
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 economic sector includes a broad set of industries,
8 including but not limited to marine construction, ship and boat
9 building, marine transportation, energy, tourism and recreation,
10 fisheries and other fishery-related businesses, aquaculture,
11 marine biotechnology, ocean and coastal management, and
12 conservation. The annual economic output of the blue economy is
13 projected to 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' only
16 island state, Hawaii's blue economy is substantial and growing,
17 with the number of marine businesses in the State having



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

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

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

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



1 encompass a broad range of blue economy activities, supported by
2 technology, innovation, and Native Hawaiian knowledge as
3 essential cross-cutting priorities.

4 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 5 (1) Declare that the State is an ocean cluster;
- 6 (2) Establish the office of marine affairs and marine
7 affairs governing board within the Hawaii technology
8 development corporation;
- 9 (3) Establish the marine affairs coordinator position;
- 10 (4) Repeal the powers and duties of the department of
11 business, economic development, and tourism over
12 marine affairs; and
- 13 (5) Transfer the personnel and functions of the governor's
14 advisory committee on marine affairs to the office of
15 marine affairs.

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

19 **"PART . MARINE AFFAIRS**

20 **§206M-A Declaration of intent.** The legislature declares
21 it to be the purpose of this part to recognize and promote the



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

17 **§206M-B Definitions.** As used in this part:

18 "Blue economy" means industrial and economic activities
19 that sustainably use ocean- and aquatic-related resources for
20 economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation while
21 preserving the health of oceanic and aquatic ecosystems. "Blue



1 economy" includes industries such as marine construction, ship
2 and boat building, marine transportation, energy, tourism and
3 recreation, fisheries and fishery-related businesses,
4 aquaculture, marine biotechnology, ocean and coastal management,
5 and conservation.

6 "Board" means the marine affairs governing board.

7 "Coordinator" means the marine affairs coordinator.

8 "Office" means the office of marine affairs.

9 **§206M-C Office of marine affairs; marine affairs governing**

10 **board; establishment.** (a) There is established the office of
11 marine affairs within the development corporation for
12 administrative purposes only. The purpose of the office shall
13 be to facilitate the development of marine affairs-related
14 industries in the State. Duties of the office shall include but
15 not be limited to:

16 (1) Developing and implementing a statewide marine affairs
17 strategy that prioritizes the sustainable use,
18 conservation, and stewardship of marine resources and
19 encompasses:

20 (A) Research and education;

21 (B) Ecosystem management;



- 1 (C) Coastal resilience;
- 2 (D) Fisheries and ocean-based food systems;
- 3 (E) Marine tourism and recreation;
- 4 (F) Conservation and stewardship; and
- 5 (G) Marine transportation and logistics;
- 6 (2) Conducting comprehensive reviews of the status of
- 7 marine policy in the State at regular intervals;
- 8 (3) Identifying key challenges and opportunities for the
- 9 State in marine affairs;
- 10 (4) Collaborating with and supporting other public
- 11 entities working to develop the State's marine
- 12 industries;
- 13 (5) Promoting and developing technology-enabled marine
- 14 industries within the blue economy by:
- 15 (A) Developing and implementing a statewide ocean
- 16 technology and innovation development strategy
- 17 that complements the statewide marine affairs
- 18 strategy developed pursuant to paragraph (1);
- 19 (B) Conducting regular blue economy value chain
- 20 assessments, including maritime industries,
- 21 aquaculture, coastal resilience, and ocean



- 1 observation data to determine constraints,
- 2 capital requirements, workforce gaps, and
- 3 commercialization pathways;
- 4 (C) Identifying, evaluating, and proposing solutions
- 5 to regulatory, capital, workforce,
- 6 infrastructure, and permitting barriers to the
- 7 growth and competitiveness of technology-enabled
- 8 ocean industries in the State;
- 9 (D) Establishing a blue economy project and
- 10 investment readiness program to facilitate the
- 11 conversion of ocean innovation concepts into
- 12 investable and deployable projects;
- 13 (E) Pursuing public, private, and federal funding to
- 14 support ocean innovation and commercialization
- 15 and the development of a robust ocean technology
- 16 ecosystem;
- 17 (F) Developing advanced technologies to support
- 18 marine industries, including:
- 19 (i) Autonomous maritime navigation;
- 20 (ii) Digital and physical modernization of ocean
- 21 and coastal infrastructure;



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

15 In carrying out its duties, the office shall not supplant
16 the strategies and priorities of the department of land and
17 natural resources but shall integrate its efforts with the
18 department's ongoing work.

19 (b) The governing body of the office shall be the marine
20 affairs governing board, consisting of the following members:



- 1 (1) The chairperson of the board of land and natural
2 resources or the chairperson's designee;
- 3 (2) The chairperson of the board of agriculture and
4 biosecurity or the chairperson's designee;
- 5 (3) The deputy director of the harbors division of the
6 department of transportation or the deputy director's
7 designee;
- 8 (4) The executive director of the natural energy
9 laboratory of Hawaii authority or the executive
10 director's designee;
- 11 (5) The chief executive officer of the Hawaii technology
12 development corporation or the chief executive
13 officer's designee;
- 14 (6) The executive director of the agribusiness development
15 corporation or the executive director's designee;
- 16 (7) The chief energy officer of the Hawaii state energy
17 office or the chief energy officer's designee;
- 18 (8) The chairperson of the board of trustees of the office
19 of Hawaiian affairs or the chairperson's designee;
- 20 (9) Two representatives from the university of Hawaii
21 system, including:



1 (A) The dean of the school of ocean and earth science
2 and technology or the dean's designee; and

3 (B) The vice president for research and innovation or
4 the vice president's designee; and

5 (10) Three representatives of the business sector with
6 experience in the marine affairs field, including
7 ocean shipping, ocean engineering, marine science and
8 technology, consulting and public affairs, and marine
9 research, who shall be invited by the chairperson of
10 the board to participate.

11 (c) Members shall be appointed in accordance with section
12 26-34. The terms of the members shall be for four years. The
13 board shall select one of its members to serve as chairperson.
14 No member of the board shall receive any compensation for board
15 services, but shall be allowed reimbursement for necessary
16 expenses for travel, board, and lodging incurred in the
17 performance of board duties.

18 **§206M-D Marine affairs coordinator; appointment; duties.**

19 (a) The governor shall appoint a marine affairs coordinator,
20 without regard to chapter 76, for the proper administration,
21 enforcement, and facilitation of this part; provided that the



1 coordinator shall be eligible to participate in state employee
2 benefit plans. Notwithstanding section 76-16(b)(17), this
3 exemption from chapter 76 shall not expire. The salary of the
4 coordinator shall be set by the director of business, economic
5 development, and tourism.

6 (b) The marine affairs coordinator shall:

7 (1) Develop plans for future projects that align with the
8 statewide marine affairs strategy and statewide ocean
9 technology and innovation development strategy,
10 including objectives and criteria to:

11 (A) Measure the accomplishment of objectives;

12 (B) Develop and implement programs through which the
13 objectives are to be attained; and

14 (C) Determine financial requirements for the total
15 and optimum development of the State's marine
16 resources based on the goals and needs of the
17 State, consistent with constitutional and
18 statutory mandates related to natural resource
19 protection;

20 (2) Conduct systematic analyses of existing and proposed
21 marine programs; evaluate the analyses conducted by



1 state agencies; and recommend to the office, governor,
2 and legislature programs that represent the most
3 effective allocation of resources for the development
4 of the blue economy;

5 (3) Assist departments having interests in marine affairs,
6 including by assisting state agencies to:

7 (A) Develop and analyze plans for future economic
8 development projects relating to marine resources
9 or technologies;

10 (B) Coordinate activities that involve the
11 responsibilities of multiple state agencies; and

12 (C) Ensure the timely and effective implementation of
13 all authorized marine projects and programs;

14 (4) Coordinate the dissemination of information related to
15 the office's activities and the State's leadership
16 potential as the center for marine affairs to the
17 federal government, other state governments,
18 governments of nations with interests in the Pacific
19 basin, private and public organizations involved in
20 marine science and technology, and commercial
21 enterprises;



- 1 (5) Coordinate the State's involvement in national and
2 international efforts to investigate, develop, and use
3 the marine resources of the Pacific basin;
- 4 (6) Develop programs to continuously encourage private and
5 public marine exploration and research projects that
6 will result in the development of improved
7 technological capabilities in the State;
- 8 (7) Formulate specific program and project proposals to
9 solicit increased investment from the federal
10 government and other sources to develop the State's
11 marine resources and technologies and coordinate the
12 preparation and submission of program and project
13 proposals of state agencies;
- 14 (8) Serve as consultant on behalf of the office to the
15 governor, state agencies, and private industry on
16 matters relating to the preservation and enhancement
17 of the quality of the State's marine environment;
- 18 (9) Perform other services as may be required by the
19 office, governor, or legislature;
- 20 (10) Contract for services when required for the
21 implementation of this part; and



1 (11) No later than December 1 of each year, prepare and
2 submit an annual report to the governor and
3 legislature on the implementation of this part and all
4 matters related to marine affairs, including the
5 office's findings, recommendations, and any proposed
6 legislation."

7 SECTION 3. Section 201-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 repealed.

9 [~~"§201-13 Powers and duties of the department of business,
10 economic development, and tourism in marine affairs. The
11 department of business, economic development, and tourism shall:~~

12 ~~(1) Assist state agencies in developing and analyzing
13 plans, including objectives, criteria to measure the
14 accomplishment of objectives, programs through which
15 the objectives are to be attained, and financial
16 requirements for the total and optimum development of
17 Hawaii's marine resources based on the needs and goals
18 of the State;~~

19 ~~(2) Develop and analyze plans for future economic
20 development projects, including objectives and
21 criteria to measure the accomplishment of objectives;~~



- 1 ~~develop and implement programs through which the~~
2 ~~objectives are to be attained; and determine financial~~
3 ~~requirements for the total and optimum development of~~
4 ~~Hawaii's marine resources based on the needs and goals~~
5 ~~of the State;~~
- 6 ~~(3) Assist those departments having interests in marine~~
7 ~~affairs, coordinate those activities which involve the~~
8 ~~responsibilities of multiple state agencies, and~~
9 ~~encourage the timely and effective implementation of~~
10 ~~all authorized marine projects and programs;~~
- 11 ~~(4) Coordinate the dissemination of information to the~~
12 ~~federal government, other state governments,~~
13 ~~governments of nations with interests in the Pacific~~
14 ~~basin, private and public organizations involved in~~
15 ~~marine science and technology, and commercial~~
16 ~~enterprises of Hawaii's leadership potential as the~~
17 ~~center for marine affairs;~~
- 18 ~~(5) Coordinate the State's involvement in national and~~
19 ~~international efforts to investigate, develop and~~
20 ~~utilize the marine resources of the Pacific basin;~~



- 1 ~~(6) Develop programs to continuously encourage private and~~
2 ~~public marine exploration and research projects which~~
3 ~~will result in the development of improved~~
4 ~~technological capabilities in Hawaii; and~~
5 ~~(7) Formulate and assist state agencies in formulating~~
6 ~~specific program and project proposals to solicit~~
7 ~~increased investment by the federal government and~~
8 ~~other sources to develop Hawaii's marine resources."]~~

9 SECTION 4. The governor's advisory committee on marine
10 affairs established by executive order is redesignated as the
11 office of marine affairs established by section 206M-C, Hawaii
12 Revised Statutes, and shall assume the functions prescribed by
13 section 206M-C, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

14 The members presently serving on the governor's advisory
15 committee on marine affairs shall continue to serve as members
16 of the marine affairs governing board; provided that subsequent
17 appointments to the marine affairs governing board shall conform
18 with the requirements of section 206M-C, Hawaii Revised
19 Statutes. The chairperson of the board of land and natural
20 resources, chairperson of the board of agriculture and
21 biosecurity, deputy director of the harbors division of the



1 department of transportation, executive director of the natural
2 energy laboratory of Hawaii authority, chief executive officer
3 of the Hawaii technology development corporation, executive
4 director of the agribusiness development corporation, chief
5 energy officer of the Hawaii state energy office, chairperson of
6 the board of trustees of the office of Hawaiian affairs, and
7 representatives of the university of Hawaii system shall begin
8 their service on the marine affairs governing board upon the
9 effective date of this Act.

10 All officers and employees whose functions relate to the
11 governor's advisory committee on marine affairs shall continue
12 to serve but, upon the effective date of this Act, shall be
13 considered employees of the office of marine affairs. The
14 status of the employees shall not be affected by this Act,
15 except for the redesignation of the governor's advisory
16 committee on marine affairs.

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

20 All officers and employees whose functions are transferred
21 by this Act shall be transferred with their functions and shall



1 continue to perform their regular duties upon their transfer,
2 subject to the state personnel laws and this Act.

3 No officer or employee of the State having tenure shall
4 suffer any loss of salary, seniority, prior service credit,
5 vacation, sick leave, or other employee benefit or privilege as
6 a consequence of this Act, and that officer or employee may be
7 transferred or appointed to a civil service position without the
8 necessity of examination; provided that the officer or employee
9 possesses the minimum qualifications for the position to which
10 the officer or employee is transferred or appointed; provided
11 further that subsequent changes in status may be made pursuant
12 to applicable civil service and compensation laws.

13 An officer or employee of the State who does not have
14 tenure and who may be transferred or appointed to a civil
15 service position as a consequence of this Act shall become a
16 civil service employee without the loss of salary, seniority,
17 prior service credit, vacation, sick leave, or other employee
18 benefits or privileges and without the necessity of examination;
19 provided that the officer or employee possesses the minimum
20 qualifications for the position to which the officer or employee
21 is transferred or appointed.



1 If an office or position held by an officer or employee
2 having tenure is abolished, the officer or employee shall not
3 thereby be separated from public employment, but shall remain in
4 the employment of the State with the same pay and classification
5 and shall be transferred to another office or position for which
6 the officer or employee is eligible under the personnel laws of
7 the State as determined by the head of the department or the
8 governor.

9 SECTION 6. All appropriations, records, equipment,
10 machines, files, supplies, contracts, books, papers, documents,
11 maps, and other personal property heretofore made, used,
12 acquired, or held by the governor's advisory committee on marine
13 affairs relating to the functions transferred to the office of
14 marine affairs shall be transferred with the functions to which
15 they relate.

16 SECTION 7. In codifying the new sections added by
17 section 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute
18 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating
19 the new sections in this Act.

20 SECTION 8. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
21 and stricken.



1 SECTION 9. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.



Report Title:

DBEDT; Hawaii Technology Development Corporation; Ocean Cluster; Office of Marine Affairs; Marine Affairs Governing Board; Marine Affairs Coordinator; Reports; Transfer

Description:

Declares that the State is an ocean cluster. Establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and Marine Affairs Governing Board within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation. Establishes the Marine Affairs Coordinator position. Repeals the powers and duties of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism over marine affairs. Transfers the employees and functions of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs to the Office of Marine Affairs. (CD1)

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