HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE CONVENCING OF A CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH WORKING GROUP TO ASSESS THE SCOPE AND RISKS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE HEALTH OF HAWAII'S RESIDENTS AND TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS TO HEALTH STATEWIDE.

WHEREAS, climate change, together with other natural and human-made health stressors, influences human health and disease in many ways; and

WHEREAS, as a result of climate change, some existing health threats will intensify, and in other cases, new health threats will emerge; and

WHEREAS, public health may be affected by disruptions of physical, biological, and ecological systems, including disturbances originating in Hawaii or elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, the potential health effects of these disruptions include: increased asthma and other respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, heat-related morbidity and mortality, injuries and premature deaths related to extreme weather events, changes in the prevalence and geographical distribution of food- and water-borne illnesses and other infectious diseases, and greater levels of mental and emotional stress in response to climate change and extreme weather-related emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii is not alone in its concern about the issue of climate change and health; and

WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association and other national health organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have identified climate change and health as a major public health issue; and
WHEREAS, the magnitude and frequency of climate change-related events are projected to increase and will stress the capability of existing response systems to manage them; and

WHEREAS, when these crucial response systems, such as communications for emergency medical services or transportation for evacuation, become stressed, public health will be affected; and

WHEREAS, there are ways that the entire array of public health strategies, from health policy advocacy, health surveillance and monitoring, environmental health intervention, infectious disease intervention, health education, and other public health services, all can help to mitigate and reduce the health effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS, public health workers in the State surveyed by the Hawaii Public Health Association in 2014 expressed a desire to help address the effects of climate change on health; and

WHEREAS, however, most public health workers feel that they lack the specific expertise, knowledge, or skills to do so; and

WHEREAS, a coordinated public health response is needed to discuss emerging and perceived threats while also providing public health workers with the necessary education, skills, and resources; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that climate change is one of the most significant public health issues of our time and that there are many other ways in which climate change is already affecting public health, the goal of the State should be to increase effective public health engagement and action regarding climate change; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-eighth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2015, the Senate concurring, that the Director of Health is requested to convene the Climate Change and Health Working Group to assess the scope and risks of climate change on the health of Hawaii's residents in order to develop a strategic plan to address climate change risks to health statewide; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Climate Change and Health Working Group shall be composed of public- and private-sector organizations and entities that will focus on assisting health professionals in preparing for and responding effectively and efficiently to the health effects of climate change through the following:

(1) Developing, improving, integrating, and maintaining state and regional disease surveillance systems and monitoring capacity to respond to health-related effects of climate change, including specific threats related to:

(A) Water security, food safety, and vector-borne infectious diseases;

(B) Respiratory and pulmonary effects, including responses to air allergens;

(C) Cardiovascular effects, including impacts of temperature extremes;

(D) The health effects of air pollution, including heightened sensitivity to air pollution; and

(E) Mental and behavioral health impacts of climate change in the health of displaced persons and at-risk populations and communities;

(2) Creating evidence-based tools for predicting and monitoring the public health impacts of climate change at the state and community levels;

(3) Identifying and prioritizing communities and populations vulnerable to the health effects of climate change, and determining actions and communication strategies that should be adopted to inform and protect these communities and populations;

(4) Developing recommendations for health communication, public education, and outreach programs aimed at public health and health care professionals as well as
the general public to promote preparedness and response strategies related to climate change and public health;

(5) Developing recommendations for expanding and training the public health workforce to strengthen its capacity to respond to and prepare for the health impacts of climate change; and

(6) Developing recommendations for the development, implementation, and support of preparedness and response planning to anticipate and reduce the health threats due to climate change; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Health, or the Director's designee, serve as the chairperson or co-chairperson of the Climate Change and Health Working Group; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Climate Change and Health Working Group include representation from both public- and private-sector representatives in public health and health care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Climate Change and Health Working Group shall submit a report, to be prepared and drafted by the Department of Health, of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than 20 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2016; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Climate Change and Health Working Group will be dissolved on June 30, 2016; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health, President of the Hawaii Public Health Association, and other identified agencies in health care and public health.
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