

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO COMMERCIAL AQUARIUM COLLECTION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the capture and sale
2 of Hawaii's native reef wildlife for ornamental display and
3 commercial profit is unsustainable and contrary to Hawaiian
4 values, including malama aina, aloha aina, kuleana for the
5 surrounding environment, and pono fishing practices, such as
6 taking only what is needed for family or community subsistence.

7 The legislature further finds that the 1953 territorial
8 legislature, in enacting legislation to permit commercial
9 aquarium fish collection using fine-meshed nets, currently
10 codified in section 188-31, Hawaii Revised Statutes, ignored,
11 disregarded, and effectively nullified the many traditional uses
12 of Hawaiian reef fish by falsely stating that fish taken for
13 aquarium display have "little or no value as food fish," and
14 that "the species of fish for aquarium purposes is not edible".

15 The legislature recognizes that many species of fish
16 targeted by aquarium collection, including lauipala (yellow
17 tang) and kole (goldring surgeonfish), have in fact been used



1 for subsistence and cultural purposes and have been critical to
2 maintaining healthy reef ecosystems to support these purposes
3 since time immemorial, up to and including the present day.

4 The legislature also finds that climate change and
5 associated ecological shifts require the State to keep as many
6 native fish on the reef as possible. Abundant populations of
7 herbivorous reef wildlife can bolster reef resiliency against
8 the effects of climate change by consuming algae that bloom and
9 can smother reefs following ocean heat waves or changes in ocean
10 acidity. Reefs provide vital ecosystem benefits, reducing the
11 impact of extreme weather events and high surf by moderating
12 onshore erosion, protecting human infrastructure, and mitigating
13 harm to flora and fauna. Moreover, on-reef tourism activities,
14 including snorkeling and diving, are a vital part of Hawaii's
15 nature-based tourism economy, which is driven by healthy and
16 vibrant ecosystems.

17 The legislature notes that in 1988, the State prohibited
18 the taking of sand, dead coral or coral rubble, rocks, soil, and
19 other marine deposits. Extending these prohibitions to
20 encompass the commercial collection and sale of reef wildlife
21 for the aquarium pet trade is now necessary to protect and



1 conserve Hawaii's invaluable natural resources for present and
2 future generations, including traditional Native Hawaiian
3 cultural practices that depend on them. The legislature further
4 notes that these obligations and protections are enshrined in
5 article XI, sections 1 and 9, and article XII, section 7 of the
6 Constitution of the State of Hawaii.

7 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to prohibit the
8 capture and sale of aquatic life for commercial aquarium
9 purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 188, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
11 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
12 and to read as follows:

13 "§188- Harvesting aquatic life for commercial aquarium
14 purposes; prohibition. (a) No person shall harvest aquatic
15 life from state marine waters for commercial aquarium purposes.

16 (b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

17 (1) Affect:

18 (A) Captive-breeding and aquaculture activities
19 pursuant to section 187A-3.5; or
20 (B) The issuance of special activity permits
21 authorizing the capture and take of aquatic life



for scientific, educational, management, or
propagation purposes pursuant to section 187A-6.

3 of

4 (2) Prohibit the:

5 (A) Exercise of traditional and customary practices;

6 (B) Lawful taking of fish for consumption or bait; or

7 (C) Lawful management or taking of aquatic life from

9 (c) As used in this section:

10 "Commercial aquarium purpose" means the taking of marine

11 life for profit, gain, or as a means of livelihood for sale into

12 the aquarium trade to be held in a state of captivity as a pet

13 or for ornamental display."

14 SECTION 3. Section 188-22.9, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is

15 amended to read as follows:

16 " [f]§188-22.9[]) Ha'ena community-based subsistence

17 fishing area; restrictions; regulations. (a) There is

18 designated the Ha`ena community-based subsistence fishing area

19 on the northwestern coast of Kauai, which shall consist of all

20 state waters and submerged lands bounded by:

21 (1) The shoreline of the Ha'ena district;





13 (1) A determination of fishing practices that are
14 customarily and traditionally exercised for purposes
15 of native Hawaiian subsistence, culture, and religion
16 in the fishing area;

17 (2) A management plan recognizing existing marine
18 activities permitted by the department of land and
19 natural resources and containing a description of
20 specific activities to be conducted in the fishing



10 The department of land and natural resources shall adopt
11 rules pursuant to chapter 91 necessary for the purpose of this
12 section."

13 SECTION 4. Section 189-11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
14 amended to read as follows:

15 "**§189-11 Receipts in duplicate.** Every commercial marine
16 dealer shall issue receipts to the person from whom marine life
17 is obtained and shall provide the following information in the
18 receipt:

19 (1) The date of the issuance;

20 (2) The name of the person to whom the receipt is issued;



6 (B) The numbers of marine life when they average a
7 pound or more; and

8 (C) The price per pound paid; and

9 [(D)] With regard to aquarium fish, regardless of

10 weight, the number and species of the fishes;
11 and]

12 (4) The signature of the dealer who issues the receipt.

13 Any dealer taking the dealer's own marine life or handling any
14 marine life taken by commercial marine licensees working for or
15 with the dealer, shall make out the same receipt, giving market
16 price for the marine life as prevails on the date of receipt. A
17 duplicate copy of this receipt shall be kept on file at the
18 premise where the marine life was sold by the dealer issuing the
19 same for a period of twelve months from the date of issuance,
20 and the duplicate copy shall be available for inspection upon



1 the demand of any conservation officer authorized to enforce the
2 laws of the State."

3 SECTION 5. Section 188-31, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 repealed.

5 ~~["§188-31 Permits to take aquatic life for aquarium~~
6 ~~purposes.~~ (a) ~~Except as prohibited by law, the department,~~
7 ~~upon receipt of a written application, may issue an aquarium~~
8 ~~fish permit, not longer than one year in duration, to use fine~~
9 ~~meshed traps, or fine meshed nets other than throw nets, for the~~
10 ~~taking of marine or freshwater nongame fish and other aquatic~~
11 ~~life for aquarium purposes.~~

12 ~~(b) Except as prohibited by law, the permits shall be~~
13 ~~issued only to persons who can satisfy the department that they~~
14 ~~possess facilities to and can maintain fish and other aquatic~~
15 ~~life alive and in reasonable health.~~

16 ~~(c) It shall be illegal to sell or offer for sale any fish~~
17 ~~and other aquatic life taken under an aquarium fish permit~~
18 ~~unless those fish and other aquatic life are sold alive for~~
19 ~~aquarium purposes.~~

20 ~~The department may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 for~~
21 ~~the purpose of this section.~~



1 (d) For the purposes of this section:

2 (1) "Aquarium purposes" means to hold salt water fish,
3 freshwater nongame fish, or other aquatic life alive
4 in a state of captivity as pets, for scientific study,
5 or for public exhibition or display, or for sale for
6 these purposes; and

7 (2) "Aquarium fish permit" means a permit issued by the
8 board for the use of fine mesh nets and traps to take
9 salt water fish, freshwater nongame fish, or other
10 aquatic life for aquarium purposes.]

11 SECTION 6. Section 188-31.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
12 repealed.

13 ["~~[S188-31.5] Aquarium fish for export; monthly count.~~
14 The department of land and natural resources shall adopt rules
15 in accordance with chapter 91 to monitor the aquarium fish catch
16 report and fish dealer's report for export of aquarium fish
17 taken from the waters of the State for aquarium purposes
18 pursuant to section 188-31. A monthly count of the quantities
19 taken of each individual species of aquarium fish exported shall
20 be reported to the board."]



1 SECTION 7. If any provision of this Act, or the
2 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held
3 invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or
4 applications of the Act that can be given effect without the
5 invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions
6 of this Act are severable.

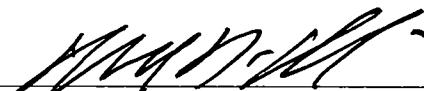
7 SECTION 8. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
8 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were
9 begun before its effective date.

10 SECTION 9. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
11 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

12 SECTION 10. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

13

INTRODUCED BY:



By Request



S.B. NO. 2535

Report Title:

Office of Hawaiian Affairs Package; DLNR; BLNR; Aquatic Resources; Fishing Regulations; Commercial Aquarium Collection; Sustainability; Prohibition

Description:

Prohibits the capture and sale of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

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