
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

ENCOURAGING HAWAI‘I COUNTY, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE PUKŌ
COMMUNITY, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, TO
COMPLETE THE PUKŌ SEWAGE PROJECT.

1 WHEREAS, the Kumulipo, the Hawaiian creation chant,
2 describes a coral polyp as the origin of life in Hawai‘i through
3 the verse, "Hanau ka ‘Uku-ko‘ako‘a, hanau kana, he ‘Ako‘ako‘a,
4 puka"; and
5

6 WHEREAS, coral is vital to Hawai‘i, sustaining Native
7 Hawaiian fisheries, protecting shorelines from storm surge,
8 supporting the tourism economy, and providing enjoyment for
9 families; and
10

11 WHEREAS, the State has approximately eighty thousand
12 cesspools dumping fifty-three million gallons of untreated
13 sewage into the environment each year; and
14

15 WHEREAS, in 2017, the Department of Health identified
16 fourteen priority areas where cesspool upgrades are critically
17 needed to protect public health and the environment, including
18 Puakō; and
19

20 WHEREAS, these cesspools must be upgraded or converted to
21 Director of Health-approved wastewater systems or connected to
22 sewerage systems by 2050; however, the projected total cost of
23 doing so is more than \$1,500,000,000, and there are no ongoing
24 financial support programs available to assist homeowners with
25 upgrade, conversion, or connection; and
26

27 WHEREAS, wastewater pollution is contributing to the
28 degradation of Hawai‘i's ocean resources, including at Puakō
29 Reef, where live coral cover has declined from seventy percent



1 to seven percent, approaching the estimated five percent
2 threshold below which reef systems may be unable to recover; and
3

4 WHEREAS, the County of Hawai'i has signed a memorandum of
5 understanding with Puakō for Reefs, a non-profit organization
6 dedicated to the protection and revitalization of the Puakō
7 Reef, committing to work on the issue together and establishing
8 monthly meetings with the mayor; and
9

10 WHEREAS, within the census-designated place of Puakō, the
11 State owns more than fifty percent of the land area, including
12 Wailea State Park, Puakō boat ramp, the Paniau Beach access
13 area, the planned University of Hawai'i at Hilo Puakō Marine
14 Center, and six vacant residential parcels, all of which require
15 cesspool upgrade or conversion; and
16

17 WHEREAS, sewers are typically built by developers in new
18 subdivisions or by counties during planned expansions; however,
19 there is no roadmap, model, or identified funding support for
20 communities like Puakō that need to address existing cesspool
21 and wastewater issues; and
22

23 WHEREAS, approximately thirty-five thousand households in
24 Hawai'i lack reliable access to high-speed Internet, defined by
25 the emerging federal standard of one hundred megabits per second
26 download and twenty megabits per second upload; and
27

28 WHEREAS, lack of reliable internet access is particularly
29 prominent in rural coastal communities, agricultural areas,
30 Native Hawaiian homestead lands, and remote subdivisions, all of
31 which are heavily dependent on cesspools; and
32

33 WHEREAS, Puakō community volunteers have worked over the
34 last thirteen years to create a fully designed solution, build
35 community support, and raise \$2,500,000 in community donations,
36 all without using a single dollar of government funding; and
37

38 WHEREAS, the proposed Puakō solution is a generational
39 investment, not a short-term fix, which includes installation of
40 advanced wastewater collection technology integrated with fiber-
41 optic infrastructure to support a low-pressure system that
42 enables remote monitoring to reduce long-term operational costs



1 while expanding high-speed internet access for community
2 residents; and
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4 WHEREAS, recognizing that Hawai'i's cesspool crisis is too
5 large for any single entity to address alone, the Puakō Sewage
6 Project leverages collaboration among public, private,
7 philanthropic, and community partners, using the World Economic
8 Forum's 4P investment model for social impact projects, to
9 reduce the burden on any single entity and to create a
10 replicable model that can be used in communities throughout
11 Hawai'i; now, therefore,
12

13 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
14 Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
15 of 2026, the Senate concurring, that Hawai'i County, in
16 collaboration with the Puakō community, Department of Health,
17 and other stakeholders, is encouraged to complete the Puakō
18 Sewage Project to:.

- 19 (1) Protect and restore Puakō Reef;
- 20
- 21 (2) Establish a replicable model demonstrating effective
- 22 financing strategies, governance structures,
- 23 technology performance, public-private partnerships,
- 24 and cost efficiencies to accelerate cesspool
- 25 conversion in similar coastal communities statewide;
- 26 and
- 27
- 28 (3) Help close the digital divide in rural communities in
- 29 Hawai'i with the simultaneous installation of broadband
- 30 infrastructure; and
- 31
- 32

33 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
34 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health,
35 Mayor of the County of Hawai'i, and President of Puakō for Reefs.
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OFFERED BY: 

MAR 10 2026

