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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

DESIGNATING HAWAII'S CORAL REEFS AS CRITICAL NATURAL  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRONGLY SUPPORTING NATURE-BASED  
SOLUTIONS SUCH AS CORAL REEF RESTORATION FOR RISK  
REDUCTION.

1           WHEREAS, the islands of the State include environmental  
2 resources such as coral reefs that, if healthy, effectively  
3 managed, and functioning, can help mitigate the risks and  
4 related loss and damage from floods and the effects of climate  
5 change and natural disasters; and

6  
7           WHEREAS, studies have shown that healthy coral reefs can  
8 absorb up to ninety-seven percent of wave energy, protecting  
9 coastal properties from the power of the sea by reducing wave  
10 energy, trapping sediments, and attenuating storm surge, and one  
11 study has estimated that Hawaii's coral reefs protect  
12 \$836,000,000 worth of coastal infrastructure from flooding  
13 annually; and

14  
15           WHEREAS, in addition to coastal protection, Hawaii's coral  
16 reefs provide residents with income from fishing and tourism,  
17 food security, recreational opportunities, and a cultural  
18 connection to their island home; and

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20           WHEREAS, ten million visitors travel to the State annually  
21 to experience the beauty of its beaches, reefs, oceans, and  
22 other natural resources, and in doing so contribute nearly  
23 \$17,000,000,000 to our state economy annually; and

24  
25           WHEREAS, the State's coastal areas and infrastructure face  
26 climate change-related risks and disaster events, including  
27 exposure to storms, high wave events, sea level rise, and  
28 flooding, and climate scientists and other experts predict an  
29 increase in the number and severity of hurricanes, higher levels



1 of rainfall in fewer storm events, increasing sea surface  
2 temperatures, and increased ocean acidification, which will  
3 negatively impact coral reefs; and

4  
5 WHEREAS, the health and sustainability of the State's  
6 communities and economy are closely intertwined with the health  
7 of our coral reefs but are being threatened by global stressors  
8 related to climate change, such as sea level rise, as well as  
9 coral bleaching and ocean acidification; and by local stressors  
10 from land-based sources of pollution, unsustainable fishing  
11 practices, and invasive species; and

12  
13 WHEREAS, coastal ecosystems, such as coral reefs, that  
14 serve as a first line of defense are being lost at alarming  
15 rates; and

16  
17 WHEREAS, live coral cover has declined by as much as forty  
18 percent in some areas, and Hawaii has experienced three coral  
19 bleaching events in the past ten years, including the first  
20 statewide mass bleaching event in 2015; and

21  
22 WHEREAS, storms impact national and local economic  
23 productivity, threaten water and food security, increase  
24 diseases, damage critical public infrastructure, and impede  
25 basic services; and

26  
27 WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is  
28 responsible for responding to natural disasters and providing  
29 technical and financial hazard mitigation support, and this  
30 support is primarily distributed as grant funding through the  
31 Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation  
32 Assistance programs; and

33  
34 WHEREAS, there is growing interest in the use of coral  
35 restoration for hazard mitigation action to reduce risks to  
36 people and property; and

37  
38 WHEREAS, coral reef restoration for risk reduction is an  
39 active restoration strategy with the aim of increasing the  
40 structural integrity and complexity of coral reef ecosystems to  
41 attenuate wave energy and reduce coastal flooding; and  
42



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1 WHEREAS, a recent report by The Nature Conservancy  
2 concluded that coral reef restoration for risk reduction is a  
3 cost-effective hazard mitigation strategy in Hawaii; and  
4

5 WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency provides  
6 financial assistance to all states, territories, and federally  
7 recognized tribal governments of the United States through its  
8 Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs, including its Building  
9 Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program; and  
10

11 WHEREAS, legislative recognition of coral reefs as critical  
12 natural infrastructure demonstrates political support for  
13 nature-based solutions, and the level of a State's political  
14 support is an important metric when the Federal Emergency  
15 Management Agency directs activities and funding toward coral  
16 reef restoration for risk reduction projects; now, therefore,  
17

18 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
19 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular  
20 Session of 2023, the Senate concurring, that this body  
21 designates Hawaii's coral reefs as critical natural  
22 infrastructure and strongly supports nature-based solutions such  
23 as coral reef restoration for risk reduction; and  
24

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
26 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor,  
27 Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources, and  
28 Administrator of the Hawaii Emergency Management Authority.  
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30  
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OFFERED BY: *Rindechizone*  
MAR 09 2023

