

MAR 16 2026

SENATE RESOLUTION

URGING STATE AGENCIES THAT OWN OR CONTROL LAND IN WEST MAUI TO IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE AGGRESSIVE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT, FUEL REDUCTION, DEFENSIBLE SPACE, AND EMERGENCY ACCESS MEASURES TO REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK TO LAHAINA AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

1 WHEREAS, Act 302, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025 (Act 302),
2 established the Office of the State Fire Marshal within the
3 Department of Law Enforcement for administrative purposes and
4 charged the Office with reviewing and assessing the fire risk of
5 the State, coordinating fire protection efforts among local
6 agencies, and conducting inspections of state buildings and
7 facilities to ensure fire safety compliance; and

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9 WHEREAS, Act 302 allowed the Office of the State Fire
10 Marshal to oversee development of a statewide wildfire hazard
11 map and to facilitate vegetation management, defensible space,
12 and other fuel modification activities through a community risk
13 reduction program; and

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15 WHEREAS, Act 302 further required the Office of the State
16 Fire Marshal to submit a biennial report to the Legislature
17 regarding community risk reduction and the establishment,
18 administration, and enforcement of defensible space
19 requirements, thereby reflecting a clear statewide policy that
20 wildfire-risk reduction on public lands is an ongoing government
21 responsibility and not a discretionary afterthought; and

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23 WHEREAS, the Legislature has continued to consider
24 additional vegetation-management measures to reduce wildfire
25 risk, including proposals to require owners and persons in
26 control of hazardous fire-area property to maintain effective
27 firebreaks and clear flammable vegetation, to establish a
28 community fuels reduction project on state lands adjacent to
29 communities, to require trimming of hazardous vegetation near
30 utility corridors and public rights-of-way by public and private
31 property owners, and to treat hazardous vegetation as a public
32 nuisance subject to abatement; and

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1 WHEREAS, reports on the Lahaina wildfire and its aftermath
2 documented that state-owned lands formed part of the larger,
3 unmanaged, fire-prone grassland landscape around Lahaina and
4 that West Maui remained at high wildfire risk because invasive
5 grasses lacked active management, placing the State on clear
6 notice that similar conditions can again serve as a conduit for
7 the spread of fire into developed areas if hazardous fuels are
8 not systematically reduced; and
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10 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development
11 Corporation controls substantial lands in the Lahaina area,
12 including the Villages of Leialii, which are situated on
13 approximately 1,128 acres of state-owned land mauka of the
14 Lahaina Civic Center, and the State previously leased
15 approximately twenty acres adjacent to the Lahaina Civic Center
16 from the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation for
17 public use and expansion of civic facilities; and
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19 WHEREAS, temporary housing areas for wildfire survivors
20 were developed on approximately fifty-seven acres mauka of the
21 Lahaina Civic Center, and reporting on the temporary housing
22 areas emphasized both the presence of brush conditions before
23 development and the critical role of an emergency evacuation
24 route in allowing escape from Lahaina during the 2023 Maui
25 wildfires; and
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27 WHEREAS, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands has direct
28 interests in West Maui, including the Leialii Hawaiian homestead
29 community located just minutes west of Lahaina, and the possible
30 transfer of hundreds of additional acres within the Villages of
31 Leialii project further demonstrates the Department's
32 substantial and growing land-management responsibility in this
33 fire-prone corridor; and
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35 WHEREAS, the Department of Education likewise controls and
36 operates critical school lands and facilities in Lahaina, and
37 the State found it necessary after the 2023 Maui wildfires to
38 construct a 2.5-mile emergency evacuation route from the
39 Lahainaluna fire lane to the Lahaina Bypass, with additional
40 access improvements, before Lahaina schools could safely reopen,
41 confirming the severe ingress and egress constraints affecting
42 this area; and
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1 WHEREAS, community concern remains acute regarding rampant
2 vegetation growth on large parcels near homes, schools,
3 evacuation corridors, and temporary housing areas for wildfire
4 survivors, and public reporting one and two years after the
5 Lahaina disaster continued to describe broad stretches of
6 unmanaged flammable grass on Maui and to emphasize that large
7 property owners need to do more to reduce fuel loads; and
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9 WHEREAS, the winter of 2025 into 2026 brought repeated
10 periods of heavy rain, flood watches, and saturated ground
11 conditions in the County of Maui, and while the storms reduced
12 immediate dryness in some areas, it is a reasonable inference
13 that repeated winter rain events have accelerated vegetative
14 growth that may cure into additional wildfire fuel as conditions
15 dry later in the year; now, therefore,
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17 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
18 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,
19 that state agencies owning or controlling land in West Maui,
20 including the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development
21 Corporation, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Department of
22 Accounting and General Services, Department of Land and Natural
23 Resources, and any other applicable state agencies, are urged to
24 immediately identify, prioritize, and abate hazardous
25 vegetation, invasive grasses, and other combustible growth on
26 lands in or adjacent to Lahaina and nearby West Maui communities
27 for the purpose of reducing the risk of wildfires; and
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29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that applicable state agencies are
30 urged to establish and maintain defensible space, fuel breaks,
31 and other appropriate fuel-modification measures on state-owned
32 or -controlled lands bordering residential communities, schools,
33 temporary housing areas for wildfire survivors, major evacuation
34 corridors, and other occupied or vulnerable areas in West Maui;
35 and
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37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that applicable state agencies are
38 urged to inspect and maintain all existing emergency access
39 roads, fire lanes, gates, and potential secondary ingress and
40 egress routes serving or affecting state-owned or -controlled
41 lands in West Maui, and where any existing routes are incomplete
42 or inadequate, to work with the Office of the State Fire
43 Marshal, Department of Transportation, Maui Emergency Management



1 Agency, and County of Maui to accelerate additional emergency-
2 access improvements; and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Office of the State Fire
5 Marshal is urged to use its authority to inspect state buildings
6 and facilities, assess fire risk, coordinate fire protection
7 efforts, and support community risk reduction to assist in
8 evaluating state-owned or -controlled lands in West Maui and in
9 recommending site-specific corrective actions, including
10 vegetation management, defensible space, and emergency access
11 improvements; and

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13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Hawaii Housing Finance and
14 Development Corporation, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and
15 Department of Education are urged to give immediate priority to
16 parcels in and around the Lahaina Civic Center, Leialii,
17 Lahainaluna, Princess Nahienaena Elementary, Lahaina
18 Intermediate School, and other state-associated facilities or
19 lands where hazardous vegetation and constrained evacuation
20 routes could endanger residents, students, staff, or wildfire
21 survivors; and

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23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Land and
24 Natural Resources, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Department
25 of Accounting and General Services, Hawaii Housing Finance and
26 Development Corporation, and any other applicable state agencies
27 are requested to submit a report of their efforts to the
28 Legislature no later than December 31, 2026; and

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30 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
31 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Adjutant General,
32 Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,
33 Chairperson of the Hawaiian Homes Commission, Superintendent of
34 Education, Director of Transportation, Executive Director of the
35 Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation,
36 Administrator of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, and
37 State Fire Marshal.

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39 OFFERED BY: 

