



In February, Kona Community Hospital celebrated the completion of a brand new Infusion Center, doubling their capacity to serve patients receiving chemotherapy and similar treatments without the need to travel to O’ahu. Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, center, commemorated the event with leadership from Hawai’i Health Services Corporation’s West Hawai’i Region.

Investing In The Future Of West Hawai’i Healthcare

West Hawai’i is seeing meaningful progress in strengthening access to quality healthcare for our growing community. This session, the House passed its version of the State Budget, which includes **\$50 million in funding for the development of a new North Kona outpatient center**, a critical step toward a future hospital in partnership with The Queen’s Health Systems and the Hawai’i Health Systems Corporation (HHSC). While this is a major milestone, advocacy will continue to ensure these funds remain in the final budget as discussions move forward with the Senate.

This project represents a historic public-private partnership aimed at expanding access to care in West Hawai’i. The planned outpatient center, which is expected to be over 50,000 square feet, will provide a “one-stop hub” for both primary and specialty services, helping to reduce long wait times and the need for patients to travel long distances for care.

Located adjacent to a future hospital already planned by Queen’s, the facility will create a



West Hawai’i Representatives Jeanné Kapela, Nicole Lowen, and Kirstin Kahaloa discuss healthcare needs with Dr. Parwathi Panicker from Kaiser Permanente’s Kona Clinic, who was honored on the House floor in February for being named a Hawai’i Healthcare Hero.

more seamless system between outpatient and inpatient services and improve continuity of care for our community.

For decades, West Hawai’i has faced challenges such as physician shortages and limited access to specialty care. This investment is designed to directly address those gaps, supporting recruitment and retention of healthcare

WORKING FOR KONA



Rep. Chris Toshiro Todd, who represents Hilo, is the new chair of the House Finance Committee and a strong supporter of West Hawai'i's healthcare needs.

providers, expanding services locally, and ultimately improving health outcomes for our residents. The project is also expected to create hundreds of jobs and support the long-term growth of our regional healthcare system.

The \$50 million appropriation builds on previous legislative investments in West Hawai'i healthcare infrastructure.

In February, Kona Community Hospital celebrated the **completion of a brand new Infusion Center**, doubling their capacity to serve patients receiving chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and other treatments that require medication delivered straight into the bloodstream. As patients who were not able to receive these treatments in Kona had to travel to Hilo or O'ahu multiple times a week, this added capacity will be transformative for many patients and their families.

The Infusion Center is the latest improvement to Kona Community Hospital to open. Since Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa took office, the West Hawai'i delegation has secured **over \$23.5 million in funding for the hospital**, including critical infrastructure upgrades, an expansion of the pharmacy, and a new imaging suite.

"As our community continues to grow, these investments are essential to ensuring that West Hawai'i families can access high-quality care close to home," said Rep. Kahaloa. "I remain committed to advocating for these resources and working with our partners to build a stronger, more resilient healthcare system for Hawai'i Island."



Meet the District 6 staff for the 2026 session: Nanea Spies, Clare Ann Ronquillo (Office Manager), Luke Nohea Gee (Keiki Caucus Intern – Junior at Kealakehe High School), Kyung Lee, and Cassie Rios. Their dedication and commitment ensure that we are responsive, organized, and grounded in service to our district.

At Session Halftime, House Measures Cross Over To Senate

In Hawai'i's bicameral Legislature, measures that are introduced and passed in the House must then cross over to the Senate to be passed. Once a measure passes through both chambers, and once any differences are reconciled by conferees from each chamber, successful measures are sent to the Governor for signature. Here are selected measures introduced by Rep. Kahaloa this session that passed the House and have crossed over to the Senate for further consideration.

Delivering On The State's Obligations To Native Hawaiians

Hawai'i's Public Land Trust (PLT) is 1.4 million acres of land under the stewardship of the Hawaiian Kingdom until the illegal 1893 overthrow, now under the stewardship of the State. The Hawai'i State Constitution directs the PLT to be managed for, among other purposes, the betterment of Native Hawaiians. However, the flow of funds from the utilization of PLT lands has not always been consistent. As the new Chair of the Native Hawaiian Caucus, Rep. Kahaloa introduced measures to address this issue.

HB2582 HD1 amends the membership and responsibilities of the Public Land Trust Working Group established under Act 226, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022. **HB2584 HD1** temporarily increases the total amount of public land trust revenues transferred to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, while reaffirming the State's obligation to the 20% pro rata share pursuant to the Hawai'i State Constitution.

Protecting The Health Of Our Most Vulnerable Neighbors

Between a 15% cut to federal Medicaid spending and the phasing out of Affordable Care Act subsidies, over 17 million Americans could lose health care coverage. To care for Hawai'i's



people, **HB1546** establishes a three-year Coverage Continuity Pilot Program to assist individuals who lose Medicaid health insurance coverage and lack access to other health insurance options.

Growing & Defending Hawai'i Agriculture

Cultivating food is a strong part of Hawai'i's heritage, and building upon that heritage, agriculture is a critical part of Hawai'i's future.

HB2475 establishes labeling requirements for 'ōkolehao, a distinctively Hawaiian spirit distilled from the root of the ti plant that is gaining popularity internationally. Businesses on Hawai'i Island are building facilities to produce 'ōkolehao at scale. This labeling requirement is patterned after protections Rep. Kahaloa championed for Kona coffee, macadamia nuts, and māmaki tea.

Defending Hawai'i against invasive species continues to be a top priority. **HB2207** adds another tool to the fight against coconut rhinoceros beetles by allowing the use of netting for the protection of vulnerable trees.

Follow these bills and others on the Legislature's website at capitol.hawaii.gov.



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Aloha District 6 'Ohana!

We've officially reached the midpoint of the 2026 Legislative Session—a key milestone where bills have moved through their initial hearings and we begin to see which measures will continue advancing. This is an important moment to reflect on the work underway at the Capitol and the priorities shaping this session.

I hope this newsletter provides helpful updates and highlights on the legislation, initiatives, and community efforts we've been focused on as we continue working on behalf of our Kona and Hawai'i Island communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirstin Kahaloa".

*P.S.: If you visit the State Capitol, we've moved –
come see us in our new office, Room 438!*