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# SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO ESTABLISH A KONA  
AREA AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURE,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND HOUSING.

1           WHEREAS, a thriving and sustainable agriculture industry  
2 serves as a critical component of Hawaii County's rural  
3 lifestyle, character, and economy by producing food, fiber,  
4 energy, and ornamentals for local consumption and export; and  
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6           WHEREAS, Hawaii island agriculture will continue to be a  
7 stabilizing foundation of the local economy for the foreseeable  
8 future; and  
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10           WHEREAS, agriculture exports to outer island and the North  
11 American and Asia continents provide a critical infusion of  
12 money originating off-island; and  
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14           WHEREAS, the agriculture industry on the island of Hawaii  
15 would greatly benefit from the availability of services that are  
16 not currently being provided, such as improving food security by  
17 encouraging the consumption of locally produced agricultural  
18 goods, developing county-provided services to agricultural  
19 producers or processors at economically viable rates, and  
20 producing other programs to encourage and more fully develop  
21 this important industry on Hawaii island; and  
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23           WHEREAS, the Kona area provides a plethora of singular  
24 ventures that can improve the agriculture, economic development,  
25 and housing opportunities by working together with state and  
26 county agencies; and  
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28           WHEREAS, the construction of the Keahole Agricultural Park  
29 was intended to strengthen diversified agriculture through a  
30 plan that consolidates and concentrates agricultural activities  
31 in a centralized location for the purpose of improving  
32 production and distribution; and  
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1           WHEREAS, the one hundred seventy-nine acre Keahole  
2 Agricultural Park is in consonance with state policy and  
3 complements the existing rural environment, provides employment,  
4 and stimulates the agricultural economy in the area; and  
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6           WHEREAS, due to constraints in water availability in the  
7 Kona area, the agricultural park has been implemented in phases  
8 and one hundred-plus acres of state-owned land immediately mauka  
9 of the agricultural park remain undeveloped and unproductive;  
10 and  
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12           WHEREAS, the close proximity of the Palamanui Campus of  
13 Hawaii Community College to the Keahole Agriculture Park offers  
14 opportunities for courses in landscape agriculture and  
15 engineering; and  
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17           WHEREAS, energy and ocean-related research, education, and  
18 commercial aquaculture is centered at the Natural Energy  
19 Laboratory of Hawaii Authority (NELHA) on three hundred twenty-  
20 two acres at Keahole Point. NELHA provides an opportunity to  
21 expand production of fresh aquaculture food products, promote  
22 marketing of locally grown aquaculture products, provide stable  
23 cash flow for aquaculture farmers, and create a varied and large  
24 market for local aquaculture; and  
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26           WHEREAS, currently, the County of Hawaii hauls its west  
27 side green waste to Hilo for processing. Instead, nutrient rich  
28 waste products produced by NELHA should be mixed with the County  
29 of Hawaii's abundant green waste to produce a nitrogen-rich and  
30 valuable compost for agricultural park farmers, who struggle to  
31 operate on volcanic lands; and  
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33           WHEREAS, for the last decade, the Kealakehe Wastewater  
34 Treatment Plant treats and disposes of sewage collected from the  
35 North Kona Sewerage system, which extends across the greater  
36 Kailua-Kona region. Current discharge, rich in nitrogen and  
37 phosphorus, from the plant are approximately 1.8 million gallons  
38 per day and dumped into an open sump from whence it migrates  
39 through groundwater and delivered directly above Honokohau  
40 Harbor and through the adjacent porous shorelines, thereby  
41 resulting in West Hawaii's coastal waters being rated as  
42 impaired by the Department of Health. Treating and reusing the



1 water to irrigate the Keahole Agricultural Park, NELHA, and  
2 resorts and homes in between the two locations can reduce the  
3 demand for freshwater which will help relieve high demand on  
4 high elevation wells and reduce irrigation costs; and  
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6 WHEREAS, prior to the start of the coronavirus disease 2019  
7 pandemic, the Department of Transportation's Keahole Airport had  
8 its own wastewater treatment plant that produced an excess of  
9 recycled water to irrigate its airport facilities and was usable  
10 to irrigate neighboring state facilities, including the Keahole  
11 Agricultural Park; and  
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13 WHEREAS, a 2015 report by the Department of Business,  
14 Economic Development, and Tourism titled "Measuring Housing  
15 Demand in Hawaii, 2015-2025" projected that Hawaii County's  
16 population will grow by twenty-nine per cent by 2025, creating a  
17 forecasted demand for 18,610 additional housing units, which is  
18 approximately thirty per cent of the total projected demand of  
19 64,700 housing units needed across the state; and  
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21 WHEREAS, the County of Hawaii lacks a comprehensive plan  
22 that defines strategies and target deadlines to create more  
23 housing over the short- and long-term, as well as the kind of  
24 housing that is needed and its location, how to fund critical  
25 infrastructure, ways to foster public-private partnerships,  
26 recommendations to leverage state and federal policy tools and  
27 funding streams, and policy changes to reduce barriers and  
28 obstacles to address the island's housing crisis with a clearly  
29 defined purpose, vision, and values; and  
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31 WHEREAS, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands owns six  
32 hundred acres in the Keahole Agricultural Park area. Four  
33 hundred vacant acres are zoned for residential development. One  
34 hundred acres are zoned for agricultural development and one  
35 hundred acres are zoned for commercial development. Development  
36 in this area can contribute to creating a significant number of  
37 homes for Hawaiians on Hawaii island and development in  
38 agricultural and commercial zoned properties will also generate  
39 new and additional revenues for the Department of Hawaiian Home  
40 Lands; and  
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1 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Opportunity Zones Program provides  
2 incentives for investors to re-invest realized capital gains  
3 into Opportunity Funds in exchange for temporary tax deferral  
4 and other benefits. The Opportunity Funds are then used to  
5 provide investment capital in certain economically distressed  
6 communities called Opportunity Zones. The Kona area is home to  
7 Opportunity Zones 215.4 and 216.1. The Opportunity Zones  
8 designation makes them extremely attractive to private investors  
9 so these opportunities do not necessarily require state funding  
10 to be realized due to the presence of federal infrastructure  
11 development financing; now, therefore,  
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13 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first  
14 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021,  
15 that the Department of Agriculture is urged to form an inter-  
16 governmental Kona Area agricultural working group to help  
17 navigate opportunities of agriculture, affordable housing, and  
18 economic development consisting of members of relevant county  
19 departments and agencies to develop and implement a  
20 comprehensive plan for the Kona area; and  
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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested  
23 to develop a framework to:  
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- 25 (1) Improve communication to increase efficiency and  
26 strengthen partnerships between Hawaii County, the  
27 agriculture industry, landowners, and the Hawaii  
28 island community;  
29
- 30 (2) Increase profitability of Hawaii Island's agricultural  
31 businesses through cost reduction strategies and  
32 greater market share for local products;  
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- 34 (3) Increase the availability and quality of agricultural  
35 education on Hawaii island;  
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- 37 (4) Secure affordable land with long-term tenure for  
38 farming and ranching and allow for the production of  
39 residential units on Hawaiian home lands;  
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- 41 (5) Provide adequate and affordable agricultural water for  
42 farmers, livestock producers, and food processors;



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(6) Reduce the cost of energy and fuel for agricultural producers;

(7) Maximize transportation infrastructure resources and minimize transporting green waste within the Kona area;

(8) Promote environmental conservation and minimize discharges of wastewater;

(9) Facilitate practical, applied research that will assist farmers in crop and livestock production using sustainable techniques and establish Hawaii island as a center for tropical agricultural research; and

(10) Promote investment opportunities in areas in the federal Opportunity Zone designation and maximize on realizing federal infrastructure development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group's membership consist of the following members or their designees:

(1) The Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture who should serve as the chair of the task force;

(2) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the President of the Senate;

(3) One member of the House of Representatives, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(4) One representative of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism;

(5) One representative of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands;

(6) One representative of the Department of Health;



- 1 (7) One representative of the Department of  
2 Transportation;
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- 4 (8) One representative of the University of Hawaii System  
5 (Hawaii Community College);
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- 7 (9) One representative of the Office of the Mayor of the  
8 County of Hawaii;
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- 10 (10) One representative of the Hawaii County Department of  
11 Environmental Management; and
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- 13 (11) One representative of the County of Hawaii Department  
14 of Water Supply.
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group, with the  
17 administrative assistance of the Department of Agriculture, is  
18 requested to submit a report of its findings and  
19 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the  
20 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
21 the Regular Session of 2022; and

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23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
24 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of  
25 Agriculture; Director of Business, Economic Development, and  
26 Tourism; Director of Health; Chairperson of Hawaiian Homes  
27 Commission; Director of Transportation; President of the  
28 University of Hawaii System; Mayor of the County of Hawaii;  
29 Director of the Department of Environmental Management; and  
30 Manager of the Department of Water Supply for the County of  
31 Hawaii.

