
SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP FUNDING
SOURCES FOR RURAL BROADBAND IMPROVEMENTS.

1 WHEREAS, broadband connectivity is the critical
2 infrastructure of the 21st century, and as such, the State
3 recognizes robust broadband infrastructure as foundational to
4 Hawaii's economic future and, as importantly, the quality of
5 life of all its residents; and
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7 WHEREAS, in 2012 the State Broadband Strategic Plan was
8 developed to provide information and a framework for the
9 creation of policies and programs to address the challenges
10 faced in meeting both state and national broadband goals. The
11 plan supported grant-seeking at the state and county levels to
12 implement the recommended policies, programs, and activities to
13 advance broadband access and use statewide; and
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15 WHEREAS, the economic and business incentives to deploy
16 broadband infrastructure continue to be insufficient to ensure
17 full access to broadband services in low-density, rural
18 locations, and other unserved and underserved areas of the
19 State; and
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21 WHEREAS, economically feasible deployment of infrastructure
22 for high-speed broadband across the State, especially to low
23 population density areas, presents a formidable challenge
24 because the unit costs of providing broadband service may not
25 provide an adequate return on investment; and
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27 WHEREAS, the unique geography of the State prevents the use
28 of less costly options than broadband services for connectivity
29 by rural areas; and
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31 WHEREAS, in March 2020, the coronavirus disease 2019 was
32 detected in the State, upending all that residents knew as
33 normal. Governor Ige was joined by the Mayors from all four



1 counties in mandating restrictions and policies on operations,
2 travel between the islands, and work-from-home policies; and
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4 WHEREAS, the drastic and sudden change required leaders and
5 managers in government, business, education, and nonprofits to
6 expeditiously address functions and communications to perform
7 their duties in a virtual mode; and
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9 WHEREAS, the pandemic and its broad adverse economic impact
10 underscored that access to broadband services in unserved and
11 underserved areas of Hawaii would enhance economic development,
12 education, healthcare, public safety, and emergency services in
13 those areas; and
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15 WHEREAS, with thousands in the State forced to function
16 from residences, workers relied on the quality of their internet
17 connections for access to virtual communications; and
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19 WHEREAS, in establishing distance learning procedures,
20 public and private schools soon discovered that pockets of
21 students needed tailored solutions for access to hardware and to
22 Wi-Fi; and
23

24 WHEREAS, while nonprofits adjusted annual plans to
25 effectively serve their target populations virtually and the
26 State relied on social media and websites to keep constituents
27 informed on the latest developments and public health
28 procedures, the common thread was broadband access, and the
29 dependence on access to broadband infrastructure; and
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31 WHEREAS, although broadband coverage in the State is
32 widespread, additional investment must be made to respond to the
33 needs of rural and low-income communities to bridge the digital
34 divide; now, therefore,
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36 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
37 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021,
38 that the Department of Business, Economic Development and
39 Tourism is requested to establish a working group to facilitate
40 the development of funding sources to increase broadband
41 infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of Hawaii, by
42 identifying and addressing remaining obstacles to full



1 deployment of broadband infrastructure to all areas of Hawaii;
2 and

3
4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is urged to
5 consist of the following members:

- 6
7 (1) The Director of Business, Economic Development and
8 Tourism, to serve as the chair;
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10 (2) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the
11 President of the Senate;
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13 (3) One member of the House of Representatives, to be
14 appointed by the Speaker of the House of
15 Representatives;
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17 (4) One representative of the Department of Commerce and
18 Consumer Affairs; and
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20 (5) At least one representative from Charter Spectrum
21 Communications, Hawaiian Telcom, or other Hawaii
22 broadband internet service provider who is requested
23 to be invited by the chair; and
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25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the rural broadband working
26 group is requested to submit a report of its findings and
27 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
28 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
29 the Regular Session of 2023; and
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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
32 Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Business, Economic
33 Development and Tourism; President of the Senate; Speaker of the
34 House of Representatives; and Director of Commerce and Consumer
35 Affairs.

