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# 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 the department of  
2 education's Ho'ākea: Mauka to Makai Navigating our Future Program  
3 is designed to educate students by integrating core educational  
4 concepts in math, science, social studies, civics, leadership,  
5 language, and literacy with cultural practices and traditions in  
6 'āina and community settings. Lesson plans also integrate  
7 environmental stewardship, climate change, native Hawaiian  
8 practices, responsibility to care for community, total  
9 well-being, and a sense of place.

10           The legislature further finds that students become more  
11 engaged and curious when educational content is relevant to  
12 their home and culture. In addition, indigenous knowledge and  
13 practices are a key source to understanding climate change  
14 because they provide a deep understanding of local ecosystems.  
15 Indigenous knowledge can include early warning signs of  
16 environmental shifts and offer valuable knowledge on sustainable  
17 land management practices developed through generations of



1 living in harmony with nature, allowing for more effective  
2 adaptation and mitigation strategies against climate change  
3 impacts.

4       The legislature also finds that Polynesian and native  
5 Hawaiian students have a longstanding, disproportionately high  
6 rate of absenteeism and lower educational achievement.  
7 Recognizing that the board of education formally adopted Nā  
8 Hopena A‘o (HĀ) as a policy in 2015, the department of education  
9 has prioritized HĀ in its current strategic plan. By making  
10 educational material more relevant and engaging, creating  
11 conditions that make students feel safe, and honoring their  
12 heritage and culture, students will naturally be more engaged  
13 and excited about learning. By creating a HĀ environment for  
14 learning in this way, the department of education believes that  
15 graduates will be prepared not only for college and careers, but  
16 also for community and civic engagement. The department  
17 believes these lessons will endure as students become leaders,  
18 stewards, and critical thinkers when they graduate and begin  
19 navigating the world.

20       The legislature notes that the Polynesian Voyaging Society  
21 and the ‘ohana of wa‘a were established as organizations with



1 educational missions to engage students in learning through  
2 voyaging. Recognizing that most Pacific Islander and native  
3 Hawaiian students attend public schools, and responding to  
4 demand by department of education educators and principals to  
5 incorporate authentic learning experiences like wa'a and 'āina,  
6 the department of education has partnered with these  
7 organizations to start its own program, called Ho'ākea, for  
8 department schools.

9       The legislature further notes that over the past two years,  
10 the department of education has partnered with the 'ohana of wa'a  
11 and 'āina organizations, located in communities where department  
12 schools are located, to design and deliver engaging, rigorous,  
13 authentic learning experiences for the department's students in  
14 a number of ways. The first way includes Ho'ākea, which connects  
15 students and teachers with their community's wa'a and local 'āina  
16 organizations to teach Hawaiian navigation and voyaging,  
17 mo'olelo, or stories, and history. The second way includes  
18 student-focused authentic learning experiences that occur in  
19 spaces outside the formal classroom setting and out-of-school  
20 time such as after school or during the summer, spring, and  
21 winter breaks. These experiences further reinforce traditional



1 classroom work with authentic real world situations out in the  
2 community. The third way includes teacher-focused professional  
3 development opportunities to connect lesson plans in āina-based  
4 settings.

5 The legislature recognizes that thus far, the Ho‘ākea  
6 program has reached over three thousand two hundred students and  
7 nearly one thousand three hundred teachers and engaged more than  
8 fifty organizations across the State. There is increasing  
9 demand from schools for āina-based learning experiences that the  
10 department of education cannot meet with existing resources.  
11 The department believes that with sufficient funding provided in  
12 this Act, the department can triple engagement by 2027.

13 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the  
14 department of education to expand the department's Ho‘ākea  
15 program.

16 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,500,000 or so much  
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
19 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
20 2026-2027 for funding for the Ho‘ākea program.



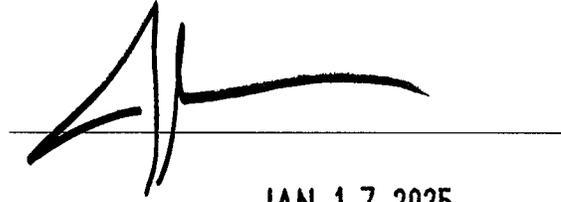
# H.B. NO. 626

1           The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
2 of education for the purposes of this Act.

3           SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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JAN 17 2025



# H.B. NO. 626

**Report Title:**

Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Department's Ho'ākea Program.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

