
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ATHLETICS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that University of Hawaii
2 athletics is a significant cultural aspect to Hawaii's people.
3 The University of Hawaii football team began in 1909, and the
4 program has remained as one of the university's signature
5 programs. Since its inception, the football program has
6 achieved great success throughout the years, including a record
7 undefeated season that brought the rainbow warriors to the Sugar
8 Bowl in 2008. The University of Hawaii football program has
9 captivated the people of Hawaii for decades, becoming a major
10 icon for the State.

11 As leaders of their respective programs, head coaches serve
12 as an impactful, influential figure for student athletes. To
13 some student athletes, head coaches can become parental figures
14 who provide mentorship and look after player mental health and
15 well-being. In comparison to the student-faculty rapport, the
16 connection and rapport between head coaches and student athletes
17 continues to grow through camaraderie and the bond formed in



1 competitive sports. Beyond graduation and departure from the
2 team, many coaches maintain relationships with former players
3 and their families. The strong connections between players and
4 coaches, along with the culture within the University of Hawaii
5 athletic department, creates a unique community to all who are
6 involved in collegiate athletics.

7 From December 2021 to January 2022, at least eighteen
8 warrior football players declared their intent to enter the
9 transfer portal. The high number of players entering the portal
10 was unusual, as more than a dozen scholarship players, team
11 captains, and starting lineup members departed from the team.

12 In December 2021, allegations of mistreatment surfaced
13 against former head coach Todd Graham. In an anonymous social
14 media forum, current and former players raised concerns that
15 Graham mistreated players and showed little respect for the
16 culture in Hawaii. Combined with the growing number of players
17 in the transfer portal, the cultural issues within the football
18 program warranted further investigation.

19 The legislature further finds that the difficulties faced
20 by the University of Hawaii football team became a matter of
21 statewide concern. As the football program is a significant



1 revenue generator for the university and its athletic programs,
2 the senate ways and means and higher education committees called
3 an informational briefing to discuss the budget and costs
4 related to coaching staff contracts and issues surrounding the
5 transfer of players. Compelled by constituent concerns, senate
6 committees held a hearing to learn more from university
7 administrators about the criticism and allegations regarding the
8 football program and the athletic department. Following the
9 senate hearing, university administrators committed to improve
10 communication and culture within the program.

11 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to enable the board
12 of regents to:

- 13 (1) Terminate the athletic director and head coaches for
14 cause; and
15 (2) Approve contracts for coaching staff with salaries
16 greater than \$200,000, including private funding and
17 bonuses.

18 SECTION 2. Chapter 304A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
19 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
20 and to read as follows:



1 "§304A- Athletic staff and coaches; contracts. (a)

2 The board of regents shall have the authority to terminate the
3 athletic director and head coaches of the athletic department
4 for cause.

5 (b) No University of Hawaii coaching contract with a
6 salary greater than \$200,000 shall be valid unless approved by
7 the board of regents. For purposes of this section, "salary"
8 shall include bonuses and private funding."

9 SECTION 3. Out of the general revenues of the State of
10 Hawaii that are appropriated for program ID University of
11 Hawaii, Manoa (UOH 100), there is appropriated the sum of
12 \$3,600,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
13 year 2022-2023 for the purposes of this Act.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the University of
15 Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 4. Out of the general revenues of the State of
17 Hawaii that are appropriated for program ID University of
18 Hawaii, Hilo (UOH 210), there is appropriated the sum of
19 \$400,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
20 2022-2023 for athletics.



1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the University of
2 Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

4 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



Report Title:

UH; Board of Regents; Athletic Director; Coaches; Contracts;
Salaries; Termination; Appropriation

Description:

Authorizes the University of Hawaii Board of Regents to terminate the Athletic Director and head coaches for cause. Requires Board of Regents approval of all coaching contracts with salaries greater than \$200,000, including additional private funding and bonuses. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

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