THE SENATE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 679

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HURRICANE SHELTERS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that, with warmer seas caused by climate change, the spawning area for hurricanes near Mexico has moved north, and now, hurricanes that used to pass a few hundred miles below Hawaii are headed right at the State. Warmer seas means stronger hurricanes, and categories three, four, and five hurricanes are increasing in number and strength. Super category five hurricanes, with wind speeds of up to two hundred miles per hour, have been occurring every eight years. By 2080, a super category five hurricane is expected to occur at least once a year, with the northern Pacific, which includes Hawaii, anticipated to have the most.

The legislature further finds that the State used to be protected by cooler surrounding seas and by trade winds at a lower level, with strong winds in the opposite direction at a higher level that could tear approaching hurricanes apart. As those seas have now warmed and having lost two days of trade

winds each year for fifty years, the State now has protection from hurricanes for only half of the days of the year.

The legislature also finds that Hawaii cannot call its places of refuge "hurricane shelters" because many of the shelters do not meet the criteria of legitimate hurricane shelters, and few refuge areas in the State are able to withstand even a category two hurricane. In addition, there are only a few refuge areas in the State, with a capacity to hold up to one hundred thousand people; however the Honolulu department of emergency management expects that during a hurricane, the expectation is that two hundred thousand people will need to seek shelter.

In addition, as there are numerous wooden homes in Hawaii, most of these homes will be damaged or destroyed even in a category one hurricane. Very few shelters can withstand a category three, four, or five hurricane, and if a hurricane strikes the State, there will be no other place for people to go.

The legislature believes that it has a deep moral obligation to the people of the State and to future generations

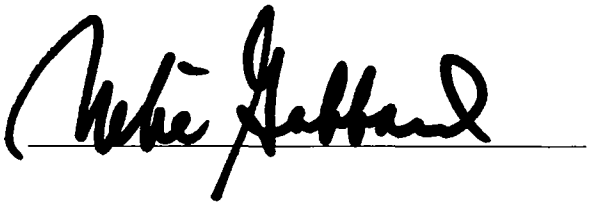
living in Hawaii to immediately begin to build every home and every building to withstand future hurricanes.

Accordingly the purpose of this Act is to fund the strengthening of existing hurricane shelters and development of new hurricane shelters.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the office of the governor, in collaboration with the insurance division of the department of commerce and consumer affairs and Hawaii emergency management agency, to strengthen existing hurricane shelters and develop new hurricane shelters to withstand category five hurricanes.

The sums appropriated shall be expended by the office of the governor for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

INTRODUCED BY: 

S.B. NO. 679

Report Title:
Governor; DCCA; HIEMA; Hurricane Shelters; Strengthening; Development

Description:
Appropriates funds for the Office of the Governor, in collaboration with the Insurance Division of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, to strengthen existing hurricane shelters and develop new hurricane shelters to withstand category five hurricanes.

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