

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO MARINE AFFAIRS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the ocean economy--
2 commonly referred to as the blue economy--represents one of the
3 fastest-growing economic opportunities globally. The blue
4 economy is the sustainable use of ocean and aquatic resources
5 for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation
6 while preserving the health of oceanic and aquatic ecosystems.
7 This includes a broad set of industries, including but not
8 limited to marine construction, ship and boat building, marine
9 transportation, energy, tourism and recreation, fisheries and
10 other fishery-related businesses, aquaculture, marine
11 biotechnology, ocean and coastal management, and conservation.
12 The annual economic output of the blue economy is projected to
13 double to an estimated \$3 trillion by 2030.

14 The legislature further finds that Hawaii is already a
15 national leader in the blue economy. As the United States'
16 largest island state located in the Pacific, Hawaii's blue
17 economy is substantial and growing, with the number of marine



1 businesses in the State having increased by twenty-three per
2 cent within the past decade. This strength builds on the
3 legacy, wisdom, and cultural ties that Native Hawaiians have
4 cultivated with the ocean for centuries.

5 However, to remain competitive with other coastal states in
6 the United States and with other countries internationally, the
7 State must act to modernize its approach and capitalize on its
8 technology, infrastructure, and manufacturing advancements.
9 These assets include marine biotechnology; autonomous maritime
10 navigation; cybersecurity; shipping, ports, and harbors; and
11 ocean data observation systems.

12 The legislature also finds that ocean clusters serve as
13 engines of growth for more than fifty ocean industry development
14 initiatives around the world. Successful examples exist in
15 Norway, Iceland, Singapore, San Diego, and Washington, where
16 ocean clusters have catalyzed job creation, investment,
17 innovation, and cross-sector collaboration.

18 Therefore, the legislature finds that designating and
19 prioritizing Hawaii as an ocean cluster will further promote and
20 expand the State's blue economy by leveraging existing strengths
21 while supporting innovation, emerging opportunities, and



1 diversified economic growth. The Hawaii ocean cluster would
2 encompass a broad range of blue economy activities, supported by
3 technology, innovation, and Native Hawaiian knowledge as
4 essential cross-cutting priorities.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 6 (1) Declare that the State is an ocean cluster;
- 7 (2) Establish the office of marine affairs;
- 8 (3) Establish and fund the marine affairs coordinator
- 9 position; and
- 10 (4) Transfer the personnel and functions of the governor's
- 11 advisory committee on marine affairs to the office of
- 12 marine affairs.

13 SECTION 2. Chapter 206M, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
14 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and
15 to read as follows:

16 "PART . . . MARINE AFFAIRS

17 **§206M-A Declaration of intent.** The legislature declares
18 it to be the purpose of this part to recognize and promote the
19 State as an ocean cluster, a globally unique hub for ocean- and
20 aquatic-centered culture, stewardship, economic opportunity, and
21 innovation. The legislature recognizes that the State's status



1 as the United States' largest island state, strategic location
2 in the Pacific Ocean, and history of Native Hawaiian knowledge
3 in ocean navigation, regenerative marine resource management and
4 ecosystem monitoring, and coastal resilience, uniquely position
5 the State to lead the Pacific region in ocean- and aquatic-based
6 industry development. The legislature further declares that
7 actions taken under this part shall recognize the State's legacy
8 within the blue economy while positioning the State as a global
9 center of excellence for ocean- and aquatic-related activities.
10 It is the intent of the legislature that the State's development
11 as an ocean cluster benefits communities across the State
12 through innovation that promotes cultural heritage and economic
13 opportunity.

14 **S206M-B Definitions.** For the purposes of this part:

15 "Blue economy" means industrial and economic activities
16 that sustainably use ocean- and aquatic-related resources for
17 economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation while
18 preserving the health of oceanic and aquatic ecosystems. "Blue
19 economy" includes but is not limited to industries such as
20 marine construction, ship and boat building, marine
21 transportation, energy, tourism and recreation, fisheries and



1 fishery-related businesses, aquaculture, marine biotechnology,
2 ocean and coastal management, and conservation.

3 "Coordinator" means the marine affairs coordinator.

4 "Office" means the office of marine affairs.

5 "Task force" means the marine affairs task force.

6 **S206M-C Office of marine affairs; marine affairs task**
7 **force; establishment.** (a) There is established the office of
8 marine affairs within the development corporation for
9 administrative purposes only. The purpose of the office shall
10 be to facilitate the development of marine affairs-related
11 industries in the State. Its duties shall include but not be
12 limited to:

13 (1) Developing and implementing a statewide marine affairs
14 strategy that prioritizes the sustainable use,
15 conservation, and stewardship of marine resources and
16 encompasses:
17 (A) Research and education;
18 (B) Ecosystem management;
19 (C) Coastal resilience;
20 (D) Fisheries and ocean-based food systems;
21 (E) Marine tourism and recreation;



- (F) Conservation and stewardship; and
- (G) Marine transportation and logistics;

(2) Conducting comprehensive reviews of the state of marine policy in the State at regular intervals;

(3) Identifying key challenges and opportunities for the State in marine affairs;

(4) Collaborating with and supporting other public entities working to develop the State's marine industries;

(5) Promoting and developing technology-enabled marine industries within the blue economy by:

- (A) Developing and implementing a statewide ocean technology and innovation development strategy that complements the statewide marine affairs strategy developed pursuant to paragraph (1);
- (B) Conducting regular blue economy value chain assessments, including but not limited to maritime, aquaculture, coastal resilience, and ocean observation data to determine constraints, capital requirements, workforce gaps, and commercialization pathways;



- 1 (C) Identifying, evaluating, and proposing solutions
2 to regulatory, capital, workforce,
3 infrastructure, and permitting barriers to the
4 growth and competitiveness of technology-enabled
5 ocean industries in the State;
- 6 (D) Establishing a blue economy project and
7 investment readiness program to facilitate the
8 conversion of ocean innovation concepts into
9 investable and deployable projects;
- 10 (E) Pursuing public, private, and federal funding to
11 support ocean innovation and commercialization
12 and the development of a robust ocean technology
13 ecosystem;
- 14 (F) Developing advanced technologies to support
15 marine industries, including but not limited to:
 - 16 (i) Autonomous maritime navigation;
 - 17 (ii) Digital and physical modernization of ocean
18 and coastal infrastructure;
 - 19 (iii) Electrification of ports and harbors;
 - 20 (iv) Marine biotechnology;



1 (v) Ocean and coastal monitoring and observation
2 systems; and
3 (vi) Regenerative technology innovations; and
4 (G) Recommending legislation and policies to
5 strengthen the State's competitiveness in the
6 blue economy and ocean technologies sectors;
7 (6) Serving as the State's coordinating entity for
8 technological advancement and economic development in
9 the blue economy; and
10 (7) Developing actionable recommendations for the governor
11 and legislature to reinvigorate the State's marine
12 affairs development strategy.

13 (b) The governing body of the office shall consist of a
14 marine affairs task force consisting of the following members:
15 (1) The chairperson of the board of land and natural
16 resources or the chairperson's designee;
17 (2) The chairperson of the board of agriculture and
18 biosecurity or the chairperson's designee;
19 (3) The deputy director of the harbors division of the
20 department of transportation or the deputy director's
21 designee;



- (4) The executive director of the natural energy laboratory of Hawaii authority or the executive director's designee;
- (5) The chief executive officer of the Hawaii technology development corporation or the chief executive officer's designee;
- (6) The executive director of the agribusiness development corporation or the executive director's designee;
- (7) The chief energy officer of the Hawaii state energy office or the chief energy officer's designee;
- (8) The chief executive officer of the office of Hawaiian affairs or the chief executive officer's designee;
- (9) Two representatives from the university of Hawaii system, including:
 - (A) The dean of the school of ocean and earth science and technology or the dean's designee; and
 - (B) The vice president of research and innovation or the vice president's designee; and
- (10) Three representatives of the business sector with experience in the marine affairs field, including ocean shipping, ocean engineering, marine science and



1 technology, consulting and public affairs, and marine
2 research.

10 S206M-D Marine affairs coordinator; appointment; duties.

11 (a) The office of marine affairs established pursuant to
12 section 206M-C(a) shall appoint a marine affairs coordinator for
13 the proper administration, enforcement, and facilitation of this
14 part. The appointment shall be made without regard to chapter
15 76; provided that the coordinator shall be eligible for
16 participation in state employee benefit plans. Notwithstanding
17 section 76-16(b)(17), this exemption from chapter 76 shall not
18 expire. The salary of the coordinator shall be set by the
19 office.

20 (b) The marine affairs coordinator shall:



- 1 (1) Develop plans for future projects that align with the
2 office's marine affairs strategy and statewide ocean
3 technology and innovation development strategy,
4 including objectives and criteria to measure the
5 accomplishment of objectives; develop and implement
6 programs through which the objectives are to be
7 attained; and determine financial requirements for the
8 total and optimum development of the State's marine
9 resources based on the goals and needs of the State;
- 10 (2) Conduct systematic analyses of existing and proposed
11 marine programs, evaluate the analyses conducted by
12 state agencies, and recommend to the office, governor,
13 and legislature programs that represent the most
14 effective allocation of resources for the development
15 of the marine environment;
- 16 (3) Assist those departments having interests in marine
17 affairs, including by assisting state agencies to
18 develop and analyze plans for future economic
19 development projects relating to marine resources or
20 technologies; coordinate activities that involve the
21 responsibilities of multiple state agencies; and



1 insure the timely and effective implementation of all
2 authorized marine projects and programs;

3 (4) Coordinate the dissemination of information to the
4 federal government, other state governments,
5 governments of nations with interests in the Pacific
6 basin, private and public organizations involved in
7 marine science and technology, and commercial
8 enterprises of the office's activities and the State's
9 leadership potential as the center for marine affairs;

10 (5) Coordinate the State's involvement in national and
11 international efforts to investigate, develop, and
12 utilize the marine resources of the Pacific basin;

13 (6) Develop programs to continuously encourage private and
14 public marine exploration and research projects that
15 will result in the development of improved
16 technological capabilities in the State;

17 (7) Formulate specific program and project proposals to
18 solicit increased investment by the federal government
19 and other sources to develop the State's marine
20 resources and technologies and coordinate the



1 preparation and submission of program and project
2 proposals of state agencies;

3 (8) Serve as consultant on behalf of the office to the
4 governor, state agencies, and private industry on
5 matters relating to the preservation and enhancement
6 of the quality of the State's marine environment;

7 (9) Perform other services as may be required by the
8 office, governor, or legislature;

9 (10) Contract for services when required for the
10 implementation of this part; and

11 (11) Prepare and submit an annual report to the governor
12 and legislature on the implementation of this part and
13 all matters related to marine affairs, including the
14 office's findings, recommendations, and any proposed
15 legislation."

16 SECTION 3. Section 201-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
17 repealed.

18 ["§201-13 Powers and duties of the department of business,
19 economic development, and tourism in marine affairs. The
20 department of business, economic development, and tourism shall:

- 1 (1) ~~Assist state agencies in developing and analyzing~~
2 ~~plans, including objectives, criteria to measure the~~
3 ~~accomplishment of objectives, programs through which~~
4 ~~the objectives are to be attained, and financial~~
5 ~~requirements for the total and optimum development of~~
6 ~~Hawaii's marine resources based on the needs and goals~~
7 ~~of the State;~~
- 8 (2) ~~Develop and analyze plans for future economic~~
9 ~~development projects, including objectives and~~
10 ~~criteria to measure the accomplishment of objectives;~~
11 ~~develop and implement programs through which the~~
12 ~~objectives are to be attained; and determine financial~~
13 ~~requirements for the total and optimum development of~~
14 ~~Hawaii's marine resources based on the needs and goals~~
15 ~~of the State;~~
- 16 (3) ~~Assist those departments having interests in marine~~
17 ~~affairs, coordinate those activities which involve the~~
18 ~~responsibilities of multiple state agencies, and~~
19 ~~encourage the timely and effective implementation of~~
20 ~~all authorized marine projects and programs;~~



1 (4) Coordinate the dissemination of information to the
2 federal government, other state governments,
3 governments of nations with interests in the Pacific
4 basin, private and public organizations involved in
5 marine science and technology, and commercial
6 enterprises of Hawaii's leadership potential as the
7 center for marine affairs;

8 (5) Coordinate the State's involvement in national and
9 international efforts to investigate, develop and
10 utilize the marine resources of the Pacific basin;

11 (6) Develop programs to continuously encourage private and
12 public marine exploration and research projects which
13 will result in the development of improved
14 technological capabilities in Hawaii; and

15 (7) Formulate and assist state agencies in formulating
16 specific program and project proposals to solicit
17 increased investment by the federal government and
18 other sources to develop Hawaii's marine resources."]

19 SECTION 4. The governor's advisory committee on marine
20 affairs established by executive order is redesignated as the
21 office of marine affairs established by section 206M-C, Hawaii



1 Revised Statutes, and shall assume the functions prescribed by
2 section 206M-C, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

3 The members presently serving on the governor's advisory
4 committee on marine affairs shall continue to serve; provided
5 that subsequent appointments to the office of marine affairs
6 shall conform with the requirements of section 206M-C, Hawaii
7 Revised Statutes. The chairperson of the board of land and
8 natural resources, chairperson of the board of agriculture and
9 biosecurity, deputy director of the harbors division of the
10 department of transportation, executive director of the natural
11 energy laboratory of Hawaii authority, chief executive officer
12 of the Hawaii technology development corporation, executive
13 director of the agribusiness development corporation, chief
14 energy officer of the Hawaii state energy office, chief
15 executive officer of the office of Hawaiian affairs, and
16 representatives of the university of Hawaii system shall begin
17 their service upon the effective date of this Act.

18 All officers and employees whose functions relate to the
19 governor's advisory committee on marine affairs shall continue
20 to serve but shall upon and after the effective date of this Act
21 be considered employees of the office of marine affairs. The



1 status of the employees shall not be affected by this Act,
2 except for the redesignation of the committee.

3 SECTION 5. All rights, powers, functions, and duties of
4 the governor's advisory committee on marine affairs are
5 transferred to the Hawaii technology development corporation.

6 All officers and employees whose functions are transferred
7 by this Act shall be transferred with their functions and shall
8 continue to perform their regular duties upon their transfer,
9 subject to the state personnel laws and this Act.

10 No officer or employee of the State having tenure shall
11 suffer any loss of salary, seniority, prior service credit,
12 vacation, sick leave, or other employee benefit or privilege as
13 a consequence of this Act, and such officer or employee may be
14 transferred or appointed to a civil service position without the
15 necessity of examination; provided that the officer or employee
16 possesses the minimum qualifications for the position to which
17 transferred or appointed; and provided that subsequent changes
18 in status may be made pursuant to applicable civil service and
19 compensation laws.

20 An officer or employee of the State who does not have
21 tenure and who may be transferred or appointed to a civil



1 service position as a consequence of this Act shall become a
2 civil service employee without the loss of salary, seniority,
3 prior service credit, vacation, sick leave, or other employee
4 benefits or privileges and without the necessity of examination;
5 provided that such officer or employee possesses the minimum
6 qualifications for the position to which transferred or
7 appointed.

8 If an office or position held by an officer or employee
9 having tenure is abolished, the officer or employee shall not
10 thereby be separated from public employment, but shall remain in
11 the employment of the State with the same pay and classification
12 and shall be transferred to some other office or position for
13 which the officer or employee is eligible under the personnel
14 laws of the State as determined by the head of the department or
15 the governor.

16 SECTION 6. All appropriations, records, equipment,
17 machines, files, supplies, contracts, books, papers, documents,
18 maps, and other personal property heretofore made, used,
19 acquired, or held by the governor's advisory committee on marine
20 affairs relating to the functions transferred to the office of



1 marine affairs shall be transferred with the functions to which
2 they relate.

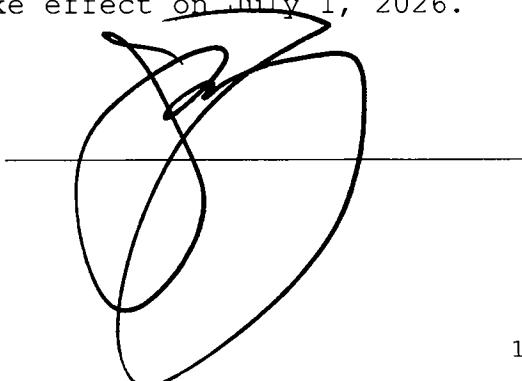
3 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$150,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to fund
6 one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) marine affairs coordinator
7 position within the Hawaii technology development corporation to
8 support the office of marine affairs.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii
10 technology development corporation for the purposes of this
11 part.

12 SECTION 8. In codifying the new sections added by
13 section 2 and referenced in section 4 of this Act, the revisor
14 of statutes shall substitute appropriate section numbers for the
15 letters used in designating the new sections in this Act.

16 SECTION 9. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
17 and stricken.

18 SECTION 10. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.
19

INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 2907

Report Title:

HTDC; Ocean Cluster; Office of Marine Affairs; Marine Affairs Task Force; Marine Affairs Coordinator; Reports; Transfer; Appropriation

Description:

Declares that the State is an ocean cluster. Establishes the Office of Marine Affairs under the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation for administrative purposes only. Establishes the Marine Affairs Coordinator position. Requires the Marine Affairs Coordinator to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature. Transfers the employees and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs. Appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) Marine Affairs Coordinator position.

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