

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, May 3, 2021

Contact:

Ka'ala Souza, 808-228-7958

kaala@kaala.com

## **State of Hawai'i Workforce Development Council Offers Digital Literacy Courses**

*Free three-hour classes offer basic computer skills to prepare a resilient workforce for a more diverse economy*

**HONOLULU** – Beginning April 30, 2021, the State of Hawai'i Workforce Development Council (WDC), in partnership with the Hawai'i State Public Library System, the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges, and the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT), will offer free "Introduction to Computers and the Internet" classes at public libraries and community college campuses throughout the state for those who want to improve their digital literacy. This effort is part of the Workforce Resiliency Initiative (WRI), a key component to leading Hawai'i's economy toward recovery and resiliency. Courses will be held throughout the week at select locations and are open to all Hawai'i residents 18 years and older. A total of 200 classes will be conducted throughout the state during this pilot period of April 30 through June 30.

The single, in-person three-hour class intends to help those with little to no computer knowledge obtain the skills necessary to continue learning at home or at work using provided online learning resources.

Classes will cover the following topics and skills:

- Creating an email account
- Identifying computer hardware and software
- Using the mouse and keyboard
- Browsing and searching the internet safely

Following the class, participants will be eligible for continued learning online with Northstar Digital Literacy where they can access assessments and curriculum on:

- Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Google Docs
- Social Media
- Information Literacy
- Career Search Skills
- Supporting K-12 Distance Learning
- Your Digital Footprint

Digital literacy and computer skills have always been important and COVID-19 revealed just how important this knowledge is for work, livelihood, and day-to-day living, and how critical it is for Hawai'i's workforce as it looks to recover, diversify the economy and become more resilient. These computer classes are part of the Workforce Resiliency Initiative, a plan to help upskill Hawai'i's workforce to be ready for anything the future brings.

"There are so many options and opportunities for people who have digital and computer skills and so many barriers and hurdles for those without," said Leslie Wilkins, chair of the Workforce Development Council. "Hawai'i must proactively address the digital skills gap we face in our islands to ensure that everyone is able to work and live life to the fullest. It's not just about jobs and careers; it's about the well-being of all of our communities."

The World Economic Forum estimates that 70 percent of new value created in the economy over the next decade will be based on digitally enabled platform business models, and further projects that 42% of jobs are expected to have completely different core skill sets by 2022, in particular, digital skills.

"The Workforce Resiliency Initiative provides a critical foundation for digital literacy that contributes to digital equity throughout the State of Hawai'i. The free digital literacy courses offered through the WRI by the Workforce Development Council supports the Broadband Hui's Digital Declaration's motto of access, livelihood and learning and ensures the preparation of Hawai'i's residents to live, work and play in our state," said Mike McCartney, director of DBEDT. "Expanding basic digital literacy is the foundation for other opportunities in remote work and cloud computing certifications that DBEDT is working on as part of the state's economic recovery and resiliency efforts that are in partnership with other public and private organizations."

The vision of the digital literacy efforts of the Workforce Resiliency Initiative is to see Hawai'i positioned as a place and a people with the highest digital literacy in the world. To that end, WDC is working collaboratively to address this challenge. Hawai'i's public libraries are providing rooms and equipment throughout the state with class instructors coming from almost every community college campus.

"Our public libraries are hubs for free access to internet connectivity, technology and opportunities for life-long learning. We're a great place to start and look forward to welcoming our communities to build their 21st Century digital literacy skills at the library," said Stacey Aldrich, state librarian for Hawai'i's public library system.

The desire to learn and thirst for knowledge has historically existed in Hawai'i. Shortly after the first printing press was introduced to the islands in 1820, King Kamehameha III declared, "He aupuni palapala ko'u," meaning, "Mine will be a kingdom of literacy." By the mid-1800s, Hawai'i had one of the highest literacy rates – over 90 percent – in the world. 200 years later, the Workforce Development Council is working on conveying the importance of digital literacy and strives to achieve King Kamehameha III's goal.

To register for classes at all the UHCC campuses call 235-7334. For more information about the program and WRI, please contact Ka'ala Souza at 808-228-7958 / [kaala@kaala.com](mailto:kaala@kaala.com) or visit [www.digitalreadyhawaii.org](http://www.digitalreadyhawaii.org).

**\*\*IMAGERY AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD [HERE](#)\*\***

#### **ABOUT THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

The Workforce Development Council is a 41-member public-private advisory board on workforce development to support economic development and employment opportunities for job seekers and employers. Under Federal mandate, WDC is tasked with developing the infrastructure for a seamless common intake and referral system at the American Job Centers so job seekers and employers receive employment, education, training and support services throughout the State, especially to those with barriers to employment.

Ka'ala Souza  
Project Manager  
Workforce Development Council  
Office: 808-228-7958  
[kaala@kaala.com](mailto:kaala@kaala.com)