
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 BridgeUSA J-1
2 visa program, administered by the United States Department of
3 State, offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach in
4 accredited schools in the United States servicing students in
5 grades kindergarten through twelve. The J-1 visa program, was
6 also designed to help address the ongoing chronic teacher
7 shortage while providing academic and cultural exchange
8 opportunities to visiting teachers. Additionally, the J-1 visa
9 program offers the opportunity for foreign teachers of various
10 backgrounds to become a part of educational communities to
11 reflect the diverse student populations.

12 The legislature also finds that 22.4 per cent of the public
13 school student population identifies as Filipino, while 7.4 per
14 cent of teachers share the same background. According to the
15 federal Institute of Education Sciences, diverse teacher
16 representation significantly impacts student learning. Teachers
17 of color can often help close achievement gaps and improve



1 attendance and behavioral outcomes, and are highly rated by
2 students of all backgrounds.

3 Beyond academic benefits, having teachers who reflect their
4 students' backgrounds can inspire future aspirations. Seeing
5 role models in the classroom can encourage students to pursue
6 similar career paths. Presently, the State's implementation of
7 the J-1 visa program has aimed to expose Filipino children to
8 Filipino teachers, inspiring them to consider careers in
9 education. Conversely, the J-1 visa program has further
10 contributed to classroom diversity while eliminating certain
11 barriers to academic achievement.

12 Since its implementation, the J-1 visa program has been a
13 resounding success. To date, two hundred eighteen
14 internationally certified teachers, primarily from the
15 Philippines, serve in fifty-five public schools statewide.
16 Similar to the Philippines, Kenya also has strong educational
17 equivalencies, and the State's first J-1 teacher from Kenya was
18 hired at an elementary school serving military families
19 accustomed to working with diverse teachers around the globe.
20 Teachers from the J-1 visa program are positively impacting the
21 State's diverse classrooms, and the program has strong support



1 from community organizations, including groups from the Filipino
2 community.

3 However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the
4 full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program.
5 Unlike states such as Alaska, Nevada, and North Carolina, which
6 have streamlined licensing processes for international teachers,
7 Hawaii classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires". This
8 designation requires prospective participants to take a series
9 of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000
10 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the
11 time available to analyze formative assessments, meet with
12 families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are
13 ineligible for additional compensation offered to teachers in
14 hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

15 The legislature further finds that the State's existing
16 licensure reciprocity policies do not adequately recognize the
17 international qualifications of J-1 teachers. This limitation
18 contradicts the department of education's commitment to being
19 "globally competitive and locally committed". By creating a
20 more inclusive and equitable licensing system, the State can



1 fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of
2 international teachers.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to recognize the
4 qualifications and experience of international teachers, while
5 ensuring equitable compensation, by requiring the Hawaii teacher
6 standards board to establish a provisional licensing pathway for
7 visiting international teachers.

8 SECTION 2. Section 302A-802, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
9 amended by amending subsection (c) to read as follows:

10 "(c) The board shall adopt policies, exempt from
11 chapters 91 and 92, to initiate the following:

- 12 (1) Develop criteria allowing more individuals with trade
13 or industry experience to teach in vocational,
14 technical, and career pathway programs, and criteria
15 for the issuance of permits allowing qualified
16 individuals to teach when recommended by the
17 superintendent or the commission, when appropriate.
18 The department or the commission, when appropriate,
19 shall be responsible for the review and acceptance of
20 the relevant licenses, certificates, or other
21 qualifications related to an individual's vocational,



1 technical, or career pathway education-related
2 experience that the department or the commission, when
3 appropriate, deems necessary for a permit. The
4 department or the commission, when appropriate, shall
5 have the authority to waive the requirement of a
6 bachelor's degree to teach in a vocation, technical,
7 or career pathway education program;

8 (2) Develop a plan to accept teachers from any state as
9 long as they have completed state-approved teacher
10 education programs and pass relevant Hawaii teacher
11 examinations or their equivalent;

12 (3) Clarify the requirements, on a state-by-state basis,
13 for out-of-state licensed teachers to obtain a license
14 in Hawaii;

15 (4) Develop a plan to facilitate licensing for those who
16 intend to teach in Hawaii immersion programs, the
17 island of Niihau, or any other extraordinary situation
18 as defined by the superintendent or the
19 superintendent's designee, or by the commission, when
20 appropriate;



1 (5) Pursue full teacher license reciprocity with all other
2 states; ~~and~~

3 (6) Develop a plan to facilitate an optional certification
4 for those who teach or intend to teach at private
5 schools~~[-]~~; and

6 (7) Establish a visiting international teacher license to
7 promote cultural and educational exchange between the
8 State and other countries. The international teacher
9 license shall provide teachers hired by the department
10 or public charter schools the ability to teach all
11 subjects and grade levels that the teacher is
12 qualified to teach; provided that:

13 (A) International teachers hired by the department or
14 public charter schools as part of a designated
15 exchange visitor program of the United States
16 Department of State shall be issued a renewable
17 visiting international teacher license upon
18 receipt of the following:

19 (i) A valid and current J-1 visa;

20 (ii) The equivalent of a United States bachelor's
21 degree or higher;



1 (iii) Completion of an equivalent United States
2 teacher preparation program that verifies
3 basic skills and content knowledge;

4 (iv) A valid teaching license in the teacher's
5 home country;

6 (v) Verification of three years of employment at
7 a public or private school in a
8 pre-kindergarten through grade twelve
9 setting; and

10 (B) Renewal of a visiting international teacher
11 license shall be conditioned on the existence of
12 a valid and current J-1 visa and participation in
13 a designated exchange visitor program of the
14 United States Department of State."

15 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
16 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

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



S.B. NO. 819 S.D. 2

Report Title:

Filipino Caucus; HTSB; International Teacher License; Criteria; Establishment

Description:

Requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to establish an international teacher license for certain visa holders. Establishes criteria for obtaining and renewing an international teacher license. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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