WHEREAS, digital equity is the condition in which all Hawaii residents, keiki to kupuna, have the information technology capacity to participate fully in the State's society, democratic process, and economy, including civics, social and cultural activities, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services; and

WHEREAS, digital equity requires ubiquitous and affordable access to broadband and the internet, digital tools, and the knowledge to thrive in an increasingly digital world; and

WHEREAS, the digital divide, also known as digital inequity, has been a pressing community issue for many years, separating those in rural communities and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances from the rest of modern society; and

WHEREAS, a lack of adequate broadband infrastructure, internet-capable devices, affordable high-quality broadband service, and technological know-how creates inequitable digital access; and

WHEREAS, digital infrastructure investments have faced challenges with misinformation within our communities about the effects of those technologies; and

WHEREAS, digital inequity is rapidly emerging through racial, economic, and geographical boundaries and is amplified among Hawaii's most vulnerable and underserved populations; and
WHEREAS, stay-at-home and work-from-home orders related to the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19 pandemic) have made digital connectivity a necessity across all economic sectors and demographics; and

WHEREAS, the need for social distancing related to the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many social functions to occur online; and

WHEREAS, those without digital connectivity may become socially isolated, lonely, and suffer from mental health issues; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii's high unemployment rate during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to families cutting home internet subscriptions in order to prioritize food and rent expenses; and

WHEREAS, the lack of internet access disproportionately affects native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander communities, with the percentage of those households without internet access being almost double that of the state population as whole; and

WHEREAS, in 1824 King Kamehameha III, Kauikeaouli, proclaimed "He aupuni palapala ko'ou (mine is a kingdom of literacy)"; and

WHEREAS, the King's appreciation for the written language and education resulted in extremely high literacy rates among native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, today, Hawaii finds itself in a similar situation where society must adopt a new form of digital literacy to succeed in a digital age; and

WHEREAS, a pivot towards this new form of digital literacy will empower Hawaii's residents to realize their full potential; and

WHEREAS, the Broadband Hui is a multi-sector conglomerate of public and private organizations and individuals whose months of thoughtful conversations led to the compilation of
well-articulated visions and goals known as the Digital Equity Declaration for Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, the Digital Equity Declaration is published on the Broadband Hui’s website (broadbandhui.org) and encourages "Broadband for A.L.L. (Access, Literacy, Livelihood)"; and

WHEREAS, the Digital Equity Declaration, in alignment with the 2020 Broadband Strategic Plan, sets a foundation for collective action among private- and public-sector partners by providing a vision and goals that will move Hawaii toward a more equitable digital future; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the Senate concurring, that this body supports and adopts the goals set forth in the Digital Equity Declaration for Hawaii adopted by the Broadband Hui; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the goals of the Digital Equity Declaration, which support the Aloha+ Challenge, Hawaii’s statewide sustainability framework, are requested to be included in the Aloha+ Dashboard and updated regularly to track progress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to Hawaii’s congressional delegation; Governor; Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu; Mayor of Maui County; Mayor of Hawaii County; Mayor of Kauai County; Director of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; Director of Labor and Industrial Relations; Director of Commerce and Consumer Affairs; Superintendent of Education; President of the University of Hawaii; Chairpersons of each county council; Chief Executive Officer of Kamehameha Schools; Executive Director of Hawaii Green Growth; and Chairperson of the Economic Development Alliance of Hawaii.