

# Ke Ala Hou

*A New Path Forward*

*Ke Ke'ena O Ke Kia'āina | Office of the Governor • December 2025*

## GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



Governor Josh Green

As this year draws to a close, I'm excited to share some meaningful milestones from our community and highlight the many ways we're continuing to show up for one another.

This past month, we've made significant investments in our future, including a \$250,000 grant aimed at accelerating clean energy and enhancing our workforce development initiatives. We also celebrated the groundbreaking of the Central O'ahu Agriculture and Food Hub and a new public library in the Upper Puna area.

I am proud to share that our Kōkua Food Drive — supported by our dedicated Hawai'i National Guard, Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke and local libraries — has provided essential food donations to over 3,515 households in need during these challenging times. Mahalo to everyone who donated their time and resources to support those in need.

Additionally, I want to congratulate Mānana, Mililani Mauka and Wilson Elementary, for being honored as 2025 National Blue

Ribbon Schools. I'd also like to recognize the Office of Wellness and Resilience for launching its Learning and Leadership Collaborative, which includes the state's first certification in Trauma-Informed Care.

As you gather with family and friends this holiday, I encourage you to shop local, support our small businesses and please consider donating to local nonprofits this season. The Light the World Giving Machine is a great way to give back to 16 local nonprofits and a few respected global charities. The Giving Machines are at six locations across three counties — from Ala Moana, Pearlridge and the Polynesian Cultural Center, to Whalers Village, Prince Kūhiō Plaza and Queen's Marketplace. Together, let's embrace the spirit of giving and enjoy quality time with our loved ones.

Wishing you all a joyful and safe holiday season!

With warm regards,

*Josh Green M.D.*

## Three O'ahu Elementary Schools Recognized as 2025 Blue Ribbon Schools



Playground at Mānana Elementary School. Photo courtesy: HIDOE.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) is proud to recognize three schools as 2025 National Blue Ribbon Schools: Mānana Elementary, Mililani Mauka Elementary and Wilson Elementary.

"Blue Ribbon Schools have historically represented the very best in teaching and learning across the country," said Superintendent Keith Hayashi. "We are extremely proud to honor these schools as models of innovation, excellence and student success, where students are empowered to be locally committed and globally competitive. This achievement reflects the dedication of students, teachers, staff and families working together."

All three schools — each a first-time recipient — earned recognition under the former federal program's "Exemplary High-Performing Schools" category, ranking among Hawai'i's highest-performing schools based on state assessment results.

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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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## Three O'ahu Elementary Schools Recognized as 2025 Blue Ribbon Schools Continued from page 1

At Mānana Elementary, teachers encourage students to tackle real-world challenges that build creativity, critical thinking and collaboration by emphasizing project-based learning. Students can participate in many extracurricular activities, including sports, student government, robotics, math olympiad and book club.



Painted bench at Mililani Mauka Elementary School. Photo courtesy: HIDOE.

Mililani Mauka's success is driven by a fully licensed, experienced teaching staff; data-driven, grade-level collaboration; and professional development focused on foundational reading and inclusive practices. The school offers extracurricular opportunities, including student council, intramural sports, VEX Robotics, Mauka Singers and an agriculture technology program.

Wilson Elementary offers a robust curriculum that includes STEM, library studies, physical education, music, world language,

Hawaiian studies and computer science. After-school programs include band, sports, performing arts and language clubs. Staff use data to guide academic, behavioral and social-emotional support through small-group instruction.



Mural at Wilson Elementary School. Photo courtesy: HIDOE.

For over 40 years, the National Blue Ribbon Program has recognized public and private schools for high academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps. The three schools were selected for the 2025 honor prior to the U.S. Department of Education's decision to discontinue the program in August.

HIDOE is developing a state-level program to continue recognizing schools that exemplify excellence.

## Groundbreaking Marks Major Step for Hawai'i's Local Food Economy

A major step toward strengthening Hawai'i's food security and agricultural innovation was taken on Nov. 14 as the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) and the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) broke ground on the Central O'ahu Agriculture and Food Hub in Whitmore Village, Wahiawā.



ADC staff smile for a group photo. Photo courtesy: DBEDT.

The groundbreaking ceremony featured remarks from First Lady Jaime Kanani Green, Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, DBEDT Deputy Director Dane Wicker and ADC Executive Director Wendy Gady. The event was blessed by Kahu Blaine Kamalani Kia.

The complex will serve as a commercial-scale innovation center, providing food manufacturing and industry services to help local entrepreneurs grow and export their products globally. It is a collaborative effort involving DBEDT, ADC, Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE), Department of Law Enforcement, the University of Hawai'i (UH) College of Tropical

Agriculture and Human Resilience, UH Community College System and Department of Accounting and General Services.

A key component of the project is the Central O'ahu Regional Kitchen, being developed by HIDOE. This facility will support the state's farm-to-school initiative by connecting local farms to school cafeterias and serving as a model for regional food hubs statewide.

"This is how we fulfill the vision of feeding our keiki — nourishing bodies, empowering communities and building resilience from the ground up," said First Lady Green.

"This facility is a turning point for Hawai'i's agricultural future," said ADC Board Chair Jayson Watts. "It gives our farmers and local food producers the infrastructure they've asked for — real tools that strengthen production, expand markets and keep local food on local tables. Projects like this only happen when the entire agricultural community works together and this groundbreaking shows what partnerships can accomplish. As chair of the ADC board, my focus is simple: get shovels in the ground, build systems that work for farmers and move Hawai'i toward a resilient, self-reliant food economy. This is the foundation for the next generation of agriculture — and we're just getting started."

The project honors the legacy of the late Jimmy Nakatani, former ADC executive director, whose vision helped inspire the broader Food and Product Innovation Network — a statewide initiative to revitalize rural communities and support local food producers.



## HIDOD Supports State of Hawai'i Kōkua Food Drive

In response to the federal shutdown and disruptions to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program last month, the state of Hawai'i launched the Kōkua Food Drive, a weeklong food collection campaign in partnership with the Hawai'i State Public Library System, to support food banks across the islands.

At the request of Governor Josh Green and Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke, Hawai'i National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Stephen F. Logan placed members of the Hawai'i Army National Guard on state active duty status to assist operations in every county.

From Nov. 3 to 7, residents were encouraged to bring canned goods and other nonperishable food items to their local public library during regular business hours. Guard members supported the Kōkua Food Drive by transporting the donations from library branches statewide to food banks for distribution to families in need.



National Guard member loading a truck with donations. Photo courtesy: HIDOD.

Donations were distributed by the Hawai'i Foodbank, Maui Food Bank, The Food Basket and their partner agencies, to ensure residents had access to food during this challenging time.

Even with 550 Hawai'i National Guard federal technicians working without pay for the second pay period in a row, they were still able to generate response

capabilities to assist the community, said Maj. Gen. Logan, who added, "Your Hawai'i National Guard is 'Always Ready, Always There.'"

As of Nov. 13, over 3,515 households were served, with more than 21,561 pounds of donations having been delivered by the Hawai'i National Guard.

## State Collaborates with City and County of Honolulu on Clean Energy Grant

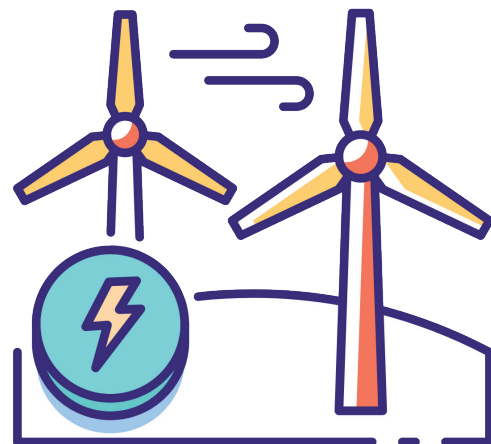
The Hawai'i Green Infrastructure Authority (HGIA) has been awarded a \$250,000 "Market-Building" grant from Phase I of the Municipal Investment Fund (MIF), administered by Coalition for Green Capital and International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives — Local Governments for Sustainability USA. This award places Hawai'i among a select group of communities nationwide advancing locally driven solutions to secure our energy future — at a time when rising energy demand is driving up costs, straining outdated infrastructure and leaving communities vulnerable to climate-related disasters.

In partnership with the City and County of Honolulu, the grant will support the development of a public-private partnership plan that will accelerate the deployment of clean energy and energy efficiency projects, drive economic growth and create jobs, while also serving as a model for other communities across the state.

The City's Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency will lead robust stakeholder engagement through workshops focused on contractor workforce development training, education on rebates and incentives and general networking for condominium associations and property managers. These workshops will inform the creation of the public-private partnership plan focused on building a market for a pipeline of clean energy and other qualified projects on O'ahu.

This work lays the foundation for future investment and implementation, ensuring that clean energy development and efficiency-focused retrofitting projects can be scaled, with minimal bottlenecks, in an equity-informed approach. It also supports Hawai'i's commitment to a just transition to 100% renewable energy by 2045.

Upon completion of Phase I of the MIF grant, HGIA and the city will be eligible to apply for Phase II funding of up to \$2 million to support implementation, further positioning Hawai'i as a national leader in clean energy and resilience.



## A New Chapter Begins with Groundbreaking for Upper Puna Library

State and local officials, friends and longtime supporters gathered on Nov. 10 to celebrate a milestone for the Upper Puna District — the official groundbreaking of its future public library. Hawaiian Cultural Practitioner Kumu Moses Kaho’okele Crabbe offered heartfelt thanks to the ‘āina and asked for blessings on the project and the community it will serve.



*Current and former elected officials, DOE and state library leadership gathered for the historic groundbreaking, officiated by Hawaiian Cultural Practitioner Kumu Moses Kaho’okele Crabbe. Photo courtesy: Hawai‘i State Public Library System.*

“This growing community deserves a library that can be a true hub for reading, learning and connecting,” said State Librarian Stacey A. Aldrich.

Aldrich shared that the new library will offer expanded room for collections and flexible spaces designed to evolve with community needs. Modular shelving and furnishings will support a wide range of programs and a dedicated tech lab will help residents access current and emerging technologies. Community members will also be able to reserve both large and small meeting rooms, while an outdoor lanai will provide a venue for special gatherings, including after-hours events.

During the ceremony, Aldrich also honored the memory of Maxine Aki, the beloved former manager of the Kea’au Public and School Library, who died before seeing the project come to fruition. In recognition of her lasting contributions, a room in the new library will be named in her honor.

The new one-story, 13,885-square-foot facility will rise on the vacant lot next to the existing Kea’au Public and School Library on Kea’au-Pāhoa Road. Construction on the \$20 million project is expected to take at least two years.

Once complete, services currently provided by the Kea’au and Mountain View Public and School Libraries will be merged into the new Upper Puna Library, creating a more efficient and accessible hub for the entire district.

## State Certification in Trauma-Informed Care Launches

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR), recently launched its Learning and Leadership Collaborative at the second-annual Kūpa’a Maoli Ola, Hawai‘i’s Wellness and Resilience Summit. Governor Green welcomed more than 175 state employees to the summit in Kāne’ohe.

Governor Green noted that the culture change of becoming a trauma-informed state and committing to do better by our people, makes the state a better employer and service provider.

The Learning and Leadership Collaborative includes the state’s first certification in Trauma-Informed Care, an eight-module course covering an introduction to trauma and resilience, the principles of trauma-informed care, as well as how to implement this approach in the workplace for ourselves, our colleagues and with the people we serve. The content is presented in a hybrid mix of in-person training and asynchronous



*Governor Green taking a selfie with summit participants.*

video modules, housed on the DHRD training website, which will launch in early 2026.

After completion of the course, employees will be enrolled into a cohort community of other employees across all state departments. Each will receive more training from top experts locally and nationally, as well as coaching and technical assistance for their individual and organizational trauma-informed care and resilience goals. All state employees are encouraged to become certified trauma-informed care

professionals, especially those working in public-facing roles.

A Train-the-Trainer opportunity will also be available in late 2026 for change makers in our state workforce who want to become certified trainers in trauma-informed care and help lead their workplaces with a trauma-informed approach.

“This is just the beginning. I’m looking forward to working with OWR Director Tia Hartsock and her team on the next chapter of this work, which is how we prevent and lessen the health effects of childhood trauma,” said Governor Green. “It costs too much when it comes to the well-being of our state, not to mention the financial impact to our healthcare system — currently upwards of \$40 billion per year.”

For more information about the OWR Learning and Leadership Collaborative, visit <https://owr.hawaii.gov>.



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

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