

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that olelo Hawaii, the
2 Hawaiian language, is the native language of the Native Hawaiian
3 people. Once spoken throughout Hawaii by Native Hawaiians and
4 foreigners alike, olelo Hawaii was considered to be nearly
5 extinct by the 1980s, with fewer than fifty fluent speakers
6 under the age of eighteen left. A major reason for the
7 deterioration of the Hawaiian language was an 1896 law that
8 required English instruction in Hawaii schools. In practice,
9 this law functioned to "ban" students from speaking olelo Hawaii
10 at their schools.

11 To save the Hawaiian language, a number of historic
12 initiatives were launched, including Aha Punana Leo's Hawaiian
13 language immersion preschools, the department of education's
14 Hawaiian language immersion program, and the Hawaiian language
15 programs of the university of Hawaii system.



1 In addition, in 1978, the Hawaii constitution was amended
2 to recognize the Hawaiian language as one of the two official
3 languages of the State.

4 Furthermore, several important gubernatorial proclamations
5 on olelo Hawaii were issued in the 1990s. In 1994 and 1995,
6 gubernatorial proclamations, written in both Hawaiian and
7 English, were issued recognizing February 1994 and February 1995
8 as "Hawaiian Language Month in Hawaii." The proclamations urged
9 people to participate in the Hawaiian language activities held
10 in February.

11 While the Hawaiian language revitalization movement has
12 made major strides in the last thirty years, for olelo Hawaii to
13 not just survive, but to also thrive, more people need to speak
14 Hawaiian.

15 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require students
16 of Hawaii's public high schools to learn the Hawaiian language
17 and to establish a pilot program at Noelani elementary school
18 and Nanakuli high and intermediate school to encourage the
19 learning and practice of the Hawaiian language.

20 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
21 amended by adding a new section to part I, subpart B, to read as
22 follows:



1 "§302A- Hawaiian language instruction required.
2 Beginning with high school diplomas awarded at the conclusion of
3 the 2026-2027 school year, each student shall complete course
4 work for two credits of Hawaiian language instruction as a
5 requirement for a high school diploma."

- 6 SECTION 3. (a) The department of education shall:
- 7 (1) Design and establish a two-year Hawaiian language
8 pilot program at Noelani elementary school and
9 Nanakuli high and intermediate school that enables
10 students to learn and practice the Hawaiian language;
 - 11 (2) Award a certificate to each student of Noelani
12 elementary school who completed the Hawaiian language
13 pilot program, and recognize the credits earned from
14 the pilot program by students of Nanakuli high and
15 intermediate school for a high school diploma;
 - 16 (3) Assess and analyze the progress made by the students
17 based on standards set forth by the department; and
 - 18 (4) Make recommendations that address the requirement of
19 two credits of Hawaiian language instruction for a
20 high school diploma.



1 (b) Based on the department of education's assessment of
2 the pilot program, the department shall determine whether to
3 continue, expand, or end the pilot program.

4 (c) No later than thirty days before the convening of the
5 regular session of 2028, the department of education shall
6 submit to the legislature a report of its findings and
7 recommendations, including any proposed legislation.

8 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
10 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026, and the
11 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
12 2026-2027 for the purposes of this Act.

13 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
14 of education.

15 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

16 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

17
INTRODUCED BY: Kurt Fjellhaug



S.B. NO. 613

Report Title:

Hawaiian Language; DOE; Graduation Requirement; Pilot Program; Appropriations

Description:

Requires that each Department of Education public school student earn 2 credits in Hawaiian language for a high school diploma. Establishes a 2-year pilot program for Hawaiian language instruction at Noelani Elementary School and Nanakuli High and Intermediate School. Appropriates moneys.

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