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# SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO SHARE INFORMATION  
ON THE SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE OF COMMERCIAL TOUR OPERATORS  
TO HELP RESIDENTS AND VISITORS MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS.

1           WHEREAS, general aviation and commercial helicopter flights  
2 are sometimes used by local residents and businesses for  
3 commercial purposes, and are popular activities tourists  
4 throughout Hawaii; and

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6           WHEREAS, numerous general aviation and tour operators  
7 provide commercial air tour flights throughout the islands,  
8 including numerous companies often operating on a single island;  
9 and

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11           WHEREAS, not all tour operators employ the same levels of  
12 safety precautions and best practices when flying customers, or  
13 maintain their helicopters and vehicles with the same degree of  
14 care, which have been contributing factors in fatal crashes; and

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16           WHEREAS, pilots at some companies have reported being  
17 pressured to continue flying at times and in conditions when  
18 they felt it was potentially unsafe or inappropriate to fly; and

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20           WHEREAS, since 2000, there have been over forty helicopter  
21 tour crashes and incidents in Hawaii, resulting in approximately  
22 fifty fatalities and nearly as many other serious injuries; and

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24           WHEREAS, commercial air tour operators on Kauai recorded  
25 the highest number of fatalities with nearly thirty deaths as a  
26 result of helicopter crashes; and

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28           WHEREAS, general aviation and commercial helicopter flights  
29 over residential areas can create safety hazards, such as the  
30 2019 crash of a tour helicopter on a street in Kailua, Oahu that  
31 resulted in three deaths, and could have killed dozens more had  
32 it struck a busy area; and



1 WHEREAS, the risk of crashes, fatalities, and injuries to  
2 helicopter and tour pilots and customers is significantly  
3 increased in the absence of currently available safety  
4 mechanisms, devices, and best practices; and  
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6 WHEREAS, following the 2019 crash in Kailua, the Chair of  
7 the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) stated that  
8 "each crash underscores the urgency of improving the safety of  
9 charter flights by implementing existing [board] safety  
10 recommendations," and called for small aircraft flight safety  
11 improvements; and  
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13 WHEREAS, NTSB has made repeated recommendations for safety  
14 enhancements in the helicopter tour and charter industry,  
15 including the use of crash-resistant fuel systems, flotation  
16 devices for flights over water, and terrain awareness and  
17 warning systems to reduce the risk of controlled flight into  
18 terrain; and  
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20 WHEREAS, the implementation of safety measures such as  
21 crash-resistant fuel tanks can significantly reduce the risk of  
22 post-crash fires, a factor that has contributed to fatalities in  
23 multiple aviation crashes; and  
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25 WHEREAS, helicopters operating in the State frequently fly  
26 over the ocean and remote terrain where emergency landings may  
27 be required, and the presence of emergency flotation devices are  
28 a critical factor in survivability in the event of an unplanned  
29 water landing; and  
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31 WHEREAS, radar and terrain awareness technology have proven  
32 effective in enhancing pilot situational awareness and reducing  
33 the likelihood of accidents caused by poor visibility, weather  
34 conditions, or pilot disorientation; and  
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36 WHEREAS, many companies currently hold minimal insurance  
37 policies that may not be sufficient to cover injuries or worse  
38 in the event of a crash; and  
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40 WHEREAS, ensuring public access to safety-related  
41 information regarding the presence or absence of flotation  
42 devices, radar technology, and crash-resistant fuel tanks in



1 helicopters used for commercial and general aviation flights, as  
2 well as applicable levels of insurance coverage would empower  
3 consumers and the public to make better informed decisions  
4 regarding their safety and help save lives; and

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6 WHEREAS, increased transparency in the aviation industry  
7 would encourage helicopter tour operators and charter companies  
8 to adopt best practices in aviation safety, thereby reducing  
9 risks to passengers, crew, and the public at large; and

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11 WHEREAS, providing detailed safety information aligns with  
12 broader efforts to enhance consumer protections and uphold the  
13 State's commitment to safeguarding its residents and visitors  
14 from avoidable risks; and

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16 WHEREAS, providing residents and visitors with safety and  
17 performance related information will enable them to make  
18 informed decisions; now, therefore,

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20 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third  
21 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2025,  
22 that the Department of Transportation is requested to share  
23 information on the safety and performance of commercial tour  
24 operators to help residents and visitors make informed  
25 decisions; and

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27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
28 Transportation is requested to solicit information no less than  
29 annually from commercial air tour operators on whether their  
30 helicopters are equipped with, and what percentage of their  
31 helicopters are equipped with:

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- 33 (1) Crash resistant fuel systems;
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- 35 (2) Flotation devices in the event of a water landing;
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- 37 (3) Terrain awareness and warning systems; and
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- 39 (4) Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast technology;
- 40 and
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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
2 Transportation is requested to solicit information from  
3 commercial air tour operators on whether their companies are  
4 operating with best practices including information regarding:

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6 (1) Minimum pilot hours required to fly commercial  
7 passengers; and

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9 (2) The amount of insurance coverage provided to cover  
10 personal injury and loss for each customer in the  
11 event of harm; and

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13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
14 Transportation is requested to identify and share with the  
15 public the numbers of legitimate complaints about safety, noise,  
16 or operations received by the Department of Transportation or  
17 any other appropriate departments or agencies about each  
18 commercial air tour operator operating in the State, and any  
19 other relevant safety or operational information as may be  
20 appropriate; and

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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
23 Transportation is requested to identify and share with the  
24 public the numbers of legitimate safety-related incidents  
25 experienced by each commercial air tour operator over the  
26 preceding twenty-four months; and

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28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
29 Transportation is requested to collaborate with the NTSB to  
30 identify and develop any other safety criteria that may be  
31 appropriate to be shared with the public; and

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33 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
34 Transportation is requested to establish a system of scoring and  
35 transparency for these collected criteria to provide the public  
36 with information in a format easy to visualize and understand,  
37 that enables a resident or visitor to know whether or not a  
38 commercial air tour company has incorporated the particular  
39 criteria, and what threshold or amount of criteria that company  
40 has incorporated, where appropriate; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED in establishing the system of  
2 scoring and transparency, that the Department of Transportation  
3 is requested to also assign an easy to understand overall score  
4 or letter grade for each commercial air tour operator that  
5 clearly distinguishes those commercial air tour operators that  
6 employ more or higher levels of safety and other relevant  
7 criteria than those that do no; and

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9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
10 Transportation is requested to identify the very highest scoring  
11 commercial air tour operator each year and recognize and  
12 categorize that commercial air tour operator as the "Safest  
13 Commercial Air Tour Operator" and categorize commercial air tour  
14 operators who did not provide a response with safety information  
15 as "Safety Unknown"; and

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17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
18 Transportation is requested to provide this information to the  
19 public in an online place and format that is easy and simple to  
20 find and understand, and keep it updated; and

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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
23 Transportation is requested to share this information with the  
24 Hawaii Tourism Authority, who is requested to also provide this  
25 information to visitors in an online format that is easy and  
26 simple to find and understand, and keep it updated; and

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28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of  
29 Transportation is requested to submit an annual report to the  
30 Legislature summarizing specific safety-related information for  
31 each general aviation and commercial tour operator in the State  
32 and post an electronic copy of each report on the Department of  
33 Transportation's website; and

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35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
36 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the National  
37 Transportation Safety Board, Director of Transportation, and  
38 Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Hawaii Tourism  
39 Authority.

