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## HOUSE 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  
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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  
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  
30 to seven percent, approaching the estimated five percent  
31 threshold below which reef systems may be unable to recover; and  
32



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

6  
7 WHEREAS, within the census-designated place of Puakō, the  
8 State owns more than fifty percent of the land area, including  
9 Wailea State Park, Puakō boat ramp, the Paniau Beach access  
10 area, the planned University of Hawai'i at Hilo Puakō Marine  
11 Center, and six vacant residential parcels, all of which require  
12 cesspool upgrade or conversion; and

13  
14 WHEREAS, sewers are typically built by developers in new  
15 subdivisions or by counties during planned expansions; however,  
16 there is no roadmap, model, or identified funding support for  
17 communities like Puakō that need to address existing cesspool  
18 and wastewater issues; and

19  
20 WHEREAS, approximately thirty-five thousand households in  
21 Hawai'i lack reliable access to high-speed Internet, defined by  
22 the emerging federal standard of one hundred megabits per second  
23 download and twenty megabits per second upload; and

24  
25 WHEREAS, lack of reliable internet access is particularly  
26 prominent in rural coastal communities, agricultural areas,  
27 Native Hawaiian homestead lands, and remote subdivisions, all of  
28 which are heavily dependent on cesspools; and

29  
30 WHEREAS, Puakō community volunteers have worked over the  
31 last thirteen years to create a fully designed solution, build  
32 community support, and raise \$2,500,000 in community donations,  
33 all without using a single dollar of government funding; and

34  
35 WHEREAS, the proposed Puakō solution is a generational  
36 investment, not a short-term fix, which includes installation of  
37 advanced wastewater collection technology integrated with fiber-  
38 optic infrastructure to support a low-pressure system that  
39 enables remote monitoring to reduce long-term operational costs  
40 while expanding high-speed internet access for community  
41 residents; and  
42



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

9  
 10 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
 11 Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
 12 of 2026, that Hawai'i County, in collaboration with the Puakō  
 13 community, Department of Health, and other stakeholders, is  
 14 encouraged to complete the Puakō Sewage Project to:

- 15  
 16 (1) Protect and restore Puakō Reef;  
 17  
 18 (2) Establish a replicable model demonstrating effective  
 19 financing strategies, governance structures,  
 20 technology performance, public-private partnerships,  
 21 and cost efficiencies to accelerate cesspool  
 22 conversion in similar coastal communities statewide;  
 23 and  
 24  
 25 (3) Help close the digital divide in rural communities in  
 26 Hawai'i with the simultaneous installation of broadband  
 27 infrastructure; and  
 28

29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
 30 Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health, Mayor of  
 31 the County of Hawai'i, and President of Puakō for Reefs.  
 32  
 33  
 34

OFFERED BY: 

MAR 10 2026

