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# 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 \$3,000,000,000,000 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 with other countries, the State must act to modernize its  
6 approach and capitalize on its technology, infrastructure, and  
7 manufacturing advancements. These assets include marine  
8 biotechnology; autonomous maritime navigation; cybersecurity;  
9 shipping, ports, and harbors; and ocean data observation  
10 systems.

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

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



1 diversified economic growth. The Hawaii ocean cluster would  
2 encompass a broad range of blue economy activities, supported by  
3 technology, innovation, and Native Hawaiian knowledge as  
4 essential cross-cutting priorities.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

6 (1) Declare that the State is an ocean cluster;

7 (2) Establish the office of marine affairs and marine  
8 affairs task force within the Hawaii technology  
9 development corporation;

10 (3) Establish and appropriate funds for the marine affairs  
11 coordinator position;

12 (4) Repeal the powers and duties of the department of  
13 business, economic development, and tourism over  
14 marine affairs; and

15 (5) Transfer the personnel and functions of the governor's  
16 advisory committee on marine affairs to the office of  
17 marine affairs.

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

21 "PART . MARINE AFFAIRS



1           **§206M-A Declaration of intent.** The legislature declares  
2 it to be the purpose of this part to recognize and promote the  
3 State as an ocean cluster, a globally unique hub for ocean- and  
4 aquatic-centered culture, stewardship, economic opportunity, and  
5 innovation. The legislature recognizes that the State's status  
6 as the United States' only island state; strategic location in  
7 the Pacific Ocean; and history of Native Hawaiian knowledge in  
8 ocean navigation, regenerative marine resource management and  
9 ecosystem monitoring, and coastal resilience, uniquely position  
10 the State to lead the Pacific region in ocean- and aquatic-based  
11 industry development. The legislature further declares that  
12 actions taken under this part shall recognize the State's legacy  
13 within the blue economy while positioning the State as a global  
14 center of excellence for ocean- and aquatic-related activities.  
15 It is the intent of the legislature that the State's development  
16 as an ocean cluster benefits communities across the State  
17 through innovation that promotes cultural heritage and economic  
18 opportunity.

19           **§206M-B Definitions.** As used in this part:

20           "Blue economy" means industrial and economic activities  
21 that sustainably use ocean- and aquatic-related resources for



1 economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation while  
2 preserving the health of oceanic and aquatic ecosystems. "Blue  
3 economy" includes but is not limited to industries such as  
4 marine construction, ship and boat building, marine  
5 transportation, energy, tourism and recreation, fisheries and  
6 fishery-related businesses, aquaculture, marine biotechnology,  
7 ocean and coastal management, and conservation.

8 "Coordinator" means the marine affairs coordinator.

9 "Office" means the office of marine affairs.

10 "Task force" means the marine affairs task force.

11 **§206M-C Office of marine affairs; marine affairs task**

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

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



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



- 1 (B) Conducting regular blue economy value chain
- 2 assessments, including but not limited to
- 3 maritime industries, aquaculture, coastal
- 4 resilience, and ocean observation data to
- 5 determine constraints, capital requirements,
- 6 workforce gaps, and commercialization pathways;
- 7 (C) Identifying, evaluating, and proposing solutions
- 8 to regulatory, capital, workforce,
- 9 infrastructure, and permitting barriers to the
- 10 growth and competitiveness of technology-enabled
- 11 ocean industries in the State;
- 12 (D) Establishing a blue economy project and
- 13 investment readiness program to facilitate the
- 14 conversion of ocean innovation concepts into
- 15 investable and deployable projects;
- 16 (E) Pursuing public, private, and federal funding to
- 17 support ocean innovation and commercialization
- 18 and the development of a robust ocean technology
- 19 ecosystem;
- 20 (F) Developing advanced technologies to support
- 21 marine industries, including but not limited to:

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

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



- 1 (b) The governing body of the office shall consist of a  
2 marine affairs task force consisting of the following members:
- 3 (1) The chairperson of the board of land and natural  
4 resources or the chairperson's designee;
- 5 (2) The chairperson of the board of agriculture and  
6 biosecurity or the chairperson's designee;
- 7 (3) The deputy director of the harbors division of the  
8 department of transportation or the deputy director's  
9 designee;
- 10 (4) The executive director of the natural energy  
11 laboratory of Hawaii authority or the executive  
12 director's designee;
- 13 (5) The chief executive officer of the Hawaii technology  
14 development corporation or the chief executive  
15 officer's designee;
- 16 (6) The executive director of the agribusiness development  
17 corporation or the executive director's designee;
- 18 (7) The chief energy officer of the Hawaii state energy  
19 office or the chief energy officer's designee;
- 20 (8) The chairperson of the board of trustees of the office  
21 of Hawaiian affairs or the chairperson's designee;



- 1           (9) Two representatives from the university of Hawaii  
2           system, including:
- 3           (A) The dean of the school of ocean and earth science  
4           and technology or the dean's designee; and
- 5           (B) The vice president of research and innovation or  
6           the vice president's designee; and
- 7           (10) Three representatives of the business sector with  
8           experience in the marine affairs field, including  
9           ocean shipping, ocean engineering, marine science and  
10          technology, consulting and public affairs, and marine  
11          research, who shall be invited by the chairperson of  
12          the task force to participate.
- 13          (c) Members shall be appointed in accordance with section  
14 26-34. The terms of the members shall be for four years. The  
15 task force shall select one of its members to serve as  
16 chairperson. No member of the task force shall receive any  
17 compensation for task force services, but shall be allowed  
18 reimbursement for necessary expenses for travel, board, and  
19 lodging incurred in the performance of task force duties.
- 20          **§206M-D Marine affairs coordinator; appointment; duties.**
- 21          (a) The governor shall appoint a marine affairs coordinator,



1 without regard to chapter 76, for the proper administration,  
2 enforcement, and facilitation of this part; provided that the  
3 coordinator shall be eligible to participate in state employee  
4 benefit plans. Notwithstanding section 76-16(b)(17), this  
5 exemption from chapter 76 shall not expire. The salary of the  
6 coordinator shall be set by the governor.

7 (b) The marine affairs coordinator shall:

8 (1) Develop plans for future projects that align with the  
9 statewide marine affairs strategy and statewide ocean  
10 technology and innovation development strategy,  
11 including objectives and criteria to measure the  
12 accomplishment of objectives; develop and implement  
13 programs through which the objectives are to be  
14 attained; and determine financial requirements for the  
15 total and optimum development of the State's marine  
16 resources based on the goals and needs of the State,  
17 consistent with constitutional and statutory mandates  
18 related to natural resource protection;

19 (2) Conduct systematic analyses of existing and proposed  
20 marine programs; evaluate the analyses conducted by  
21 state agencies; and recommend to the office, governor,



1 and legislature programs that represent the most  
2 effective allocation of resources for the development  
3 of the blue economy;

4 (3) Assist departments having interests in marine affairs,  
5 including by assisting state agencies to develop and  
6 analyze plans for future economic development projects  
7 relating to marine resources or technologies;  
8 coordinate activities that involve the  
9 responsibilities of multiple state agencies; and  
10 ensure the timely and effective implementation of all  
11 authorized marine projects and programs;

12 (4) Coordinate the dissemination of information related to  
13 the office's activities and the State's leadership  
14 potential as the center for marine affairs to the  
15 federal government, other state governments,  
16 governments of nations with interests in the Pacific  
17 basin, private and public organizations involved in  
18 marine science and technology, and commercial  
19 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) Prepare and submit an annual report to the governor  
 2 and legislature on the implementation of this part and  
 3 all matters related to marine affairs, including the  
 4 office's findings and recommendations, and any  
 5 proposed legislation, no later than December 1 of each  
 6 year."

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 but as  
16      members of the marine affairs task force; provided that  
17      subsequent appointments to the office of marine affairs shall  
18      conform 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, chief  
6 executive officer of the office of Hawaiian affairs, and  
7 representatives of the university of Hawaii system shall begin  
8 their service on the marine affairs task force 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 shall upon the effective date of this Act 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 such 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 transferred or appointed; and provided that subsequent changes  
11 in status may be made pursuant to applicable civil service and  
12 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 such officer or employee possesses the minimum  
20 qualifications for the position to which transferred or  
21 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 some other office or position for  
6 which the officer or employee is eligible under the personnel  
7 laws of the State as determined by the head of the department or  
8 the 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. There is appropriated out of the general  
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
18 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to  
19 fund one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) marine affairs  
20 coordinator position within the Hawaii technology development  
21 corporation to support the office of marine affairs.



1           The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii  
2 technology development corporation for the purposes of this  
3 part.

4           SECTION 8. In codifying the new sections added by section  
5 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute  
6 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating  
7 the new sections in this Act.

8           SECTION 9. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
9 and stricken.

10          SECTION 10. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



**Report Title:**

Hawaii Technology Development Corporation; Ocean Cluster; Office of Marine Affairs; Marine Affairs Task Force; Marine Affairs Coordinator; Reports; Transfer; Appropriation

**Description:**

Declares that the State is an ocean cluster. Establishes the Office of Marine Affairs and Marine Affairs Task Force within the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation. Establishes and appropriates funds for 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. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

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