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PUBLIC HEALTH**

**REVIVE  
THE ECONOMY**

**STRENGTHEN  
OUR COMMUNITY**

## **CAPITOL CONNECTION**

**SEPTEMBER 2022**

### **From the governor: Hawai'i's future begins with us**

**I**n these turbulent times, it's easy to be cynical about the future. But many of us still say "Lucky we live Hawai'i." With the Ige team working to keep us safe, our biggest hopes remain with our keiki and our community values. This month's newsletter focuses on advances made in education — what Governor Ige calls "the most important function of government" — and other priorities for clean energy and the environment. These hallmarks of his administration will help to define us and our state's future for generations to come.

**Q. What was your reaction to the "attack ads" against some candidates during the primary election campaign?**

**A.** I think they were terrible. The worst part is the ads are run by super PACs who don't care if the information is distorted and misleading. A local candidate's campaign would be held directly accountable for what an ad says. Overall, I think integrity and trustworthiness still matter to Hawai'i voters, but in a close race, it could make a difference if enough people believe the negative ads.

**Q. What are you focusing on in these last few months of your term?**

**A.** It's about finishing strong and not going into autopilot. I want to make sure there's continuity in the programs we've initiated. Hawai'i has become a world leader in protecting the Earth and delivering on clean energy transformation. I also want to see the success of our affordable housing program continue. We've completed nearly 13,500 units during the past eight years — more than half of them affordable. As every new governor and mayor learns, building affordable housing isn't easy. That's why you need to develop a system that works. That's what we've focused on since the start of my administration.

**Q. Why have you said, "Education is the most important function of government"?**

**A.** Because public schools are the foundation of our community — especially for those of us from immigrant backgrounds. My grandparents came to Hawai'i with virtually nothing. My parents grew up on plantations. My father finished only the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and had limited options. My mom and dad always said education is the ticket to success and sacrificed so their six sons could go to college. That's why I wanted to support programs like **Early College** and **Hawai'i Promise**, to make it easier for students from all backgrounds to afford higher education and lead them to higher-paying jobs and better careers.

**Q. What do you see as the biggest challenge for our public schools in this new academic year?**

**A.** COVID-19 remains a challenge, so we need to understand how best to manage the virus on a lot of fronts. There's new technology we've deployed to purify and clean air within classrooms. And we need to continue to focus on actions we can take as a community to reduce the spread of the virus. For instance, I know it's not easy for parents to keep children home from school if they have just mild symptoms, but that one small act can save others from getting infected.



Clearway's solar projects can power 45,000 homes.

**Q. What do you want people to know about the closing of the coal plant, electricity rates and the future of solar for clean energy?**

**A.** Hawaiian Electric is forecasting an increase of about 7% or \$15 for a typical residential customer's bill on O'ahu, but the rise will be temporary. The higher cost is tied to global oil prices being driven up after Russia invaded Ukraine, although more oil has been made available from U.S. reserves. In Hawai'i, the Clearway solar project and others coming online are important because, overall, we'll be reducing electricity bills for the future and fighting climate change, especially with green energy support through **President Biden's new Inflation Reduction Act**.



Hawai'i students won 40 awards in the national Student Television Network contest.

# Miloli'i: An 'ocean classroom' for the next generation

**T**o be more pono for future generations." That vision is what drove a dedicated group of community members to work with the state's Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and other organizations to develop administrative rules to protect ocean resources along 18 miles of coastal waters on Hawai'i island. **"Community involvement has been critical to bringing us here today,"** said Governor Ige. "By blending traditional and modern knowledge through a community-led effort, we have set an amazing example of how we can work together to ensure our public trust resources are protected and preserved. Miloli'i will be an ocean classroom to teach the next generation about traditional fishing practices and the value of conservation."



Miloli'i community members celebrate the governor's signing of rules to protect its ocean resources.

DLNR director Suzanne Case continued, **"Here and across the state we face immense challenges** due to climate change, overfishing and other ecosystem stressors. We are grateful for such dedicated partners, rooted in tradition, to co-manage our nearshore resources. Community-based rules, in cooperation with government, are the way we can combine our past, present and future in a collaborative way. It's a very powerful tool." Laila Kaupu, a fifth-generation fisher who headed up the group, Kalanihale, said she saw the process as an opportunity **"to get the community heard in ways they've never been heard before."** She accompanied the governor and Mrs. Ige on a boat tour so they could snorkel and see the beauty of the coral and marine life for themselves.

## As coal plant closes, major solar farm comes online



The governor, HECO, Clearway and other officials at Mililani blessing.

**G**overnor Ige, state officials and community stakeholders celebrated the launch of **O'ahu's first utility-scale solar and battery project** from Clearway Energy Group. The 39-megawatt solar project comes online at a time the state is shutting down its last coal plant and will help advance **the state's goal of 100% clean, renewable energy for electricity by 2045.** "This project will replace some of that coal energy and will reduce our dependence on oil during the transition," the governor said.

Including this project, Clearway will own and operate five solar projects on O'ahu with **the ability to power over 45,000 homes.** "These projects will provide power for at least 20 years at fixed prices that are much cheaper than using oil," the governor added. The 156-megawatt-hour battery storage power plant is designed to provide clean energy to the grid, even after the sun sets. Shelee Kimura, president and CEO of Hawaiian Electric Co., said, "Projects like this one help our customers by providing electricity to the grid at one-third the cost of oil."

## Education bills move governor's priorities forward

**G**overnor Ige called it **"the largest state investment in pre-kindergarten education in Hawai'i's history . . . our first big opportunity to make progress in this area."** The legislation — HB 2000, now Act 257— provided **\$200 million for pre-K construction** and helps deliver on a vision the governor described in his 2019 State of the State address. He called for **"a universal, statewide public preschool system to give every child in the state a head start on learning."** This and other bills signed into law that day added to the Ige administration's track record of advancing education at all levels. **In addition to HB 2000, the other bills included:**



Legislators and advocates joined the governor and Mrs. Ige for the bill signings.

- **Public schools heat abatement** - SB 2862 provides \$10 million to install more air conditioning units for public school classrooms. This continues the Department of Education's efforts to provide heat relief to the schools and builds on the efforts by the governor and the 2016 legislature when **\$100 million funded heat abatement for more than 1,300 classrooms.**
- **Promoting school gardens and farm-to-school programs** — SB 2182 establishes a new DOE school garden coordinator position to provide start-up resources and technical support for campus gardens. The Ige administration made **support of local food production one of its priorities.** School gardens provide hands-on learning laboratories for sustainability.
- **New state coordinator position for summer learning** — SB 2812 is intended to coordinate summer programs for students who experienced learning loss and disruption during the pandemic and to coordinate efforts with other organizations.

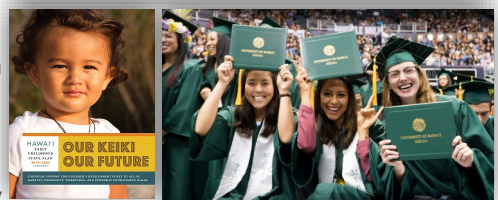
# Charting a course for school innovation, empowerment

*“Public education is the great enabler of dreams.”* — Governor David Ige

This vision of what Hawai'i's public schools and the University of Hawai'i system could be has been at the heart of Governor Ige's mission to improve education. **Back in 1987 as a first-term legislator**, the governor worked with newly elected Gov. John Waihee to establish the first of two **public Hawaiian immersion programs** at Wai'au Elementary. “People were saying to save the culture, we had to save the language,” said the governor. “From the brink of extinction with only 100 native speakers, now the language is spoken by thousands of people.” **In 1993**, then-Rep. David Ige worked with Sen. Mike McCartney to develop **an omnibus education bill** that became a landmark piece of legislation. It gave public schools more control over their own resources through the **Student Weighted Formula** to improve and innovate.

## IGE ADMINISTRATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN EDUCATION:

- **\$100 million from the 2016 legislature for air conditioning and heat abatement** so students could learn better. The DOE succeeded in cooling 1,300 classrooms at 88 schools on five islands, with more improvements to come.
- **Early College programs have expanded statewide** with the governor's support from the legislature. Students at more than 43 public high schools are earning college credits tuition-free and some have even graduated with associate degrees from UH community colleges before finishing high school.
- **Hawai'i Promise**, also advocated by the governor, provides funds for UH community colleges to cover the gap between what students can afford and college costs, after all federal and state financial aid and scholarships are applied.
- **Hawai'i's Blueprint for Public Schools** was developed by the governor's team in 2016, based on wide community input, to encourage school empowerment and innovation. It helped guide the DOE's strategic plan, moving away from a top-down, one-size-fits-all focus.
- **The first-ever Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan** in 2019 provided a collaborative roadmap to guide public and private efforts. The governor has called for a universal, statewide, public preschool system for every child in Hawai'i.
- **Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) innovation grants** awarded to 31 schools, colleges and organizations across the state. The federal funds are being used to build on the Ige administration's Blueprint for Public Education to set a course for educational change and reform following the pandemic. Other funds were directed to the Hawai'i Online Portal for Education (a distance learning teacher academy) and “Next Steps to Your Future,” a free UH transition-to-college program.
- **Major DOE and UH capital improvement projects under the Ige administration** have included new or renovated performing arts and media centers, athletic and STEM facilities, improved classroom buildings and new schools for growing communities. **In 2017, Governor Ige got personally involved in labor negotiations to win four-year contracts for teachers and school personnel.** Afterward, he said he wanted to bring “labor peace” to the process so they could focus on improving our schools.



Education progress — pre-K to college.

## Embarking on a vision to expand pre-K for our keiki statewide



Chad Keone Farias

**L**ife-changing . . . monumental.” That’s how **Chad Keone Farias**, the state’s new **School Facilities Authority (SFA) Executive director**, described **Act 257**, the historic piece of legislation Governor Ige recently signed into law to support his and the legislature’s vision of expanded early childhood education. **The act appropriates \$200 million to construct and renovate pre-kindergarten facilities in Hawai'i by 2024.** Farias is meeting with multiple stakeholders, listening to new ideas, and “over-communicating” to address concerns — all while hiring staff and staying focused on moving projects forward. **SFA’s top three priorities include expanding preschool capacity statewide, building new schools for K-12 students in fast-growing areas and creating more affordable housing for teachers and others.**

**Why is pre-K so important?** Based on his 30-year career as a teacher, principal and complex area superintendent, Farias explained, “The most brain growth happens in a child before the age of 5. You can go into a kindergarten classroom and spot the child who has had some pre-K — in their language ability, in fine and gross motor skills.” **Surveys have shown that more than half of 3- and 4-year-olds in Hawai'i aren't enrolled in a public or private preschool.** For many families, the cost of private preschool is more than they can afford. Farias applauded making pre-K a priority, saying, “The governor moved the needle by shifting the focus to early childhood. **I don't think we would have gotten the funding this legislative session had he not planted that seed.**” So far, Farias has been encouraged by the positive community response. “Everyone has reached out. This is a new authority, and we feel a sense of urgency. We're trying to keep all options on the table. There is need everywhere. **This is a tree that's going to bear fruit for our community for years to come.**”



More pre-K options are planned.

# Extending the reach of Goodwill and ‘Ohana Readers

Once a teacher, always a teacher — even if you’re also the wife of the governor. As a former educator, First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige has supported groups that help people transform their lives. Her work with **Goodwill Hawaii** is one example. She said what has impressed her most about the organization is its ability to diversify. “Some think of Goodwill as stores where you can find a bargain, but it’s so much more,” Mrs. Ige said. “The organization offers job training and placement, GED classes and even an alternative school in Kapolei for our young people and is able to constantly evolve to fulfill the needs of the community. **It’s a tribute to the strong leadership of their staff and their board members.**”



Fashion designer Micah Kamohoali'i at 'Goodwill Goes Glam' with the Iges.

**Goodwill's CEO Katy Chen** said the First Lady has definitely helped to raise the profile of the organization. “Mrs. Ige has shown the highest level of support over the past eight years. She believes in our mission and the work we do,” Chen said. Goodwill is expanding to the neighbor islands with new programs for dislocated workers. It’s also opening a new store in Kāne’ohe and partnering with other non-profits for donation centers. Watch for the **“Goodwill Goes GLAM” special Sept. 18 at 7 p.m. on KFVE.**

Mrs. Ige also is still hard at work on her **‘Ohana Readers** project, which has so far distributed more than **10,400 free books to keiki on Moloka’i, Lāna’i and Kaua’i** through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Plans are under way to expand ‘Ohana Readers to Ka’u on Hawai’i island. In addition, some 2,000 books were distributed to Hawai’i keiki through the Scholastic Summer Reading program when first ladies across the nation, including Mrs. Ige, were named ambassadors.

## Getting in GEER: Lighting the spark for Hawai’i students

From leadership development and small business partnerships to natural resource management, art kits and genome sequencing — **the 31 projects, supported by \$8.1 million in the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund, run the gamut in innovation.** But they also revolve around hands-on, real-world learning — challenging students and teachers to look at issues in new ways. The goal is to build on the Ige administration’s **Blueprint for Public Education**, encourage innovation in response to the pandemic and set a course for education change and reform.

**Many of the projects involve partnerships** between non-profits and public schools as well as state agencies, UH system programs, and businesses to address issues and provide learning that’s meaningful to students. One project involves partnerships between students at 24 public high schools and small businesses through the **Hawai’i Academies Consortium of Schools.** “This is an investment in our future workforce

while serving local businesses and community groups impacted by COVID -19,” said coordinator Edison Chong.

**Another example is Oceanit’s work with the state Department of Transportation and Wai’anae High School.** Science students are measuring coastal erosion and collecting data for DOT road planning in Mākaha. One student who admitted she used to “hate school” said, “This program kept me motivated. Now I get to say I can graduate.”

**Oceanit director Ian Kitajima** asked, “**How do you create careers of the future?** You do it by starting today with students, teaching them different skills and creating new ways of seeing the world.” To see more, go to [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxodx\\_xCMGE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxodx_xCMGE).



## UH awarded \$16 million for high-demand job training

Thanks to a three-year, \$16.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, some 3,000 Hawai’i workers will be trained for high-demand jobs in clean energy, creative industries, health care and technology sectors statewide over the next three years. The **“Resilient Hawai’i: Good Jobs Challenge”** initiative includes a coalition of more than 70 employers, training providers and community-based organizations to get local residents back to work or increase their skills for new employment.

**The initiative aims to help those who lost their jobs due to COVID-19**, as well as Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities who can earn certificates leading to higher-paying jobs, said UH President David Lassner. “UH is grateful for the support of our Congressional delegation, Governor Ige and all of our mayors for this amazing project,” he said. “It will connect residents with quality careers in sectors critical to Hawai’i’s future.” **To see job training already available at the UH community colleges, go to <https://uhcc.hawaii.edu/training/index.php?ref=hcp>.**

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