

Ke Ala Hou

A New Path Forward

Ke Ke'ena O Ke Kia'aina | Office of the Governor · July 2023

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



Governor Josh Green, M.D.

Since the end of the legislative session in early May, we have signed more than 80 bills into law that work to create safer communities, increase opportunities for educational equity and diversity, restore faith in government, increase housing opportunities and access to health care, protect our environment and natural resources, and improve the overall quality of life for the people of Hawai'i.

While we aren't quite done enacting new laws yet, in this month's newsletter, you'll learn more about a few of the bills we've signed into law and what they seek to accomplish. Many align with the priorities we set from the get-go, which include housing, health care, homelessness, education, and the environment.

We really want to extend our gratitude to the Senate and House leadership, our legislators, as well as the many community organizations, advocates, and businesses for their incredible work throughout this process. It takes many hands, minds, and hearts to affect true change for our state. We hope that through our work together, fueled by our shared passion for a better Hawai'i, that we can serve as a role model for other states and future generations.

Mahalo,



Homeowner Assistance Fund Program Expands

The Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF) Program has announced it is expanding eligibility to provide more assistance for Hawai'i homeowners. Since the program's inception in 2021, service providers from the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement and Hawai'i Community Lending have been serving homeowners with the greatest needs. HAF provides essential mortgage assistance to homeowners who experienced financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This expansion was a meaningful step forward in helping our community of homeowners struggling with their mortgages. Many homeowners were hit with a multitude of challenges during and after the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dean Minakami, HHFDC interim executive director. "We hope to now reach even

more people to provide much-needed program benefits."

Effective immediately, the program has been expanded in four significant ways:

- The maximum assistance amount per household has been increased to \$60,000 from \$30,000.
- Forward (non-outstanding) payment mortgage assistance is available for up to 12 months from 6 months.
- Homeowners do not have to be delinquent to qualify for assistance.
- Reverse mortgage homeowners are now eligible.

The program is available in Kaua'i and Hawai'i counties, and on O'ahu. To find out more about the program, visit <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hhfdc/assistance-for-homeowners/>.

About the Newsletter Design

Created by longtime local design firm Eric Woo Design Inc., the newsletter header, or nameplate, features symbolism that represents the title, "A New Path Forward." The background color transitions from dark to lighter green as a metaphor for moving toward a goal, or light. The lei encircling our major islands represents both the giver (Governor Green's Administration) and the recipient (the people of Hawai'i) and shows the connection guided by affection and respect. The repeated, orange triangular kapa 'ohe design visualizes a path to the future and reflects that forward movement is rarely perfectly straight.



New Gun Safety Laws to Protect Hawai'i's People - SB1230 and HB1239

On June 2, National Gun Violence Awareness Day, Governor Green signed into law two key pieces of firearms-related legislation – SB1230 and HB1239 – to preserve the safety of Hawai'i residents, visitors, and keiki. "These bills strike a very appropriate balance between public safety and protecting people and children in Hawai'i, along with respecting the Second Amendment right of individuals," said Governor Green.

Act 52 (SB1230) addresses sensitive places where firearms are prohibited. The purpose is to create a statewide policy that will help to avoid confusion from county to county throughout the state.

Act 53 (HB1239) requires the Department of Education to work with certain organizations to implement active shooter training in public and charter schools statewide.



Governor Green stated, "I firmly believe in providing this potentially life-saving education for our public and charter school students, to help make sure they get to go home to their families," said Governor Green. "The two bills will help keep Hawai'i as one of the safest states in the nation."

Chris Marvin of the Everytown for Gun Safety Veteran Advisory Council said, "This is not due to chance. We're safer because of sound public policy, and we must do everything we can to keep it that way, and protect our 'ohana and people."



Action to Improve the Health of Hawai'i's Youth - SB975

Governor Green signed anti-vaping bill SB975, now Act 62, which will reduce access and availability of electronic smoking devices to children and teens. Act 62 establishes the offense of unlawful shipment of tobacco products to anyone who does not hold a valid retail permit or wholesale license. Also, beginning January 1, 2024, there will be a wholesale tax of 70 percent on electronic smoking devices or e-liquid sold in the state.

"Tobacco is the single-most-preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the U.S. There has been an increase in youth vaping over the last 10 years, which has caused a health crisis in our schools and communities. Regulation and taxation are critical components to ending the youth vaping epidemic," said Governor Green.

Dr. Bryan Mih, Medical Director of the



Kapi'olani Smokefree Families Program at Hawai'i Pacific Health said, "We now have a new law that will help reduce exposure to harmful chemicals and decrease the number of young people and children becoming lifetime nicotine addicts."

"We received overwhelming youth testimony in support of stricter measures on these nicotine products," said Representative Scot Matayoshi. "By making vaping products more expensive, we make them less accessible to children and adults, lowering the negative health impact on our community."



Taking Steps to Protect Our Environment - HB1183

On June 8, Governor Green signed HB1183 at Hā'ena State Park with the intent to enhance the management of state parks across our islands.

Hā'ena State Park, similar to other visitor attractions throughout Hawai'i, was dealing with overcrowding, congestion, degradation of resources, and safety hazards, which have often contributed to a less-than-positive experience for residents and visitors alike.

Located on the island of Kaua'i and one of the busiest state parks in Hawai'i, it has become a model of destination management. HB1183 helps to ensure that future management of our state parks will protect our natural and cultural resources and improve the quality of the experience for all.

After the bill signing, the Department of Land and Natural Resources also released its playbook, which details the steps taken to preserve the natural and cultural



features of the area, while still allowing controlled visitation.

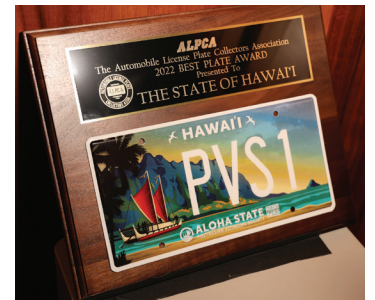
“The Transformation of Hā'ena State Park” playbook is a comprehensive case study on how the community worked together with government agencies and the visitor

industry to manage a destination hot spot, allowing for fewer traffic issues, more access, and a safer and more enjoyable place to visit. To view the playbook, visit <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Haena-State-Park-Case-Study.pdf>.

Hawai'i Receives Best New Plate Award 2022

The Automobile License Plate Collectors Association (ALPCA) has awarded Hawai'i's Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS) the Best New Plate Award for 2022. The plate design portrays the Hōkūle'a anchored at Kualoa Bay with vast mountain ranges featured in the surrounding landscape. For nearly 70 years, ALPCA has promoted license plate collecting and research, and has members from 50 states and 19 countries. This is the first time that Hawai'i has won the award.

On June 6, ALPCA's President Cyndi McCabe traveled to Hawai'i from Ohio to present the award to Governor Green, PVS, and Todd Yamashita (pictured below with his keiki), the Moloka'i graphic designer responsible for the license plate design.



“We are honored by this award that recognizes PVS and the talent of one of our very own, Todd Yamashita of Moloka'i. The inspiring design tells a story about Hawai'i's history while showcasing some of the beauty of our islands,” said Governor Green. “We are so proud of Todd's talents and creativity, the collaboration with PVS and government officials to create the specialty plate, and the award presented to us by ALPCA in recognition of those efforts.”

Despite the many beautiful plates submitted, the Hawai'i plate won with almost one-third of the maximum possible points. There were 20 entries in total. The plate was honored for its colorful design and legibility, and a portion of all license plates sold benefits PVS. “Every license plate that someone purchases is symbolic, and the reality of a movement we call “Mālama Honua” — to care for the Earth,” said PVS Chief Executive Nainoa Thompson. He also thanked state and city officials and lawmakers who supported the creation of the license plate, as well as the people of Hawai'i who have supported PVS through license plate purchases.

To learn more about the PVS specialty license plate, go to <https://www.alpca.org/bestplate/2022/>.



Supporting the Wellness and Resilience of Hawai'i's Families

On June 14, Governor Green signed multiple bills to make life safer for Hawai'i residents. The bills signed focused on the ongoing battle against domestic violence and sexual assault, and expanding support for survivors.

"Domestic violence and sexual assault are pervasive, life-threatening crimes that affect millions of lives across the country, without regard for their age, gender, economic status, race, religion or education level — each one of them deserves compassion, protection, and help," said Governor Green. "The bills I have signed today will provide resources as well as improve the overall health, well-being, and resilience of our communities."

The bills were worked on collaboratively between the Women's Legislative Caucus and their colleagues in the House and Senate, and advocates for domestic violence and child wellness.

Domestic Violence Action Center CEO Nanci Kriedman, who gave a heartfelt speech and is retiring after 40 years as



a well-regarded and highly respected community advocate said, "The importance of informed leadership cannot be overstated. The problem of abuse is too big and haunting for us to look the other way. Everyone has a role to play in bringing safety to island families. Safe families are at the core of a healthy

community. It's going to take all of us."

For a full list of the bills signed into law related to domestic violence and child wellness, visit: <https://governor.hawaii.gov/newsroom/office-of-the-governor-news-release-gov-green-acts-on-life-improving-bills/>.

More Affordable Housing for Seniors in Mō'ili'ili

Governor Green, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi, and a host of other state and city officials participated in a blessing ceremony on June 9 for a new affordable housing project for kūpuna 55 years and older. Hale Makana O Mō'ili'ili senior rental project is comprised of 105 units and began accepting tenants last month.

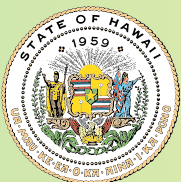
Affordable housing in Hawai'i has been a top priority of the Green Administration. "If we can't provide realistic housing solutions for our community, people will have no other choice but to live in deficient environments or move away from our island home, so it is our duty to do as much as we can to prevent those issues from occurring," said Governor Green.

Hawai'i's state affordable housing finance agency, the Hawai'i

Housing Finance & Development Corporation (HHFDC), has allotted a \$13.6 million loan to support the construction through its Rental Housing Revolving Fund. The \$39.7 million building includes affordable studio- and one-bedroom units.

Amenities include fully equipped kitchens with modern energy-efficient appliances, granite countertops, and ceiling fans. The complex also has an onsite community resource center.

"We are excited to see yet another housing opportunity being made available for our kūpuna," said Governor Green. "It's through partnerships between various government programs and private sector organizations that creates this kind of success in providing critical housing opportunities for our people most in need."



Ke Ala Hou is a monthly publication of the Office of Governor Josh Green, M.D.

We invite you to stay connected with us!

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