

JAN 30 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE STRENGTHEN HAWAII HOMES PROGRAM.

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

1 SECTION 1. This Act shall be known as may be cited as the
2 "Strengthen Hawaii Homes Act".

3 SECTION 2. The legislature finds that state homeowners are
4 struggling to secure and maintain affordable property insurance
5 due to more frequent catastrophes and tighter underwriting by
6 insurers. The legislature further finds that other states have
7 improved insurance affordability and availability in the face of
8 similar challenges by pairing targeted mitigation assistance
9 with insurance-incentive frameworks tied to recognized
10 resilience standards. Oklahoma's Strengthen Oklahoma Homes Act
11 and the Strengthen Alabama Homes program in Alabama have been
12 linked to premium relief and improved market stability, while
13 greatly increasing the resiliency of residential properties.
14 Western states, including California and Colorado, have also
15 enacted similar programs that reduce wildfire risk and support
16 insurance coverage availability. The legislature further finds
17 that the National Council of Insurance Legislators adopted the



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1 Strengthen Homes Program Model Act as a replicable policy model,
2 reflecting a growing consensus that verified, standards-based
3 mitigation can support more stable property insurance markets.

4 The legislature also finds that effective mitigation
5 assistance in the State must occur at scale. Many of the
6 State's older, single-wall plantation homes are concentrated in
7 neighborhoods where wildfire and wind-driven hazards can spread
8 rapidly from structure to structure. Risk reduction and other
9 insurance benefits sought by individual homeowners may be
10 limited or delayed until a substantial share of nearby homes are
11 also hardened and the expected loss in the surrounding
12 neighborhood declines. The legislature finds, however, that
13 fiscal uncertainty and the scale of need in the State requires a
14 robust, partnership-based approach, including private,
15 nonprofit, federal, state, and county support, to reach older
16 housing stock and income-qualified households that are least
17 able to self-fund upgrades.

18 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to stabilize and,
19 where feasible, reduce property insurance costs and to improve
20 insurance availability in the State by establishing a strengthen
21 Hawaii homes program that:



(1) Prioritizes and incentivizes verified, standards-based mitigation for older and income-qualified homes to reduce risk and insured losses; and

(2) Leverages diversified public-private funding and delivery partnerships, including private, nonprofit, federal, state, and county resources, to maximize participation and implementation statewide.

SECTION 3. The Hawaii Revised Statutes is amended by adding a new chapter to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"CHAPTER

STRENGTHEN HAWAII HOMES PROGRAM

§ -1 Definitions. As used in this chapter:

"Contractor" has the same meaning as defined in section 444-1.

"Department" means the department of land and natural resources.

"Mitigation project" means the construction or retrofitting of insurable property to mitigate potential future damage due to fire.

"Program" means the strengthen Hawaii homes program.



§ -2 Strengthen Hawaii homes program; established. (a)

There is established the strengthen Hawaii homes program within the department of land and natural resources for administrative purposes to provide grants to construct or retrofit insurable property to resist loss due to fire.

(b) Under the program, the department shall:

(1) Apply for financial grants and other types of funding for mitigation projects;

(2) Establish standards for mitigation projects, including designs sufficient to substantially mitigate future damage due to fire; and

(3) Generate a list of certified assessors to provide to applicants for grants and other types of funding.

(c) Under the program, the department may make grants available for mitigation projects to residential property owners and nonprofit entities; provided that any nonprofit entity that accepts a grant from the department shall administer the grant subject to the same regulations as the department and shall provide financial documentation to the department in a timely manner when requested.



1 (d) All mitigation projects shall have all required local
2 permits and pass all applicable assessments required under the
3 applicable county building code and the Insurance Institute for
4 Business and Home Safety Fortified Homes Program, or a similar
5 organization as determined by the department in collaboration
6 with state insurers.

7 (e) The department may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91,
8 necessary for the purposes of this chapter. Any entity
9 providing grants or other types of funding to the program may
10 adopt rules and guidelines under which the grants or other types
11 of funding may be used; provided that the rules and guidelines
12 do not violate state or federal law.

13 (f) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to create
14 an entitlement for property owners or an obligation by the State
15 to fund the assessment, construction, or retrofitting of any
16 insurable property in the State.

17 **§ -3 Grants for residential property owners;**

18 **eligibility.** (a) Residential property owners may apply for a
19 grant under the program; provided that the grant shall only be
20 used for mitigation projects. Eligibility requirements for



1 awarding grants shall be established by the department and shall
2 include but not be limited to the following:

3 (1) The residential property owner shall:

4 (A) Claim primary residence in a county where grants
5 may be approved;

6 (B) Provide proof of a valid, current insurance
7 policy for the insurable property; and

8 (C) Pay the fee for the assessor;

9 (2) The property to be mitigated shall be:

10 (A) An owner-occupied, single-family, primary
11 residence that is not a condominium or mobile
12 home; or

13 (B) A long-term rental property that is the primary
14 residence of the tenant with a lease of one year
15 or longer; and

16 (3) An assessor, who is certified by the organization
17 identified pursuant to section -2(d) and selected
18 from a list provided by the department shall:

19 (A) Prequalify the insurable property as capable of
20 mitigation;



1 (B) Identify all improvements required to achieve the
2 standard approved by the department; and

3 (C) Certify the mitigation project has achieved the
4 standard approved by the department.

5 (b) Grant applications shall be filed electronically with
6 the department in the form and manner prescribed by the
7 department, along with any applicable transaction fees.

8 (c) Documents, materials, and other information submitted
9 to the department by residential property owners or insurance
10 companies in support of a grant application shall be
11 confidential and privileged information, shall not be subject to
12 open records requests, subpoena, or discovery, or admissible in
13 evidence in any private civil action.

14 (d) Any mitigation project involving retrofitting shall be
15 completed within six months of the date that the residential
16 property owner receives notice of the approval of the grant for
17 the mitigation project. Failure to complete the project on time
18 may result in the forfeiture of the grant. Extensions may be
19 given by the department under circumstances the department deems
20 appropriate.



1 (e) Grants shall only be paid to the residential property
2 owner by the department or an agency it designates upon
3 submission of the certification of standard pursuant to
4 subsection (a)(3)(c) to the department.

5 (f) Applications for grants shall be accepted on a first-
6 come, first-served basis within each income tier established by
7 the department, in consultation with the insurance commissioner
8 and the office of the state fire marshal, with priority given
9 to:

10 (1) Lower-income applicants;

11 (2) Applicants who live in locations that have a higher
12 susceptibility to catastrophic fires, based on
13 historical data; and

14 (3) Applicants meeting any other criteria the department
15 deems appropriate.

16 (g) The department may conduct a random inspection of
17 records, financial documentation, and insurable property or
18 mitigation projects awarded a grant under the program for the
19 purposes of detecting fraud.

20 § -4 Contractor; eligibility. (a) A residential
21 property owner awarded a grant under this chapter shall hire a

1 contractor who meets the eligibility criteria contained in
2 subsection (d).

3 (b) The department shall not endorse or otherwise provide
4 preferential treatment to any contractor.

5 (c) A residential property owner shall be responsible for
6 any amount owed to a contractor that exceeds the amount of a
7 grant awarded under this chapter.

8 (d) A contractor eligible to work on a mitigation project
9 under the program shall, at a minimum:

10 (1) Maintain accurate contact information and a current
11 copy of all applicable certificates, licenses, and
12 proof of insurance coverages with the department;

13 (2) Be free from all disciplinary action by the
14 contractors license board;

15 (3) Be registered with the department of commerce and
16 consumer affairs to do business in the State;

17 (4) Have an active general liability policy with \$500,000
18 in liability coverage;

19 (5) Have workers' compensation and employer's liability
20 insurance in accordance with and to the extent
21 required by law;



- (6) Agree to follow all procedures and rules for the program as established by the department;
- (7) Report any potential conflict of interest to the department before any work commences;
- (8) Not have an additional financial interest in any mitigation project awarded a grant under the program for which the contractor performs work besides the payment received by a residential property owner from the department; and
- (9) Not make assessments for any mitigation project awarded a grant under the program.

§ -5 **Assessor; eligibility.** An assessor eligible to assess a mitigation project under the program shall, at a minimum:

- (1) Maintain accurate contact information and a current copy of all applicable certificates, licenses, and proof of insurance coverages with the department;
- (2) Be in good standing with and certified by the organization identified pursuant to section -2(d);
- (3) Be registered with the department of commerce and consumer affairs to do business in the State;



- (4) Agree to follow all procedures and rules for the program as established by the department;
- (5) Report any potential conflict of interest to the department before any assessment commences;
- (6) Not have a financial interest in any mitigation project awarded a grant under the program for which the assessor performs an assessment;
- (7) Not be a contractor or a supplier of materials, products, or systems installed for any mitigation project awarded a grant under the program for which the assessor performs an assessment; and
- (8) Not be the sales agent for any mitigation project awarded a grant under the program.

§ -6 **Strengthen Hawaii homes revolving fund.** (a) There is established in the state treasury the strengthen Hawaii homes revolving fund, into which shall be deposited:

- (1) Federal grants and other types of federal funding;
- (2) Donations and other types of funding from private, nonprofit, state, and county entities; and
- (3) Appropriations made by the legislature to the fund.



1 (b) Moneys in the strengthen Hawaii homes revolving fund
2 shall be used only for the purposes of this chapter.

3 § -7 **Reports.** The department shall submit a report to
4 the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening
5 of each regular session. The report shall include but not be
6 limited to:

7 (1) A list of all grant recipients, mitigation projects,
8 contractors, and assessors related to the program;

9 (2) All revenues, expenditures, encumbrances, and ending
10 balances of the strengthen Hawaii homes revolving
11 fund; and

12 (3) Any findings and recommendations, including any
13 proposed legislation;

14 provided that all confidential, personal, and proprietary
15 information shall be redacted prior to submission."

16 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the
19 establishment of the strengthen Hawaii homes program and the
20 strengthen Hawaii homes revolving fund.



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1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
2 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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Report Title:

DLNR; Strengthen Hawaii Homes Program; Fire Mitigation; Grants; Rules; Single-Family Homes; Long-Term Rental Properties; Residential Property Owners; Insurance; Contractors; Assessors; Mitigation Projects; Strengthen Hawaii Homes Revolving Fund; Report; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Strengthen Hawaii Homes Program under the Department of Land and Natural Resources to award grants for qualified mitigation projects to mitigate against loss from fire. Provides eligibility criteria for residential property owners to receive grants and guidelines for contractors and assessors to perform work on mitigation projects. Establishes the Strengthen Hawaii Homes Revolving Fund. Requires annual reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

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

