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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

ENCOURAGING HAWAI‘I COUNTY, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE PUAKŌ  
COMMUNITY, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT  
HILO, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, TO COMPLETE THE PUAKŌ 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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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



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

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 University of Hawai'i at Hilo, and other stakeholders, is  
18 encouraged to complete the Puakō Sewage Project to:  
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- 20 (1) Protect and restore Puakō Reef;
- 21
- 22 (2) Establish a replicable model demonstrating effective  
23 financing strategies, governance structures,  
24 technology performance, public-private partnerships,  
25 and cost efficiencies to accelerate cesspool  
26 conversion in similar coastal communities statewide;  
27 and
- 28
- 29 (3) Help close the digital divide in rural communities in  
30 Hawai'i with the simultaneous installation of broadband  
31 infrastructure; and  
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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, Chancellor at the University of  
36 Hawai'i at Hilo, and President of Puakō for Reefs.

