

MAR 16 2011

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## SENATE RESOLUTION

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REQUESTING A STUDY ON PROHIBITING THE COLLECTION OF HAWAII'S  
ENDEMIC MARINE ORNAMENTAL FISH FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

1           WHEREAS, ornamental fish are fish that are kept in  
2 aquariums and prized for their beauty and rarity; and  
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4           WHEREAS, recent studies have shown that Hawaii's coral  
5 reefs and ornamental fisheries are under severe stress from  
6 ocean acidification, non-point source pollution, unsustainable  
7 fishing practices, and the ornamental fish aquarium trade; and  
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9           WHEREAS, there are one hundred three species of fish that  
10 are collected in Hawaii, and forty-five per cent of the top  
11 twenty collected species are endemic to Hawaii; and  
12

13           WHEREAS, ornamental fish collectors capture large amounts  
14 of targeted fish species, which results in their exploitation;  
15 and  
16

17           WHEREAS, more than fifty per cent of ornamental fish  
18 species die within a week of being in captivity; and  
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20           WHEREAS, according to a recent study of the aquarium trade,  
21 there has been a significant decline in ornamental fish biomass  
22 in areas where the aquarium collection trade is not regulated as  
23 compared to areas where it is regulated; and  
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25           WHEREAS, for instance, in unregulated areas there has been  
26 a fifty-eight per cent decline in the achilles' tang, a fifty-  
27 four per cent decline in the longnose butterflyfish, a forty-  
28 seven per cent decline in the yellow tang, and a forty-six per  
29 cent decline in the moorish idol; and  
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31           WHEREAS, fish-collecting practices associated with the  
32 aquarium collection trade have damaged coral reefs in the  
33 following ways:  
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- 1           (1) Nets entangle the reef and branching corals are  
2           damaged when aquarium collectors set and retrieve  
3           their nets;  
4
- 5           (2) Coral is broken as collectors grab fish or pound the  
6           coral with sticks to flush fish out of hiding; and  
7
- 8           (3) Kneeling on the coral causes the coral to become prone  
9           to disease; and  
10

11           WHEREAS, studies show that eighty per cent of collected  
12 fish are herbivores, such as the yellow tang, that feed on  
13 algae, and over collecting such fish decimates their  
14 populations, which directly increases algae overgrowth, a main  
15 contributor of coral degradation; and  
16

17           WHEREAS, the decrease of fish biomass threatens the  
18 survival of marine species and coral reefs because high  
19 biodiversity is necessary for coral reef health and other  
20 species stability; and  
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22           WHEREAS, news reports indicate that the number of reef fish  
23 in Hawaii has declined by sixty per cent in the past twenty  
24 years; and  
25

26           WHEREAS, Hawaii's tourism industry is dependent on the  
27 health of Hawaii's aquatic ecosystem, with roughly thirty-five  
28 per cent of Hawaii's jobs related to the visitor industry and  
29 reef tourism generating \$1,000,000,000 annually for the State's  
30 economy; and  
31

32           WHEREAS, in contrast, aquarium collectors contribute  
33 \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000 annually to Hawaii's economy; and  
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35           WHEREAS, the commercial aquarium fish trade violates the  
36 traditional Hawaiian value, "Malama aina," which discourages  
37 destructive fishing practices such as overfishing and waste, and  
38 instead supports sustainability and the protection of fish  
39 species so that the species thrive and the ecosystem is  
40 balanced; and  
41

42           WHEREAS, the loss of Hawaii's beautiful coral reefs and  
43 endemic fish species poses a significant threat to the public  
44 welfare and without intervention could deprive future



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1 generations of Hawaii residents of having the opportunity to  
 2 learn about and enjoy Hawaii's ocean environment; now,  
 3 therefore,  
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5 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-sixth  
 6 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2011,  
 7 that the Department of Land and Natural Resources is requested  
 8 to study the efficacy of prohibiting the collection of Hawaii's  
 9 endemic marine ornamental fish for commercial purposes, with the  
 10 exception of permits sought for propagation or educational,  
 11 medical, or scientific purposes; and  
 12

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Land and  
 14 Natural Resources is requested to submit a report of its  
 15 findings and recommendations, including any proposed  
 16 legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior  
 17 to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session; and  
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19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this  
 20 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of  
 21 Land and Natural Resources.  
 22  
 23  
 24

OFFERED BY:

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