

MAR 10 2026

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING OPEN WATER LIFEGUARDS AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR ESSENTIAL ROLE IN EMERGENCY
RESPONSE, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING THROUGHOUT
THE STATE.

1 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards perform an essential public
2 safety function by protecting the lives of countless residents
3 and visitors from death or serious injury throughout the State;
4 and

5
6 WHEREAS, in Kauai and Maui counties, lifeguards are
7 professionally designated as ocean safety officers, while
8 lifeguards in the City and County of Honolulu and Hawaii County
9 are designated as water safety officers, reflecting their
10 specialized training, responsibilities, and scope of duty; and

11
12 WHEREAS, in the performance of their duties, open water
13 lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant risk to
14 their own lives and physical safety in dynamic and hazardous
15 ocean and shoreline environments; and

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17 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards are frequently among the
18 first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes and operate
19 alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life,
20 secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional
21 responders arrive; and

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23 WHEREAS, the duties of open water lifeguards extend beyond
24 ocean rescues and include responding to emergencies on land,
25 such as cardiac arrest, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle
26 collisions occurring on or near beaches, parks, and public
27 roadways; and

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29 WHEREAS, many open water lifeguards are cross-trained in
30 emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement
31 support, and water rescue craft operations; and



1
2 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards undergo rigorous and
3 continuous training, including but not limited to high-
4 performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external
5 defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, and emergency
6 scene management; and
7

8 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards respond to emergencies by
9 attending to, treating, assisting, and transporting victims,
10 which collectively constitute the four defined duties of an
11 emergency response employee; and
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13 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards not only protect human life,
14 but also safeguard property, preserve evidence, and protect the
15 environment, which together represent the four core tenets
16 commonly used to define a first responder; and
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18 WHEREAS, the term "first responder" is commonly defined as
19 an individual with specialized training who is among the first
20 to arrive and provide assistance at the scene of an emergency;
21 and
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23 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards differ fundamentally from
24 pool lifeguards due to the unpredictable and hazardous
25 environment in which they operate and the wide range of
26 emergency situations and locations to which they respond; and
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28 WHEREAS, many other countries formally recognize lifeguards
29 as emergency responders and grant them access to programs,
30 protections, and resources afforded to first responders; now,
31 therefore,
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33 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
34 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, the
35 House of Representatives concurring, that this body recognizes
36 open water lifeguards, including ocean safety officers and water
37 safety officers, as first responders in acknowledgement of their
38 essential role in emergency response, public safety, and
39 community wellbeing throughout the State; and
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41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all relevant state and county
42 agencies, departments, and governing bodies are urged to adopt



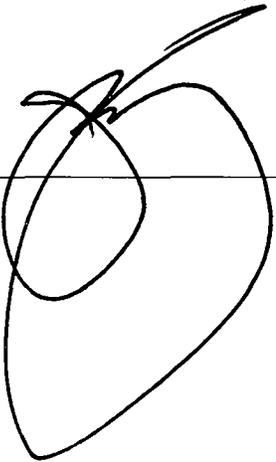
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1 this recognition and ensure that open water lifeguards are
2 afforded the rights, resources, training support, and
3 professional respect accorded to first responders; and
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5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that public safety agencies are
6 encouraged to continue collaboration amongst themselves to
7 strengthen emergency response capabilities and enhance safety
8 across the State's ocean, shoreline, and public environments;
9 and
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11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
12 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, and mayor
13 of each county.
14
15
16

OFFERED BY: _____

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature consists of several overlapping loops and a long, sweeping stroke that extends upwards and to the right.