



# Ke Ala Hou

*A New Path Forward*

Ke Ke'ena O Ke Kia'aina | Office of the Governor • May 2024

## GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



Governor Josh Green, M.D.

In April, my administration continued to make strides toward expanding health care, providing housing for our Maui 'ohana, and protecting our environment. We celebrated the groundbreaking for the expansion of the Hilo Benioff Medical Center, blessed new modular housing units at Ka La'i Ola, for our Maui wildfire survivors, and announced the appointment of Charles "Chip" Fletcher, Ph.D., as Special Advisor for Climate and Resilience and David Karl, Ph.D., as Chair of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Marine Affairs.

Our state departments have been making significant efforts to protect our indigenous species, shifting to sustainable

energy sources, and maintaining our 'aina. The stories shared in this newsletter provide just a glimpse of the state departments' efforts to establish a more eco-friendly Hawai'i.

As we dive into bill-signing season, we remain committed to Maui's recovery, increasing access to affordable housing, providing assistance to those experiencing homelessness, improving healthcare services and addressing the urgent need to combat climate change. These are complex challenges that require our utmost attention and cooperation, and I am dedicated to doing everything in my power to ensure that the people of Hawai'i can continue to live in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

## Hilo Benioff Medical Center Breaks Ground for \$80 Million Hospital Expansion Project

The Hilo Benioff Medical Center has commenced construction of its expansion project that will include a new 19-bed Intensive Care Unit and 36 additional hospital beds. This \$80 million project, marked with a ceremony last month, has been made possible due to a combination of public and private funding and will help reduce the shortage of hospital beds on Hawai'i Island.

The Hawai'i State legislature awarded \$50 million for the expansion project, as well as \$18M for Kona Community Hospital; \$21.2 million for improvements at Samuel Mahelona Hospital in Kapa'a; and \$39 million for Maui Health System for repair and maintenance projects. The funds were released by Governor Josh Green, M.D., in March to support health care infrastructure.



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*Ke Ala Hou intends to elevate, recognize, and celebrate the hard work done by our state departments. Our goal is to share top achievements from our state employees, emphasize aloha and kindness in action, and demonstrate caring leadership at the state level. It is our hope that by sharing these stories, we build trust and understanding in what we do everyday in service to you.*



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## Hilo Benioff Medical Center Continued from page 1



Above: Governor Josh Green, M.D., and Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff chatting with their o'o sticks in hand.

“Today marks a great day for health care in our state as we break ground on this historic project to increase hospital bed capacity on Hawai‘i Island,” said Governor Green at the ceremony. “The island’s largest hospital desperately needed these beds to care for the growing community and today, we are delivering on our commitment to improve health care in the state. We are honored to partner with the Benioff ‘ohana to double the state’s commitment to support Hilo Benioff Medical Center.”

Last month, Marc and Lynne Benioff generously donated \$50 million to the hospital, a portion of which will go toward the expansion project.

“We feel honored and blessed to have been part of the Hawai‘i community for so many years and to be able to support our ‘ohana in this way,” Marc Benioff, chair, CEO and co-founder of Salesforce. “Together, we’re not just adding a building, we’re bringing a world-class continuum of care to our community, partnering with Hawai‘i Pacific Health on O‘ahu and extending it to the mainland with UCSF Health in San Francisco, one of the world’s great medical research institutions. Our hope is that everyone on our island can get the expertise and care they need, when they need it.”

## New Charging Station on Maui to Accelerate EV Adoption and Reduce Pollution



Above: One of the NEVI chargers.  
Photo courtesy: HDOT

The Hawai‘i Department of Transportation (HDOT) dedicated the state’s first electric vehicle (EV) charging station funded by a federal program on February 28. The National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) is located at the Kahului Park & Ride on Maui. It is adjacent to some of Maui’s main highways including Pu‘unē Avenue (Route 3500) and Maui Veterans Highway (Route 311) formerly Mokulele Highway.

Kahu Kalani Wong who conducted the blessing of the station was an ideal candidate to conduct the blessing as he has been freed from paying at the pump and contributed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions as a 12-year EV owner. “When I calculated it out, I would have bought 7,000 gallons of gas,” said Wong.

“This charging station at the crossroads of Maui’s main thoroughfares will benefit residents like Kahu Wong with a convenient charging spot, fulfilling federal NEVI goals to build an accessible, reliable and equitable charging network across the country,” said HDOT Director Ed Sniffen. “This state and federal partnership, along with HDOT working collaboratively with the counties will move Hawai‘i toward its clean energy goals and help break the cycle of fossil fuel use in this oil-reliant state.”

Since its installation more than 1,000 charging sessions have been logged, the federal program hopes to accelerate the adoption of EVs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

HDOT is operating its NEVI charging network as revenue-neutral.

Charging prices are:

- From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. - \$0.44 per kWh
- From 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. - \$0.57 per kWh

The Maui EV charging station along Kūihelani Highway (Route 380) consists of four 150 kW DC fast chargers with Combined Charging System and CHARGE de MOve ports. The station’s design and construction cost \$3 million; with \$2.4 million from federal funds and \$600,000 in state highway funds.

The NEVI program was authorized under the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which authorizes \$1.2 trillion for transportation and infrastructure spending nationwide with \$550 billion toward new investments and programs.

In total, HDOT plans on having eight NEVI-funded EV charging stations across the state. To learn more about Hawai‘i’s NEVI state plan, visit <https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/hawaii-nevi-state-plan/>.



Above: Dignitaries untie a maile lei at the blessing.  
Photo courtesy: HDOT



## Lowering Costs for Working Class Families: The Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) Program

Hawai'i is among the first four states to initiate the U.S. Department of Energy's Home Energy Rebates programs - a historic \$8.8 billion investment for energy-efficient home upgrades for single- and multifamily homes. The Hawai'i State Energy Office administers the state's \$69 million allocation.

The HEAR program provides rebates for specific ENERGY STAR-certified residential electric heat pump appliances. It is only available to low- and moderate-income households earning less than 150% of the Area Median Income. Some rebates will be available as early as this summer. The Home Energy Rebate (HER or HOMES) program, to be launched toward the end of 2024, will incentivize whole-home efficiency retrofits.

Thanks to these programs, Hawai'i's most vulnerable households will benefit from free or reduced-cost clean energy upgrades for their homes. At least half of the rebates will go to low-income households, defined as those earning 80% or less of their area median income, ensuring ample support and funding goes to communities that are in the most need.

"Save energy and save money—that's exactly what the Home Energy Rebate programs are designed to do," said U.S. Secretary

of Energy Jennifer M. Granholm. "I am excited to announce that states across the country are getting closer to putting money in the hands of consumers to upgrade their homes with new, energy-efficient appliances and clean energy tools that will cut monthly utility costs."



Through the rebates, households can save up to \$14,000 on home upgrades. Potential savings include:

- Up to \$8,000 off an ENERGY STAR-certified heat pump for space heating and cooling
- \$4,000 off an electrical panel
- \$2,500 off electrical wiring
- \$1,750 off an ENERGY STAR-certified heat pump water heater
- \$1,600 for insulation, air sealing, and mechanical ventilation products
- \$840 for an ENERGY STAR-certified electric induction stove, cooktop, range, or oven

Follow <https://energy.hawaii.gov> for program updates.

## Celebrating Earth Day Every Day in Hawai'i

*Information provided by OPSD*

In Hawai'i, where reverence for the land and sea is ingrained in our culture, the sentiment often echoes, "Every Day is Earth Day." Blessed to call this paradise home, the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) recognizes the need for ongoing stewardship of our natural resources.

The Hawaiian Archipelago, known as Ka Pae 'Āina o Hawai'i, comprises 132 islands and more than a thousand miles of coastline in the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. With eight major islands, seven of which are inhabited, Hawai'i stands as the nation's sole island state. Our landscapes boast volcanic marvels, verdant mountain ranges, unparalleled biodiversity, and crystalline waters.

OPSD confronts the realities of climate change and human impact. Coastal hazards and environmental pressures threaten our shores and waters. As stewards of this unique ecosystem, the OPSD's Coastal Zone Management Program (HCZMP) works tirelessly to protect, preserve, and restore our coastal resources. It works to implement the Ocean Resources Management Plan (ORMP) which has three focus areas, Coastal Hazards, Land-Based Pollution, and Marine Ecosystems. Examples of some of the work it is currently doing are: Sea Level Rise Adaptation for State Facilities – a project that entails interagency coordination to identify and adapt state facilities that are vulnerable to sea level rise and other natural hazards; the redevelopment of the Low-Impact Development Users Guide – a stormwater management planning tool to identify best-management practices suited for different environments and situations; and the Kōkua Community-Based Monitoring Program – a project that brings together communities and agencies to monitor and restore near-shore ecosystems.

OPSD reminds us that our actions today shape the legacy we leave for future generations. Despite the weight of this responsibility, we can find strength in unity. The Hawaiian proverb, "A'ōhe hua o ka mai'a i ka lā ho'okahi," teaches us that no task is insurmountable when undertaken together. As we reflect on our role as stewards of this 'āina as a state, let us and work hand-in-hand to protect the natural wonders of Hawai'i for generations to come.



*Photo courtesy: Sofia Luczak with OPSD*



# State Departments Combat Invasive Species to Preserve Hawai'i's Ecosystem

## DLNR Kāhuli Bill Signing

The Department of Land and Natural Resources joined Bishop Museum, 'Iolani School, Le Jardin Academy and other government officials at Washington Place to watch Governor Green sign House Bill 1899 into law. The bill designates nine native snail species as official state snails. Rather than designating a single species, multiple species, that are emblematic of the distinctive flora and fauna of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and each island in the state, received the distinction.

"Land snails are among the most threatened creatures in the world, with more recorded extinctions than birds and mammals combined," said Governor Green. "Last year, I proclaimed the 'Year of the Kāhuli' to help bring attention to the plight of our native snails, which have significant roles in Hawaiian culture. They are symbols of romance and omens. And I am proud of the many youth who fought hard for this legislation. It gives me great hope for Hawai'i's future."

"Kāhuli are true jewels of nature and culture," said Dr. David Sischo, who leads the Snail Extinction Prevention Program at the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW). "Knowing that their importance is now enshrined in law brings a new level of focus and pride to the collective work to prevent extinctions of the island's irreplaceable animals and plants."

"The students' advocacy for their snails was remarkable. Witnessing them testify to legislators and engage with the Governor fills me with hope that they will persist in raising their voices and shaping our future," commented Le Jardin Academy teacher Serena Marsden.

To read more about this momentous bill signing ceremony, visit <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/blog/2024/04/15/nr24-36/>.



## DHHL Installs Cat-Proof Fence to Protect 'Ua'u



Above: The fence crew poses for a group photo in front of the cat-proof fence. Photo courtesy: DHHL

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) also made efforts to protect an existing nesting area for 'ua'u, an endangered native seabird, by installing a cat-proof fence enclosure on Mauna Kea.

Work on the more than 8,200-foot fence began in January 2022, surrounding 93 acres of DHHL land, and situated approximately 9,000 feet above sea level near Pu'u Kahinahina. The completed fence is six feet tall and includes a three-foot cat-proof extension and a two-foot buried skirt to deter feral cats from accessing the enclosure.

A ceremony, Ho'i Nā Manu I Kaupakuhale (the birds return to the highest perches of Mauna Kea), was conducted in partnership with researchers at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, DLNR DOFAW, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.

"As stewards of 'āina we're dedicated to protecting and revitalizing our lands from mauka to makai," said DHHL Director Kali Watson. "Preserving our natural resources not only protects the land but also upholds our cultural traditions and identity as kanaka for the benefit of generations to come."

Kuali'i Camara, DHHL 'Āina Mauna Resource Manager added, "'Ua'u were once an abundant cultural resource of Mauna Kea and an important part of the ecosystem, therefore the purpose of our ceremony is to call the 'ua'u home where they will be protected. Once 'ua'u were rediscovered on Mauna Kea we worked to quickly and collaboratively protect this vulnerable population; we're working together to envision and manifest the health and abundance of 'ua'u on Mauna Kea once again."



## FURRY FRIENDS HELP BRING JOY TO GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

The Office of the Governor had some furry visitors last month that set the stage for lots of smiles. Four vetted dogs from Hawaiian Humane Society's Joy Ambassador program visited the 4th and 5th floors in hopes that their presence would help reduce anxiety, loneliness and enhance employee well-being. Mahalo to the Joy Ambassadors for the much-needed puppy break! For photos, visit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjoshgreen/albums/72177720316634444>.



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

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