

MAR 10 2026

SENATE RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HAWAI'I WATER
SAFETY COALITION'S HAWAI'I WATER SAFETY PLAN.

1 WHEREAS, the State is in the midst of a drowning crisis,
2 ranking second behind Alaska in the number of annual drowning
3 fatalities per one million residents; and
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5 WHEREAS, drowning is the leading cause of death for
6 children in the State between ages one and fifteen, with twenty-
7 six children lost between 2019 and 2023; and
8

9 WHEREAS, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders comprise
10 approximately twenty-seven percent of the State's population but
11 thirty-six percent of drowning deaths, reflecting significant
12 inequities in access to swimming education and water safety
13 resources; and
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15 WHEREAS, visitors make up less than fifteen percent of the
16 State's average daily population but comprise the majority of
17 drowning victims, with snorkeling accounting for ninety-one
18 percent of visitor ocean drownings; and
19

20 WHEREAS, drowning incidents involving visitors threaten
21 both the State's public health and its more than \$20 billion
22 tourism economy; and
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24 WHEREAS, drowning is the leading cause of injury-related
25 visitor deaths in the State; and
26

27 WHEREAS, non-fatal drownings, which occur at more than
28 twice the rate of fatal drownings, often result in permanent
29 brain damage and lifelong impacts for families; and
30

31 WHEREAS, the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition (HWSC), formed
32 in 2023 and now under the umbrella of the Hawaiian Lifeguard
33 Association, has developed the Hawai'i Water Safety Plan (HWSP)
34 as a comprehensive, evidenced-informed strategy aligned with the



1 United States National Water Safety Action Plan and
2 international best practices; and

3
4 WHEREAS, the HWSP emphasizes the values of pono, laulima,
5 kuleana, mālama, and kākou, which mean doing the right thing,
6 cooperation, responsibility, care, and inclusion, respectively;
7 and

8
9 WHEREAS, the HWSP calls for urgent action, including the
10 following:

- 11
12 (1) Establishing the HWSC as the centralized authority for
13 water safety and drowning prevention;
14
15 (2) Expanding funding for the Department of Health to
16 prioritize drowning prevention, fill vacant staff
17 positions, and improve data collection;
18
19 (3) Requiring warning signage, fencing, and safety
20 equipment at pools and at flood control structures,
21 such as retention and detention ponds, reservoirs, and
22 dams;
23
24 (4) Supporting lifeguard services, junior lifeguard
25 programs, and culturally competent water safety
26 education statewide;
27
28 (5) Supporting free water safety competency and swimming
29 lessons for all children in the State;
30
31 (6) Addressing inequities by building and maintaining
32 public pools in underserved communities and
33 integrating swim lessons into school curricula;
34
35 (7) Reconvening the Department of Land and Natural
36 Resources' task force on beach and water safety
37 established by Act 190, Session Laws of Hawaii 1996;
38
39 (8) Ensuring that all public and private pools in the
40 State comply with the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and
41 Spa Safety Act, which mandates anti-entrapment drain

1 covers and other safety measures to prevent suction-
2 related drowning incidents; and
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- 4 (9) Encouraging the use of the Centers for Disease Control
5 and Prevention's Model Aquatic Health Code as a
6 resource and guide when creating, revising, or
7 updating state and local aquatic program regulations,
8 guidance, and policy; and
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10 WHEREAS, the HWSC was honored with the Safe Kids Champion
11 for Children Award at the Safe Kids Worldwide International
12 Childhood Injury Prevention Convention in 2025 for its
13 outstanding contributions toward preventing childhood injuries;
14 and
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16 WHEREAS, the Safe Kids Champion for Children Award
17 recognizes organizations that have made a significant impact in
18 child injury prevention, and HWSC was selected among more than
19 twenty honorees for its leadership in addressing drowning
20 through a plan grounded in Hawaiian culture and data-driven
21 strategies; now, therefore,
22

23 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
24 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,
25 that the Legislature supports the findings and recommendations
26 of the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition's Hawai'i Water Safety
27 Plan; and
28

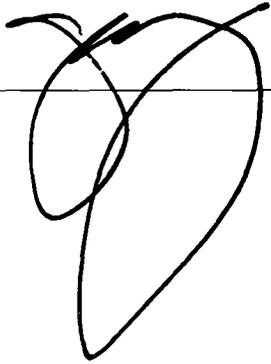
29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governor, Department of
30 Health, Department of Land and Natural Resources, Department of
31 Education, Hawaii Tourism Authority, and counties are urged to
32 collaborate with the Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition to implement
33 the Hawai'i Water Safety Plan; and
34

35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
36 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Director of Health,
37 Superintendent of Education, Chairperson of the Board of Land
38 and Natural Resources, President and Chief Executive Officer of
39 the Hawaii Tourism Authority, Mayor of each county, President of



1 the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association, and Coordinator of the
2 Hawai'i Water Safety Coalition.
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OFFERED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long vertical stroke, positioned above a horizontal line.