

FROM THE OFFICE OF
SENATOR DRU MAMO KANUHA
District 3 – Kona and Ka‘ū

Volume 2, Issue 2 | March 2020



**Member of the following
Senate Committees:**

- Housing, vice chair
- Education
- Government Operations
- Ways and Means

District 3 Priorities:

- Affordable Housing
- Education
- Economic Development
- Healthcare
- Infrastructure
- Advocating for Kona and Ka‘ū Coffee Industries
- Preserving our Environment, Natural Resources, and Historical Sites

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Ho‘omaka o Kākou
"Together We Commence"

As we are in the second year of Hawai‘i’s 30th legislative biennium, I am excited to continue the work that my colleagues and I have done for the residents of Kona, Ka‘ū and the greater State of Hawai‘i.

The 2020 legislative session ushered the Cost of Living Initiative: a collaborative set of bills that Governor Ige with the Senate and House leadership have prioritized to provide relief for working families throughout Hawai‘i. The Cost of Living Initiative will include \$275 million to fund infrastructure and the development of affordable housing, early childcare and learning opportunities for all 3- and 4- year olds and establishing a School Facilities Agency to expedite construction projects at public schools. It has been an exciting Session and I remain committed to addressing our community’s most pressing issues now, so that future generations of Hawai‘i residents may have the ability to thrive.

Let us keep the momentum going forward – *Together We Commence*.

Me ke aloha,

Senator Dru Mamo Kanuha
3rd Senatorial District (Kona, Ka‘ū)

**STATE OF EMERGENCY:
COVID-19 A.K.A. "CORONAVIRUS"**

The Department of Health (DOH) is committed to sharing information about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Everyone can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 with these daily actions:

- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- ✓ Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- ✓ Stay home when you are sick
- ✓ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- ✓ CDC does not recommend people who are well to wear a facemask to protect themselves from COVID-19. Keep in mind that supplies are limited, and we need to make sure that there are enough masks for our front-line health care workers. If you are sick, then wear a mask to protect the people around you
- ✓ Prepare for the possibility that people may want to stay home or may be asked to stay home to prevent the spread of illness

REMINDER: COVID-19 is an emerging disease and there is more to learn about its transmission, severity, and how it will take shape in Hawai‘i. Everyone can do their part to help plan, prepare, and respond to this emerging public health threat. Sign up for daily COVID-19 notifications at: health.hawaii.gov/news/covid-19-updates. To contact the DOH, please call (808) 586-4586

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2020 Legislative Package

Cost of Living Initiative

This joint legislative package of bills is the first critical step of a public-private partnership to help ALICE® (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families survive in Hawai‘i.

Helping Working Families - SB3102 / HB2451

- Provide refundable Earned Income Tax Credits and increase food/excise tax credits by 36%
- Increases the minimum wage from \$10.10 to \$13 by 2024
- Guarantees more than \$70 million in annual tax relief
- Provides \$6,000 increase in annual income for a full-time worker

Access to Early Learning - SB3101 / HB2543

- Provides access to early learning through public and private delivery systems
- Creates learning centers near places of employment
- Impacts families by relieving about \$9,500 per year in child-care costs, making the savings available for other essential

Access to Affordable Housing - SB3104 / HB2542

- Invests \$275 million into infrastructure and affordable housing
- Provides 99-year leases for multi-unit dwellings with 50 percent of units reserved for affordable housing
- Allows access to long-term affordable homes for multiple

Improving our Schools for all - SB3101 / HB2544

- Creates a new School Facilities Agency
- Expedites building and design of outstanding schools by leveraging underutilized school lands
- Increases student's academic and personal success through the modernization of schools



Sen. Kanuha met with Kim Springer, Gary Kaku, and Jo Ann Iwane of the Hawaii State Teachers Association- Retired (HSTA-R) in February to discuss HSTA-R's legislative priorities.

Senate District 3

Legislative Highlights

Emergency Funding for COVID-19 – SB75

This measure appropriates \$10,568,750 in total emergency funding for the prevention and mitigation of the COVID-19 coronavirus disease. The State's Department of Health (DOH) will receive \$6.6M for equipment, test kits and public education, the Department of Transportation (DOT) will receive \$2.8M to mitigate threats entering through Hawai'i's airports and harbors, and the Department of Defense (DOD) will receive \$1.2M for emergency management and response, including quarantine facilities.

An Ambulance for Makalei Fire Station – SB2618

This bill makes an appropriation to the Department of Health (DOH) to fund the staffing and establishment of one advanced life support ambulance to be based at Makalei Fire Station. An ambulance to be stationed at Makalei Fire Station has been identified as a priority of Sen. Kanuha's to provide essential emergency services and alleviate long response times for North Kona's growing population.

Improving Teacher Compensation – SB2488

Co-introduced by Sen. Kanuha, SB2488 appropriates \$25 million on a non-recurring basis to fund teacher compensation. The recruitment and retention of qualified teachers is essential to the success of our public education system. This bill seeks to support student learning and achievement by helping with Hawai'i's chronic teacher shortage.

Low-Income Housing Renters Credit – SB2624

This measure creates income brackets for the low-income renter tax credit. It provides for adjustment of the tax credit amount based on the consumer price index. This credit provides families with extra money for other essential needs.



On Opening Day, Sen. Kanuha was interviewed by a student participating in Youth Capitol Commentary with 'Ōlelo Community Media.

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Updates from the Legislative Session

Alleviating Traffic and Safe Crossing Routes

Addressing the chronic traffic problem in West Hawai‘i continues to be a top priority in 2020. This legislative session, Sen. Kanuha introduced SCR72 and SR39 to request the Department of Transportation (DOT) to study alternative means to mitigate traffic along Kuakini Highway between Henry Street and Kamehameha III Road.

In Ocean View, by request of residents, Sen. Kanuha introduced SCR80 and SR47 to request DOT to examine and provide a safe way for pedestrians to cross the Hawai‘i Belt Road to Lotus Blossom Lane.

With the 2020 U.S. Census, Sen. Kanuha introduced SCR76 and SR43, urging the County of Hawai‘i to utilize census data to establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to help streamline the County's transportation planning process.

Access to Healthcare

In order to improve access to urgent care and outpatient behavioral health services, Sen. Kanuha introduced SB2617, providing \$700,000 to assist with the expansion of the Ka‘ū Rural Health Clinic.

As North Kona experiences steep population growth, the need for expansion of access to essential services. This session SCR71 and SR38 will request the Hawai‘i Health Systems Corporation (HHSC) to convene a task force to conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a hospital to serve North Kona.

Affordable Housing and Workforce Development

In May 2019, Sen. Kanuha traveled to Singapore and Hong Kong with the Hawai‘i State Senate Affordable Housing Delegation to identify innovative solutions to address Hawai‘i's affordable housing shortage. In response, Sen. Kanuha introduced various measures such as SB2616, providing school impact fee exemptions for developments by Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA); SB3076, establishing a program director and staff for the State Building Code Council; and SB2625, establishing an Affordable Homeownership Revolving Fund providing loans to develop affordable homeownership housing projects to increase access to affordable housing for our community.

Advocating for Kona and Ka‘ū Coffee Industries

As coffee bills have stalled in the legislature, Sen. Kanuha introduced SCR81 and SR48 to request the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Organization (UHERO) to collaborate and conduct an economic impact study to assess the impact of potential changes to coffee labeling requirements on the local coffee industry.

Furthermore, in order to mitigate the effects of the coffee berry borer (CBB) – a small beetle that has decimated Kona Coffee crops since 2010 – Sen. Kanuha introduced SB2623 SD2 to request an extension of the DOA's Pesticide Subsidy Program to reimburse farmers for pesticides purchased to combat the CBB.



Sen. Kanuha addressing members in the Senate Chamber, providing remarks to honor Kamehameha Schools for contributions to the lāhui.

Agriculture and Environmental Protection

In addition to requesting funds for the second straight year to fund invasive species technician positions for the County of Hawaii through the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), Sen. Kanuha introduced SCR78 and SR45 urging the Department of Transportation (DOT) to study the feasibility of using recycled plastic to repair roadways.

Education

As the summer heat reaches records highs, classroom temperatures were a common concern relayed by educators throughout Kona and Ka‘ū. In addition to funds requested for various capital improvements, this session Sen. Kanuha will be advocating for funding to equip the remainder of Senate District 3's schools with air conditioning.

Another top priority is facilitating the expansion of Ke Kula 'O 'Ehunuikaimalino Charter School to raise its capacity for those students seeking education grounded in Native Hawaiian values.

Other Legislative Highlights

- SB3168, which requires coffee labeled as "Kona" or "Ka‘ū" to contain at least 51% coffee by weight from that geographic origin, instead of the current law requiring only 10%.
- SB3075, which was introduced to establish a pilot program granting prescriptive authority to qualified psychologists.
- A resolution requesting the state office of Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) and the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) to provide videoconferencing capabilities for neighbor islands to be able to participate in the legislative process.
- SB2619, which requests funding for the County of Hawai‘i Office of the Prosecuting Attorney career criminal prosecution unit.

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**Kealakehe High School
Exchange Student
Interns in the Office of
Senator Dru Mamo
Kanuha**



On Friday, January 24, my office was fortunate to host Ms. Dorina Xhemollari, an exchange student from Albania. For the day, Ms. Xhemollari accompanied my front office staff to take photos and gather staff information for the 2020 Hawai‘i State Senate Staff Directory. Ms. Xhemollari participates in the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program. During her visit to the Capitol, she was able to visit various Senate support and members offices as well as a tour of the Senate Chamber (see photo above). My staff and I enjoyed having Ms. Xhemollari for the day and we wish her all the best in future endeavors.

In a review, Ms. Xhemoralli mentioned her experience at the Hawai‘i State Capitol was a great learning experience. Most importantly, she felt the American legislative process is very precise and organized: *“I feel that in America, citizens have a higher level of freedom of speech to voice out their opinions compared to my home country”*. Mahalo, Ms. Xhemoralli, for your contributions to our office!

Kona, kai ‘ōpua i ka la‘i

*Kona, where the horizon clouds
rest in the calm.*



On February 19, the Hawai‘i State Senate recognized and congratulated Jessanie "Aunty Jessie" Marques, Ms. Stacy Sakuma, and other members of the Ka‘ū Rural Health Community Association (KRHCA) for their exceptional service to the Ka‘ū Community. Aunty Jessie is the Executive Director of the KRHCA and was recognized as the "2019 Community Star" by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health. Ms. Sakuma is a member of the KRHCA Board of Directors and helped spearhead the establishment of the Ka‘ū Resource and Distance Learning Center, a Ka‘ū rural health academy, a community health workers program, and the first HMSA telehealth kiosk on Hawai‘i Island.



On January 15, Big Island Sens. Kanuha (D-3), Ruderman (D-2), and Kahele (D-1) met with representatives of the UH-Hilo Student Association to discuss affording higher education, housing, and workforce development.



On January 15, Sen. Kanuha talks story with Hawai‘i Community College's student government, including students from the Hilo and Pālanui campuses, to discuss expanding programs offered at the campus and improving student experience for non-traditional and transferring students.