
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TO CONVENE A SEARCH AND RESCUE WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO DETER HIKERS FROM ENTERING ILLEGAL HIKING TRAILS AND TO ADDRESS RISING SEARCH AND RESCUE COSTS FACING THE STATE AND COUNTIES DUE TO INCREASED ILLEGAL HIKING TRAFFIC.

1 WHEREAS, hiking is a popular outdoor activity to enjoy the
2 State's unique natural environment, including endemic flora,
3 majestic waterfalls, and panoramic views of the ocean; and
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5 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased outdoor
6 activity around the world, specifically hiking in Hawaii; and
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8 WHEREAS, certain areas within the numerous hiking trails
9 available to the public throughout the State pose safety
10 concerns and consequently have been closed to the public; and
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12 WHEREAS, despite warnings, some individuals and groups
13 unlawfully enter trails that have been closed to the public due
14 to safety concerns, ultimately putting themselves at risk of
15 significant injury and risking damage to native habitats and
16 other natural resources that may be in those closed areas for
17 preservation purposes; and
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19 WHEREAS, an increase in hiking in the State requires more
20 emergency responders to be readily available in case hikers are
21 in need of search and rescue; and
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23 WHEREAS, the more searches and rescues made, the more risks
24 there are to emergency responders; and
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1 WHEREAS, the State and counties of Hawaii incur significant
2 costs associated with the rescue of hikers who choose to go on
3 illegal hikes and often ignore signs prohibiting access; and
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5 WHEREAS, each rescue costs upwards of thousands of dollars,
6 and nearly one thousand rescues are made every year in Hawaii;
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9 WHEREAS, six states - Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon,
10 South Dakota, and Vermont - have existing laws in place that
11 impose a financial penalty for individuals needing to be rescued
12 outdoors because of their lack of preparation; and
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14 WHEREAS, because of the considerable costs associated with
15 the search and rescue of individuals who willfully disregard
16 their and others' safety by ignoring warning signs, it is
17 critical to develop policies that encourage public safety and
18 accountability; now, therefore,
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20 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
21 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
22 Session of 2024, the Senate concurring, that the Department of
23 Law Enforcement is requested to convene a Search and Rescue
24 Working Group to develop and make recommendations to deter
25 hikers from entering illegal hiking trails and to address rising
26 search and rescue costs facing the State and counties due to
27 increased illegal hiking traffic; and
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29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Search and Rescue Working
30 Group is also requested to examine:
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- 32 (1) Existing applicable fines or fees and propose, if
33 appropriate, new or amended fines or fees;
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- 35 (2) The process for collecting fines or fees; and
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- 37 (3) The policies of other states with regard to fees
38 imposed on persons rescued from illegal hikes; and
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40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Search and Rescue Working
41 Group is requested to consist of the following members, or their
42 designees:



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- (1) The Director of Law Enforcement;
- (2) The Attorney General;
- (3) A member of the Judiciary, appointed by the Chief Justice of the Hawaii Supreme Court;
- (4) The chief of police from each county;
- (5) The fire chief from each county; and
- (6) The prosecuting attorney from each county; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Search and Rescue Working Group is requested to submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Law Enforcement, Attorney General, Chief Justice, chief of police of each county, fire chief of each county, and prosecuting attorney of each county.

OFFERED BY: *Lisa K. Tagawa*

MAR 07 2024

