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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that it is necessary to  
2       reestablish the proper constitutional framework of checks and  
3       balances and separation of powers between the legislature and  
4       the executive branch with respect to the enactment of laws to  
5       address important issues of public policy. Article III, section  
6       1, of the Hawaii State Constitution vests the "legislative power  
7       of the State" in the legislature. Article V, section 5, of the  
8       Hawaii State Constitution gives the governor the responsibility  
9       "for the faithful execution of the laws" that are enacted.

10       The legislature further finds that the decision of the  
11       Hawaii Supreme Court in *Nakoa III v. Governor of the State of*  
12       *Hawaii*, 156 Hawaii 416, 575 P.3d 506 (2025), threatens to upset  
13       this vital constitutional balance. The Hawaii Supreme Court  
14       interpreted chapter 127A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to grant the  
15       governor emergency powers, including the power to suspend laws  
16       enacted by the legislature, to address "not only discrete  
17       events" that suddenly "threaten substantial harm to Hawai'i's



1 people, property, or environment", but also "long-term issues",  
2 such as the nearly century-long shortage of affordable housing  
3 in Hawaii.

4 The legislature additionally finds that in order to  
5 preserve the separation of powers and avoid executive overreach,  
6 it must remain the exclusive province of the legislature to  
7 address longstanding public-policy challenges.

8 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to clarify that the  
9 emergency powers granted by chapter 127A, Hawaii Revised  
10 Statutes, to the governor and county mayors are strictly limited  
11 to situations that involve responding to the sudden occurrence  
12 of disasters or emergencies of unprecedented size and  
13 destructiveness resulting from natural or human-caused hazards.

14 SECTION 2. Section 127A-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
15 amended as follows:

16 1. By amending the definition of "disaster" to read:

17 ""Disaster" means [~~any emergency,~~] the occurrence or  
18 imminent threat [thereof, which results or may likely result in]  
19 of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life,  
20 property, or environment [and] resulting from any sudden natural  
21 or artificial cause, including hurricanes, windstorms, floods,



1 extreme rain events, earthquakes, landslides, mudslides,  
2 volcanic activity, tsunamis, fires, explosions, air or water  
3 contamination, blight, droughts, infestations, riots, sabotage,  
4 hostile military or paramilitary action, hazardous material  
5 accidents, disease or contagion outbreaks, bioterrorism,  
6 terrorism, or incidents involving weapons of mass destruction,  
7 that requires, or may require, assistance from other counties,  
8 states, the federal government, or from private agencies."

9 2. By amending the definition of "'emergency" to read:

10 "'Emergency" means [~~any~~] the occurrence[~~r~~] or imminent  
11 threat [~~thereof, which results or may likely result in~~  
12 ~~substantial injury or~~] of a disaster that causes or may be  
13 likely to cause catastrophic harm and immediate danger to the  
14 population [~~or~~], substantial damage to or loss of property, or  
15 substantial damage to or loss of the environment[~~r~~] and that  
16 timely action can avert or minimize."

17 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
18 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

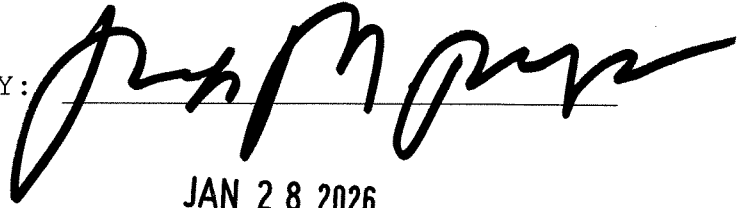
19 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.



H.B. NO. 2581

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INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Pappas", is written over a horizontal line.

JAN 28 2026



# H.B. NO. 2581

**Report Title:**

Emergency Management; Emergency Powers; Disasters; Emergencies

**Description:**

Clarifies the types of events that constitute disasters and emergencies for the purposes of emergency management.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

