

MAR 10 2022

SENATE RESOLUTION

COMMITTING TO PROVIDE GREATER PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE LEGISLATIVE
PROCESS BY ADOPTING RULES TO ALLOW FOR VIRTUAL TESTIMONY,
HEARING RECORDINGS, AND INTERNET BROADCASTS OF HEARINGS
BEYOND PERIODS OF CATASTROPHIC EVENTS.

1 WHEREAS, public access to the Legislature and the
2 legislative process allows for citizens of Hawaii to actively
3 engage with decisions impacting everyday life; and
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5 WHEREAS, the Legislature has committed to providing greater
6 public access for citizens interested in the legislative
7 process, beginning with Act 331, Session Laws of Hawaii 1989, to
8 improve public access to legislative information; and
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10 WHEREAS, Hawaii's unique geography as an archipelago of
11 islands poses significant challenges for residents from the
12 counties of Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii to actively participate due
13 to costly, time-consuming travel to attend hearings, and to
14 provide in-person, oral testimony; and
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16 WHEREAS, the lack of remote hearing and testimony
17 procedures impacts approximately four hundred thousand residents
18 in the State; and
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20 WHEREAS, the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)
21 pandemic has created great challenges to all individuals
22 interested in participating in the legislative process; and
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24 WHEREAS, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, physical
25 access to the Capitol building, hearings, and live testimony has
26 been restricted due to social distancing guidelines; and
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28 WHEREAS, during the emergency stay-at-home orders and
29 travel restrictions, legislators, staff, and members of the
30 public could not attend public meetings in person; and
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32 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the implementation of
33 emergency measures suspending certain requirements of the
34 State's sunshine law in order to allow boards and commissions to



1 continue meeting and conducting necessary business while
2 protecting participants' health and safety and expanding public
3 access to meetings throughout the State; and
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5 WHEREAS, remote meetings can connect people in different
6 physical locations through the use of interactive conference
7 technology and thus enabled enhanced legislative and public
8 participation; and
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10 WHEREAS, remote meetings could be safely held and allow
11 more people from different islands or parts of islands to
12 effectively participate, often during times when they would not
13 otherwise be physically able or authorized to leave their work,
14 homes, or schools to participate in an in-person meeting; and
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16 WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, remote meetings
17 helped to prevent the spread of disease, and even when there is
18 not an ongoing pandemic, remote meetings can be a way to protect
19 the health and safety of participants; and
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21 WHEREAS, remote meetings allowed the elderly and
22 individuals who have disabilities or medical conditions that
23 would place them at greater risks during travel or attendance at
24 in-person public meetings to participate in the legislative
25 process; and
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27 WHEREAS, in 2021, each house of the Legislature adopted
28 remote hearings and testimony rules that allowed members of the
29 public to continue participation through virtual conferencing
30 platforms; and
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32 WHEREAS, the successful utilization of virtual attendance
33 and remote testimony procedures during the ongoing COVID-19
34 pandemic supports the continuation of pandemic-era rules to
35 allow for greater public access to the legislative process; now,
36 therefore,
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38 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
39 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2022,
40 that each house of the Legislature is committed to providing
41 greater public access to the legislative process for citizens by
42 adopting rules allowing virtual testimony, recorded hearings,



1 and hearings broadcasted via the Internet, consistent with those
2 that were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, be continued
3 as a regular practice.

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OFFERED BY:

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