community Foundation:**
<https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/stronger-hawaii-donate>
- **Hawai'i Food Bank:**
<https://hawaiifoodbank.org/>





HAWAI'I ISLAND STORM RECOVERY RESOURCES

- **American Red Cross:**
<https://resources.redcross.org/>
- **Hawai'i Farmers Union United:**
<https://hfuuhi.org/>
- **Hawaii Ag Disaster Response:**
<https://report.agstewardshiphawaii.org/>



| @HAWAIISENATE



With student advocates who traveled all the way to the state capitol from the Big Island to participate in Take Down Tobacco Day 2026.



2026 Developmental Disability Advocacy Day at the Capitol. As Chair of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, I remain committed to supporting legislation that enables all within our community to thrive. Recently, the Department of Human Services Med-QUEST Division (MQD) submitted State Plan Amendment (SPA) 25-0016 to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for approval. The amendment removes both income and asset limits for individuals who meet the program's requirements. This would allow working individuals with disabilities to pursue long-term financial goals and professional advancement without worry of losing essential Medicaid coverage.



This session I introduced Senate Bill 3204 (SB3204) to support family resilience and divert children away from the child welfare system. SB3204 establishes a one-year Family Resilience Pilot Program within the Office of Wellness and Resilience. More programs and resources are necessary to increase family resilience and reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect. This measure establishes a one-year Family Resilience Pilot Program to allow the State to evaluate outcomes, identify best practices, and ensure that future efforts relating to building family resiliency are both effective and accountable.



The Senate Committee on Health & Human Services recently voted to advise and consent to the nominations of Raelene Tenno, Governor's nominee for the Policy Advisory Board for Elder Affairs, and Kathleen Merriam, Governor's nominee for the State Council on Mental Health. During the hearing, they both reflected on the importance of their nominations as well as the personal and professional connections that inspire their work. Mahalo to Ms. Tenno, Ms. Merriam, and all who selflessly give their time and expertise to better our community.



With Garrett Hall, State Trauma Systems Program Manager & Acting EMSIPS Branch Chief. Garrett Hall leads the Aeromedical Services Working Group. The group was created to inform legislative action on statewide aeromedical services governance, funding, and preparedness.



The Senate recently confirmed Governor's Nominee, Stephanie S. Char for Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the Fifth Circuit (Island of Kaua'i).



SCR21 -Requesting the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation's East Hawaii Regional Health Care System to conduct a feasibility study on establishing a rural health clinic or comparable rural health access point to serve the Volcano Community. I am very supportive of SCR21 and I am grateful for everyone who provided written testimony in support of this measure. The Senate Committee on Health & Human Services voted to pass SCR21 with none of the members voting no or with reservations. The measure will now be brought before the full Senate where it is expected to pass and be transmitted to the House



On the second day of the 2026 Senate Education Week we honored Hawaii State Teacher of the Year Elise Hannigan of Keaau High School. The honor is presented annually to a teacher selected from more than 13,000 HIDOE educators. Hannigan was among 15 Complex Area Teachers of the Year and the Charter School Teacher of the Year (also recognized).



My staff and I prepared donations baskets for the Hawaii Women's Legislative Caucus 2026 Easter Basket Drive.



On March 17th the Senate Committee on Judiciary began hearing House bills that crossed to the Senate. On this day the committee passed bills relating to Discrimination, Family Courts & Child Welfare, Domestic Abuse, Temporary Restraining Orders, Elections, and Criminal Proceedings. On this day, the committee also voted to advise & consent to the nomination of Lani Ewart for the Commission to Promote Uniform Legislation.



Discussing legislation with the Hawaii chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). ACOG represents local obstetrician-gynecologists, offering professional development, advocacy, and resources for women's health.



With the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. In addition to Director of Government Relations Cynthia Au, we had the honor of welcoming advocates from Keaau.

SENATE BILL 2277

RELATING TO HOSPITAL PRICE TRANSPARENCY.

- Requires each hospital in the State to comply with federal price transparency requirements;
- Requires the department of health to monitor and enforce compliance with federal price transparency requirements;
- Establishes a process for patients to challenge a debt collection lawsuit filed by a hospital if the hospital was not in compliance with price disclosure and transparency requirements;
- Requires hospitals to provide easily accessible itemized bills to patients prior to any debt collection or legal actions being taken against the patient.

The Senate Committee on Health & Human Services affirms that patients in Hawaii should be empowered to compare hospital costs to find the best value for care and services. This measure codifies certain federal price transparency requirements into state law to allow the State to better monitor and enforce compliance with those requirements and protect patient consumer rights.





Merrie Monarch

HAWAIIAN ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR

*Supporting Hawai'i Artisans and Creators and Showcasing
the Official 2026 Merrie Monarch Apparel, Posters & Programs*

APRIL 8 TO 11, 2026

Wednesday - Friday: 9am to 5pm

Saturday: 9am to 4pm

**Afook Chinen Civic Auditorium
& Butler Buildings, Hilo, Hawai'i**

MERRIEMONARCH.COM

@MERRIEMONARCHCRAFTFAIR



THE OFFICIAL ARTS AND CRAFTS FAIR OF THE MERRIE MONARCH FESTIVAL

2026 Merrie Monarch Festival Events

Ho'olaule'a (celebration)

9 a.m., Sun, April 5th at the Afook-Chinen Civic Auditorium.
Free admission to watch performances by our local hālau.

Free Mid-day Entertainment Daily

(Monday through Friday)

Entertainment at the Grand Naniloa Hotel (12 p.m.), and the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel (1 p.m.).

Merrie Monarch Invitational Hawaiian Arts Fair

9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wed, April 8th through Fri, April 10th
9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sat, April 11th at the Afook-Chinen Civic Auditorium

An annual favorite, this free event features local artists, crafters, and entertainment.

Hō'ike Performances

6 pm, Wed, April 8th at the Edith Kanaka'ole Stadium
An exhibition night of hula and folk dance from around the Pacific.

The performances are free to the public, no tickets required.

Miss Aloha Hula

6 pm, Thurs, April 9th at the Edith Kanaka'ole Stadium
Individual competition for the title of Miss Aloha Hula with contestants performing hula kahiko, hula 'auana and oli (chant).

Group Hula Kahiko

6 pm, Fri, April 10th at the Edith Kanaka'ole Stadium
Hālau hula perform ancient style dances.

Group Hula 'Auana & Awards

6 pm, Sat, April 11th at the Edith Kanaka'ole Stadium.
Hālau hula perform modern style dances, followed by an awards presentation for all group winners.

Merrie Monarch Royal Parade

10:30 am, Sat, April 11th through downtown Hilo
One of the festival's most entertaining and fun events for the entire family, the parade begins and ends at Pauahi St. (Kilauea Ave. — Keawe St. — Waiānuenue Ave. — Kamehameha Ave.).



Puna Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

16-492 Old Volcano Road, Keaau (808) 966-9981

Mailing Address: PO Box 100, Keaau, HI 96749

Children's Day



Mālama Hāloa Hui Ku'i Kalo
Learn to make pa'i a'i



Saturday, April 25, 2026
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

On the grounds of Puna Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in Keaau. Open to all! Keiki and keiki at heart are all welcome.



For life-threatening emergencies, call 911.

For non-life-threatening emergencies, call (808) 935-3311.

For the Fire Department, call (808) 961-8336.



PROPER 911 USE

Learn when and how to use 911 for emergencies to ensure a quick and effective response.



POLICE DIRECTORY

Access contact information for HPD departments, stations, and specialized units.



CRIME STOPPERS

Submit anonymous tips about crimes or suspicious activity to help keep our community safe.



ANIMAL CONTROL

Report stray or dangerous animals, access lost-and-found services, or learn about licensing and care.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Find support, counseling, and emergency resources for victims of domestic violence.



KULEANA HOTLINE

Share non-emergency community concerns confidentially to improve neighborhood safety.



REPORT AN UNSAFE DRIVER

Notify authorities about reckless, impaired, or dangerous driving behavior.



GET A COPY OF A POLICE REPORT

Request copies of police reports for legal, personal, or insurance purposes.



SUBMIT A TIP ABOUT AN UNSOLVED CASE

Provide confidential information to assist investigations.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR HEALTH EQUITY:

Earn Your
Masters in
Public Health
from UH Mānoa.



APPLY NOW!



UNIVERSITY of HAWAII' at MĀNOA*

THOMPSON SCHOOL

SOCIAL WORK & PUBLIC HEALTH

SCAM ALERT: DMV PHISHING TEXTS

PUBLIC IS WARNED ABOUT SCAM TEXT MESSAGES FALSELY CLAIMING TO BE FROM THE HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

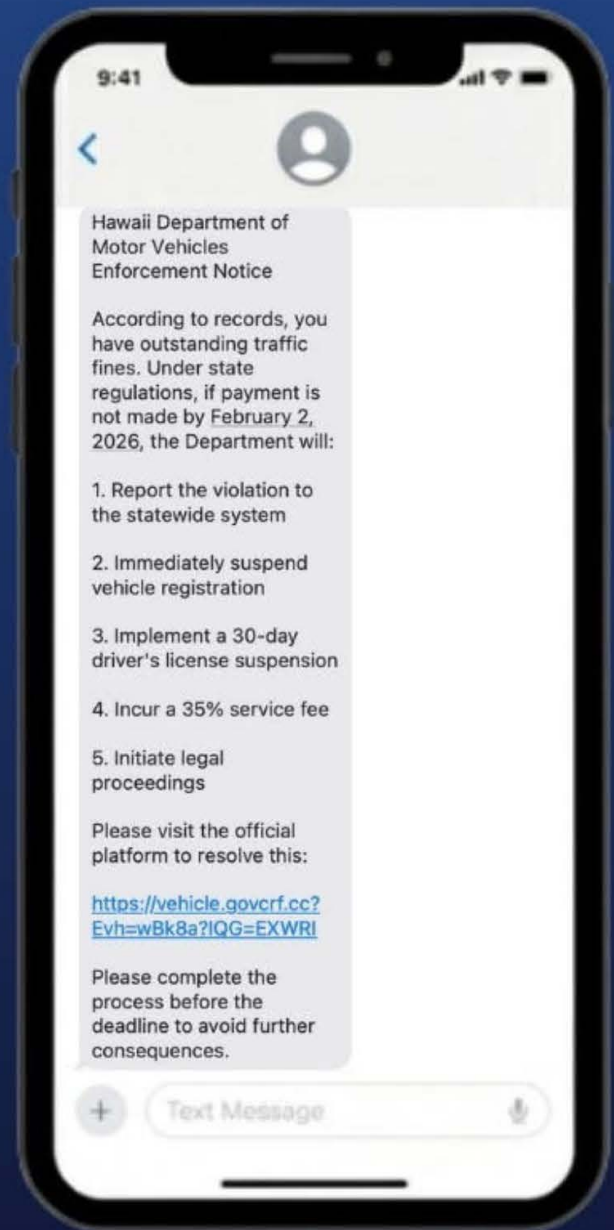
HOW THE SCAM WORKS

- Messages come from unknown numbers
- Often begin with “Important: Your Traffic Fine is Pending Payment”
- Threaten vehicle registration cancellation, license suspension, added fees, or legal action
- Include a link to a official looking fake payment page designed to steal personal and financial information

✘ These messages are **NOT** affiliated with the Hawai'i State Judiciary, State of Hawai'i offices, or County DMV offices.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

- Official communications **do not** request payment through unsolicited text messages, third-party websites, or unfamiliar web addresses.



DCCA
HAWAII

Hawaii Child Wellness Incentive Program (HCWIP)

Earn \$50 per child per year for taking your child to a well-child examination visit!

Easy as 1-2-3!



See a doctor Submit Application Get card by mail

- 1) Take your child for a well-child examination
- 2) Submit completed DHS 1193 application form
[DHS 1193 Form and Instructions \(Rev. 05.2024\).pdf](#)
- 3) Receive a \$50 incentive card by mail

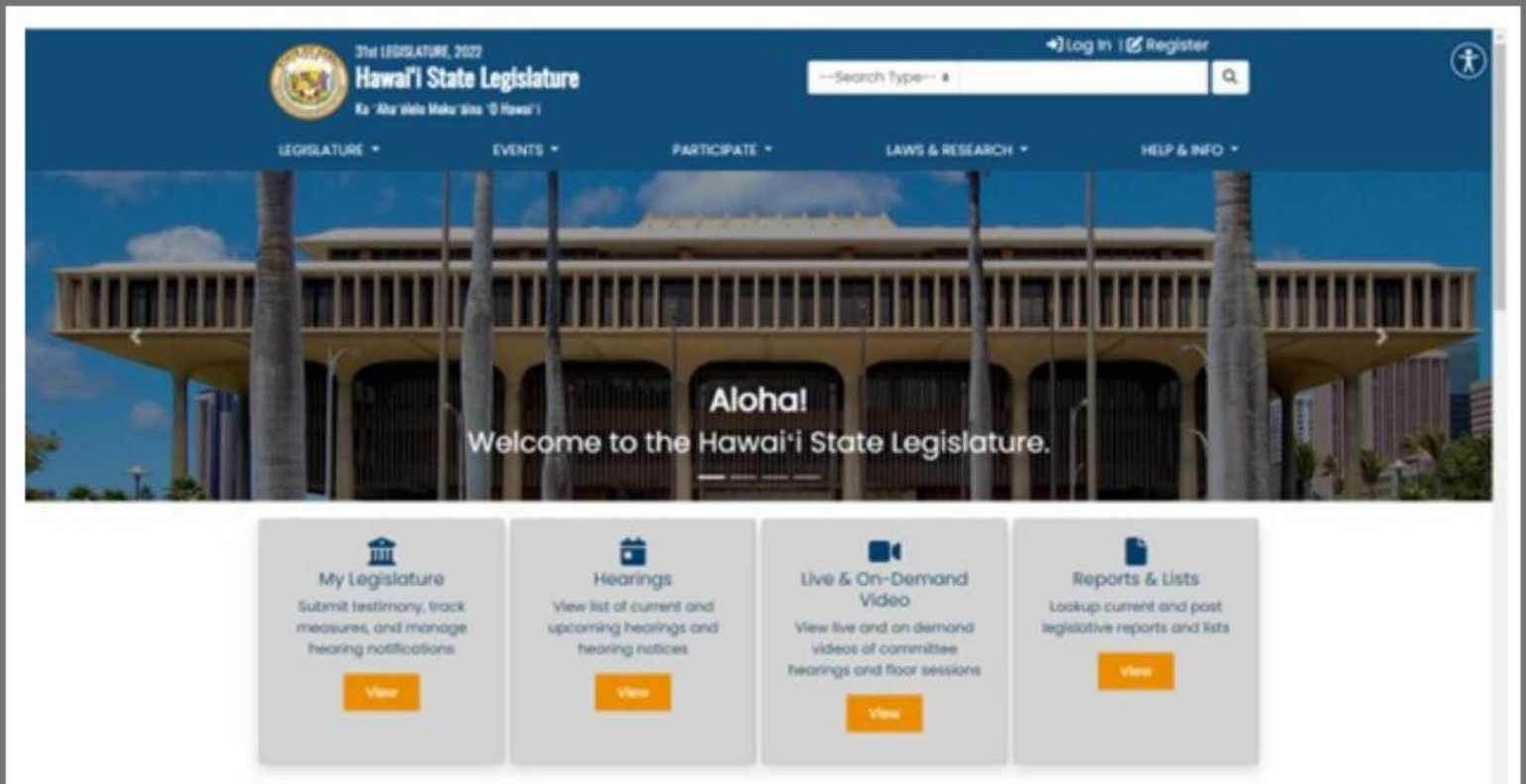
The Hawaii Child Wellness Incentive Pilot program (HCWIP) seeks to ensure the health of children in Hawaii, including early detection of potential illnesses. This program awards a \$50.00 incentive card to any parent who is a Medicaid/QUEST member for taking their child under the age of 18 to complete a well-child examination once per year. The child does not need to be a Medicaid/QUEST member.

**For Customer Service Call:
833-909-3631**



“Keeping Our Growing Keiki Healthy”

Legislative Reference Bureau: Public Access Room



The Public Access Room (PAR) provides the public with information, facilities, and services to assist them as they engage and participate in the State legislative process. PAR's website includes guides on how to track measures, submit testimony, and subscribe to hearing notices.

To learn more, please visit: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/>