



Senator Joy San Buenaventura

Senate District 2, Puna

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

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July 2026 E-Newsletter

JULY 2026 UPDATE FROM THE LEGISLATURE

Aloha:

Since the adjournment of the 2026 legislative session, I have been busy preparing and planning for informational briefings on several matters relating to the committee on Health & Human Services (HHS). One of the informational briefings will focus on Hawaii's Rural Health Transformation Plan. As Chair of the Senate HHS Committee and Big Island resident, one of my highest priorities is to continue our progress in expanding healthcare access throughout the neighbor islands and further increase investments in infrastructure that would improve quality and outcomes for rural communities such as Puna. At the previous informational briefing, I made it clear that I would like to see more being done to ensure that healthcare access will continue to be accessible to the uninsured and plans to maintain initiatives after federal funding ends. I am currently working with my House counterparts and the Department of Health to finalize the details of the briefing. I am also in the working stages of Senate HHS informational briefings related to the Federal Governments rescheduling of cannabis, and the annual homelessness summit. My plan is to schedule all of the informational briefings before the end of the year to ensure that we have time to draft legislation for the 2027 session.

Thank you to everyone who joined us at my recent "Dance/Talk-with-Joy" event. I am very grateful for the opportunity to connect with you and I welcome everyone to contact my office if you have any concerns, ideas, and/or if there are any specific bills that you would like me to review. The public is welcome to access drafts of bills introduced in previous years on the Hawaii State Legislature's website (www.capitol.hawaii.gov). If there are any particular bills/subjects that you would like me to review, please do not hesitate to call or email my office.

In this newsletter, I have also included information from the Hawaii Island Rat Lungworm Working Group (Jarvi Lab). Please note that the Jarvi study shows that carbon block 5 micron sediment filters may remove larvae.

Joy San Buenaventura





At the opening of the early phase center at the UH Cancer center. For the first time, Hawaii will embark on Phase 1 or early Phase clinical trials for cancer. The UH cancer center is the only NCI-designated cancer center in the Pacific. A recent study showed that Hawaii cancer patients spent over \$231 Mil for out-of-state care in 2021. The center has begun pilot phase 1 trials and aims to scale up to 30 active early-phase trials over the next five years. Speaking at the event was Dr. Naoto Ueno, a researcher and Director of the UH Cancer Center. Dr. Ueno is himself a two-time cancer survivor, who, was saved by an advanced cancer treatment that he originally helped research and create. With this early phase trial center, more local patients will have access to promising, free Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials, which, will hopefully lead to more success stories like Dr. Ueno's.



In April the Senate, led by Senator Tim Richards, honored and celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Hawaiian Council for its dedicated service, leadership, and advocacy for the Native Hawaiian Community. Honorees were founding member Ray Soon, CEO Joe Kūhiō Lewis, Chief-of-Staff Nick Carroll, Executive Board Member Jacob Aki (not pictured), Executive Board Member Makalika Nāholowa'a, and Executive Board Member Kevin Chang. The Hawaiian Council's valued work includes disaster response, housing solutions, economic sovereignty & innovation, legal & cultural protection, defending land & water rights, safeguarding cultural integrity, symbols, designs, art, and knowledge from exploitation at both the state and federal levels, and establishing vocational programs for economically disadvantaged individuals. The Hawaii State Legislature is very grateful for the Hawaiian Councils profound impact and their continued work to improve lives and uphold the dignity of Kānaka Maoli throughout the state.



In February, I was honored to have been given the "Legislator of the Year" award by the Hawaii Dental Association. I recently learned that I was also selected as the 2026 Legislator of the Year by the Hawaii Psychological Association.



Discussing Hawaii's role as food/agricultural innovation hub at the 4th Annual Hawaii Made Conference with fellow neighbor islanders Senator Troy Hashimoto of Maui and DBEDT Director Jimmy Tokioka. This year's conference was titled "Driving the Future of Food Innovation" and aimed to connect local farmers, value-added producers, and entrepreneurs with supply-chain partners, experts, and resources to help scale their businesses. Food agriculture is critical across the state and I am very grateful for the work being done to strengthen the resiliency of our local food systems and increase our overall food security.



At a joint Ways & Means / Health & Human Services Informational Briefing held just prior to the start of the 2026 session. One of this year's budget highlights is the passage of Senate Bill 3125 (SB3125). As noted in the committee report, SB3125 provides tax relief aimed at low- and moderate-income families through enhancements to the Household and Dependent Care Services Tax Credit. SB3125 reflects the legislature's commitment to helping local families while preserving the long-term fiscal integrity of our state. I am very grateful to the public for their support and all of the legislators who came together to pass SB3125. Thank you also to Governor Green for signing SB3125 into law (ACT024).



RAT LUNGWORM (RLW) & RAINWATER CATCHMENT



PROTECT YOURSELF

- The most widely endorsed water treatment method is a series of sediment filters followed by an ultraviolet light disinfection system (Macomber 2010, CTAHR, UH Manoa), **but this may not be sufficient to keep out RLW larvae.**
- Sediment filters reduce debris to allow UV light to penetrate the water column for disinfection.
- Most sediment filters sold on Hawai'i Island have a "nominal filtration" rating (not an absolute size). Nominal rating is defined as $\geq 85\%$ and absolute rating is defined as $>99.9\%$ of particles of a given size will be retained by the filter as determined from a single-pass particle counting results. (Harrison 2000, Wes McGowan, 4th Edition)
- Filter ratings do not account for RLW larvae behavior such as swimming or burrowing.
- The Jarvi Lab pilot study shows that sediment filters tested can reduce the number of RLW larvae.
(Howe et al. (2019) PLoS ONE 14 (4):e0209813)
- UV light damages bacteria and virus DNA resulting in an inability to grow, reproduce, and/or death (Kumar et al. 2004, Photochem & Photobio 80: 15-21). Multicellular organisms, like RLW larvae, can repair some DNA damage which may extend their life. (Leung et al. 2013, BMC Pharmacol & Toxicol 14:9)
- An ongoing Jarvi Lab pilot study evaluating the effects of UV light suggests doses comparable to a whole house UV system do not immediately kill RLW larvae. (unpublished)
- We continue our studies on this important problem and will make results publicly available.
- **Use potable water for consumption.**

This brochure was produced by the Hawai'i Island Rat Lungworm Working Group (Jarvi Lab), Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy, University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Supported by funding from (1) Dr. and Mrs. Richard Robbins representing the Max and Yetta Karasik Family Foundation (2) National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE), (3) Hawai'i Catchment Co, Keaau, Hawai'i, (4) Kea'au Ace Hardware, and (5) the State of Hawai'i. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of any funding source.

RESEARCH FACTS

Howe et al. (2019) PLoS ONE 14 (4):e0209813.

- Live, infective stage (L3) RLW larvae generally emerge from drowned slugs and snails within 3-4 days.
- Infective stage (L3) RLW larvae can survive in water for at least 21 days.
- Most RLW larvae sink to the bottom of a 50 mL tube.

Pilot study: Sediment filter testing¹

Brand (model) ²	Material	Size	% larvae crossed filter
United Filters International (UP20R10P)	Wound polypropylene	20 µm	6 -7 %
Culligan (CW-F)	Wound polypropylene	10 µm	18-41 %
Matrikx Accucarb (32-250-10-GREEN)	Carbon block	5 µm	0 %
Culligan (P5)	Spun polypropylene	5 µm	0-2 %
Culligan (P1)	Spun polypropylene	1 µm	0- 7 %

¹Methods employed have a 20-36% margin of error.

²Brand names are mentioned for experimental results only and do not constitute an endorsement by the University of Hawai'i.

WORDS OF CAUTION

1. Do not expect all filters of a particular size, material, or brand to perform exactly the same in a household catchment system as our pilot test.
2. Do not assume any filter will provide 100% protection under variable conditions.
3. Do not assume all larvae are at the bottom of your catchment reservoir as conditions may vary.
4. Organic debris in a catchment system may affect filter performance and/or larvae viability or infectivity.
5. Higher water pressure may change filter performance.
6. It is unknown if the concentration of bleach recommended for water disinfection is effective in killing RLW larvae and bleach may expose consumers to toxic compounds when it reacts with organic matter (Nuckols et al. 2005, Environ Health Perspect 113: 863-870)

This information is designed to aid consumers in the prevention of waterborne illness. Consumers should be aware that routes of disease transmission can vary. Further studies will become publicly available upon completion. For more information about rat lungworm disease please visit our website:
<http://pharmacy.uhh.hawaii.edu/rat-lungworm-overview>



PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS



Opening May 29, 2026 for children born
August 1, 2021 through July 31, 2024



2026-2027
School Year

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFO:

Phone: 808-791-2130

Toll Free: 1-800-746-5620

www.patchhawaii.org

Deadline: May 31, 2027, or until the program reaches funding capacity



Hawai'i State Department of Education

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TIGER FUN DAY AT PANA'EWA ZOO SET FOR JULY 11

The County of Hawai'i Department of Parks and Recreation and the Friends of the Pana'ewa Zoo invite the community to "Tiger Fun Day" from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, July 11 at the Pana'ewa Rainforest Zoo and Gardens.

The annual event, which includes free admission to the zoo for residents and nonresidents, celebrates the birthdays of the zoo's beloved Bengal tigers, Tzatziki and Sriracha.

Highlights of the day include games, activities, face painting, food vendors, education opportunities, and the tigers' "birthday party" where they receive special treats.

"We are so excited to invite the community out to celebrate the tigers' 11th birthday," said Zoo Administrator Mindy Runnells. "Tiger Fun Day is a wonderful opportunity for families to enjoy a day of discovery and activities and learn more about our incredible animals."

The event is a fundraiser for the Friends of the Pana'ewa Zoo, a nonprofit organization that supports the zoo and its animals.

See below for additional details:

- Zoo passports go on sale starting at 9:30 a.m.
- Participants can earn their Junior Zookeeper badge as they discover, learn and have their passport stamped at various stations around the zoo.
- The tigers' birthday party is at 10:30 a.m.
- Shuttle service will be available from the Pana'ewa Equestrian Center parking lot.

The Pana'ewa Rainforest Zoo and Gardens is home to 82 species and nearly 300 animals in a lush rainforest environment. The zoo also features special amenities such as a playground, pavilions, a gift shop and more.



Free summer meals offered at 74 HIDOE schools for children 18 and under

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) announced that 74 public schools will offer free summer meals to children ages 18 and younger, starting June 9 through July 17. Meals are available Monday through Friday through the USDA's Seamless Summer Option (SSO) program. Children do not need to be enrolled in public school to participate.

East Hawai'i

Hilo High	Kea'au Middle	Pāhoa High &
Hilo Inter	Keaukaha El	Inter
Kalaniana'ole El	Keonepoko El	Waiākea High
Kea'au El	Mountain View	Waiākea Inter
Kea'au High	El	Waiākeawaena El

West & North Hawai'i

Honoka'a High & Inter	Kohala High
Kealakehe El	Kohala Mid
Kealakehe Inter	Waimea El



Breakfasts will be served from 7:15 to 8:45 a.m. and lunches from 10:30 a.m. to noon. There will be no meal service on the June 11 (Kamehameha Day) and July 3 (Independence Day observed) state holidays. The SSO program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and was established to ensure that children continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer. Parents may call their nearest participating school directly for details.

To qualify for the SSO program, schools must have at least 50% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and host a summer program on campus. Please review the list of participating schools below carefully, as some locations have changed since last summer.

All meals must be eaten on campus; no grab-and-go options are available. Children do not have to be enrolled at a participating school to be served, and meals will consist of solid foods. For special diet accommodations, email specialdiets@k12.hi.us with as much detail as possible.

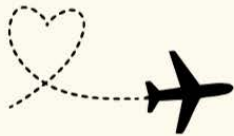
HAWAI'I OUTREACH FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION IN RURAL UNDER-RESOURCED NEIGHBORHOODS

NEW GRANT TO BUILD AND RETAIN OUR HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

STARTING IN HIGH SCHOOL: INSPIRING FUTURE HEALERS



AT LEAST ONE HEALTHCARE
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN ALL
RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS



TRAVEL SUPPORT FOR RURAL
HOSA FUTURE HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS



ACADEMIC TUTORING ON EACH
ISLAND, GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL
SESSIONS

EDUCATION & TRAINING AWARDS

EDUCATION AWARDS PAY TUITION
FOR EVERYONE COMMITTING TO
WORK 5 YEARS IN RURAL AREAS



INCLUDES TUITION FOR ONLINE & IN-
PERSON TRAINING FOR ALL
HEALTHCARE & IT PERSONNEL (ALL
SCHOOLS)



MEDICAL AND NURSING RESIDENCY
START-UPS & EXPANSION
(e.g. MAUI INTERNAL MEDICINE)



TRAVEL SUPPORT FOR RURAL
TRAINING FOR LOCAL STUDENTS &
RESIDENTS

INCENTIVES & WELLBEING



INCENTIVE PAYMENTS BETWEEN
\$20K AND \$200K FOR 5-YEAR
RURAL COMMITMENT

STATEWIDE, COORDINATED
PROVIDER WELL BEING INITIATIVES



SUPPORT FOR CONFERENCES,
COMMUNITY MEETINGS, AND MINI-
GRANTS

WELLNESS CALENDAR AND
ACTIVITIES, EXPANDING CONTINUING
EDUCATION

This program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as a part of a financial assistance award totalling \$188,592,439.75 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor endorsement of CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

STRENGTHENING RURAL HEALTH, TOGETHER

DISTRICT 2, Puna: Outstanding Students

Arionna Beatty, Keaau, Hawaii, has been named to the President's Honor Roll with a 4.00 GPA for the Spring 2026 semester at Bismarck State College.

"Earning a place on the President's Honor Roll is a significant accomplishment that reflects both academic excellence and a commitment to personal growth," said BSC President Brian Kalk.

SUNY Delhi is proud to recognize **Justina Frias** of Keaau, HI, for achieving the Dean's List for the Spring 2026 semester. Frias is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Culinary Arts Management. Congratulations on this incredible accomplishment during the Spring 2026 semester.

Abby G. Jensen, of Kurtistown, was named to first honors on the Clark University Dean's List. This selection marks outstanding academic achievement during the Spring 2026 semester.

Students must have a GPA of 3.8 or above for first honors or a GPA between 3.50 and 3.79 for second honors.

Congratulations, Abby, on this incredible accomplishment during the Spring 2026 semester!

Congratulations to the Class of 2026. \$4,000 in scholarships were awarded to the valedictorians of Pahoa High School and \$4,000 in scholarships were awarded to the valedictorians of Keaau High school to attend the University of Hawaii.



Pahoa High School Scholarship recipients (above): Carolyn Fukushima, Mari A Ganot, Krizza Marcelo, Ghency Pasion, Ros Haleyah, and Lindsay Xavier. Keaau High School Scholarship recipients (below): Sydney Rypka, Lia Scicchitano, and Zi Ting Huang



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This program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$188,892,439.75 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

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/>



SNAP AND WIC

We Got You, Hawai'i!

You may qualify for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

- **Are you pregnant or breastfeeding?**
- **Do you have children under 5 years old?**
- **Do you receive SNAP benefits?**
(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)



SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Public Assistance Information Line (toll-free): 1-855-643-1643

WIC (Women, Infants, and Children): : Call the neighbor islands hotline (toll-free): at 1-888-820-6425

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