
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that drowning is a tragic
2 but preventable source of injury and death in the State,
3 especially among children. Specifically, the department of
4 health has found that drowning was the leading cause of
5 injury-related mortality for Hawaii's children between 2014 and
6 2018. In fact, more children died by drowning than in motor
7 vehicle and pedestrian accidents combined.

8 The legislature also finds that although visitors made up a
9 slight majority of the fatal drownings that occurred in the
10 State between 2014 and 2018, an alarmingly large proportion of
11 fatal child drownings--ninety-six per cent--were among resident
12 children. During the same period, there were an annual average
13 of seventy non-fatal child drowning incidents attended by
14 emergency medical services. Although individuals who experience
15 non-fatal drowning incidents escape with their lives, some are
16 left with severe brain damage. Those individuals may face
17 long-term disabilities such as memory problems, learning



1 disabilities, or permanent losses of basic functions, a disorder
2 often referred to as a persistent vegetative state. Given the
3 potential for death or severe long-term injuries, the State must
4 prioritize the prevention of fatal and non-fatal drownings.

5 The legislature further finds that most drowning deaths
6 could be prevented through deliberate government action.
7 Specifically, the International Life Saving Federation's
8 Position Statement for Swimming and Safety Education recommends
9 that everyone have access to training in water safety, personal
10 survival, and water rescue. Ideally, this training should
11 commence at a young age and should be available regardless of
12 ability and background. In addition, the International Life
13 Saving Federation recommends that knowledge and understanding of
14 water environments and their associated hazards should be taught
15 to everyone at the earliest possible age.

16 Despite these recommendations, the legislature finds that
17 many of Hawaii's youth do not have the opportunity to receive
18 aquatic safety instruction. Less than ten per cent of public
19 and public charter elementary schools integrate aquatic safety
20 education into their physical education curriculums. Outside of
21 schools, municipal aquatic safety programs lack the resources to



1 meet public demand, and the cost of obtaining private lessons is
2 often cost-prohibitive for many local families.

3 As a result, many children are inadequately prepared for
4 water-related emergencies. An assessment of Hawaii students
5 conducted by the Hawaii Aquatics Academy during the 2018-2019
6 school year found that only thirty-one per cent of participating
7 students could swim for twenty-five yards, only twelve per cent
8 could float for thirty seconds, and only thirteen per cent could
9 tread water for sixty seconds.

10 The legislature finds that all children should be provided
11 equal access to standards-based aquatic safety education
12 programs. To achieve this, aquatic safety education should be
13 integrated into the health and physical education curriculums of
14 public schools. Providing proper training in water safety,
15 personal survival, and water rescue will help to ensure that the
16 State's youth, especially those from low- and moderate-income
17 communities, know how to avoid and recover from hazardous
18 aquatic situations. This would also be consistent with the
19 department of health's Hawaii Injury Prevention Plan 2018-2023,
20 which aims to decrease the incidence of drownings in the State.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
2 moneys to the department of education to contract with a
3 qualified nonprofit organization to establish an aquatic safety
4 education program for elementary school students.


5 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
7 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 for the
8 department of education to contract with a qualified nonprofit
9 organization, pursuant to chapter 103D, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
10 to establish an aquatic safety education program, which shall be
11 offered to elementary school students during regular school
12 hours.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
14 education for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

16

INTRODUCED BY: _____



JAN 20 2023



H.B. NO. 604

Report Title:

DOE; Aquatic Safety Education; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates moneys for the Department of Education to contract with a qualified nonprofit organization to establish an aquatic safety education program for elementary school students.

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