

JAN 15 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO STATE AND COUNTY EMPLOYMENT.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that a 2017 study from
2 the Harvard Business School found that sixty-one per cent of
3 hiring managers rejected candidates who had "the skills and
4 experience to be successful in a middle-skills job" because they
5 lacked a four-year college degree. The study also found
6 widespread evidence of a "degree gap", or the discrepancy
7 between the percentage of job postings that require a college
8 degree and the percentage of current employees who have a
9 college degree, and that positions with higher degree gaps were
10 harder to fill.

11 The legislature further finds that in late 2020, the
12 Business Roundtable announced an initiative among more than
13 eighty large employers to place greater emphasis on skills in
14 hiring. Skills-based hiring has gained significant traction in
15 both public and private sectors, mainly through the removal of
16 college degree requirements from hiring practices, sometimes
17 called "tearing the paper ceiling". Major companies such as



1 IBM, Delta Airlines, Google, and Bank of America have all
2 removed college degree requirements. A 2023 survey found that
3 fifty-three per cent of hiring managers say their company
4 eliminated a requirement for bachelor's degrees for some roles
5 within the past year.

6 The legislature further finds that the department of human
7 resources development reported that there has been an increase
8 in vacant positions within state agencies over the past four
9 years, showing the vacancy rate has climbed from eighteen per
10 cent in 2019 shortly before the coronavirus disease 2019
11 pandemic to twenty-seven per cent in 2023. The department of
12 human resources development also reported that thirty per cent
13 of existing state civil service employees will be eligible to
14 retire within five years. The legislature finds that through a
15 mix of executive and legislative actions, as of October 2023 at
16 least sixteen states no longer require a four-year degree for
17 most state jobs.

18 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to prohibit the
19 State or any of its branches, political subdivisions, or
20 agencies or any county from requiring a bachelor's degree as a



1 condition of eligibility for hire to a position in state or
2 county employment.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 78, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
4 by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to
5 read as follows:

6 "§78- Bachelor's degree requirements for state or county
7 employment; prohibition. (a) The State or any of its branches,
8 political subdivisions, or agencies or any county shall not
9 require a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility for
10 hire to a position in state or county employment.

11 (b) Subsection (a) shall not apply if the knowledge,
12 skills, or abilities required for the position for which an
13 applicant is applying can only reasonably be obtained, as
14 determined by the appointing authority, through a course of
15 study in pursuit of, and culminating in the award of, a
16 bachelor's degree."

17 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

18 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

19

INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 410

Report Title:

State Employees; County Employees; Bachelor's Degree;
Requirement; Prohibition; Exemption

Description:

Prohibits the State or any of its branches, political subdivisions, or agencies or any county from requiring a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility for hire to a position in state or county employment. Establishes exemptions.

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