
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE HAWAII CLIMATE INSTITUTE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that while Hawaii is
2 recognized globally for leadership in clean energy, the State
3 and the neighboring countries in the Pacific region continue to
4 face escalating impacts of climate change and variability,
5 including sea level rise, declining rainfall, and increasing air
6 and sea surface temperature. These impacts include increased
7 likelihood of extreme events such as flooding, hurricanes,
8 drought, wildfire, heat waves, storms, and coastal erosion.
9 These catastrophic events have obvious impacts to property and
10 infrastructure, but may also lead to growing public health risks
11 which threaten lives, ecosystems, cultural heritage, and
12 economic stability across the region.

13 The legislature further finds that the university of Hawaii
14 is uniquely positioned to lead the next phase of climate
15 adaptation by integrating advanced scientific analysis, Hawaiian
16 knowledge systems, and community partnerships to inform action.
17 Building this capacity will require developing and sustaining a



1 skilled, homegrown climate literate workforce that is capable of
2 applying research to real-world resilience challenges.

3 The legislature also finds that recent funding cuts to the
4 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's climate
5 research and services have dismantled key functions like climate
6 data collection, modeling, and regional projections. These
7 actions are creating critical voids in authoritative climate
8 information essential for disaster preparedness, agriculture,
9 and infrastructure adaptation planning.

10 The legislature additionally finds that there is no state
11 agency tasked with developing the climate science that underpins
12 Hawaii's resilience and adaptation planning. Hawaii will be
13 vulnerable to increasing natural hazards if the gaps created by
14 federal funding cuts are not offset by state support for
15 locally-derived climate assessments, robust and granular
16 forecasts, and adaptation tools.

17 The purpose of this Act is to establish the Hawaii climate
18 institute at the university of Hawaii to consolidate expertise,
19 attract federal and philanthropic funding to expand climate and
20 community resilience research, train the next generation of



1 climate professionals, and deliver locally-derived solutions for
2 issues uniquely specific to Hawaii and the Pacific region.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 304A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 amended by adding a new subpart to part IV to be appropriately
5 designated and to read as follows:

6 "SUBPART . HAWAII CLIMATE INSTITUTE.

7 §304A-A Hawaii climate institute; establishment. (a)

8 There is established the Hawaii climate institute at the
9 university of Hawaii.

10 (b) The Hawaii climate institute shall be located in and
11 be a part of the university of Hawaii at Manoa campus, to be
12 administratively attached to the university of Hawaii at Manoa's
13 school of ocean and earth science and technology. The institute
14 shall be administered by a director appointed by the board of
15 regents upon recommendation by the president.

16 (c) The Hawaii climate institute shall:

17 (1) Foster cross-disciplinary collaboration across the
18 university of Hawaii system;

19 (2) Provide granular, artificial intelligence-enabled
20 climate projections for use in planning, health,
21 resource management and policy decisions;



- (3) Develop degree programs and curricula integrating climate resilience and Hawaiian knowledge;
- (4) Support internships, fellowships, and field-based learning opportunities;
- (5) Build a climate literate workforce pipeline by preparing the next generation of Hawaii-based scientists, planners, health professionals, and community leaders for careers in climate adaptation and sustainability across all sectors;
- (6) Attract and leverage federal and philanthropic resources to expand climate and community resilience research; and
- (7) Elevate the university of Hawaii's leadership role in global climate adaptation.

§304A-B Hawaii climate institute; faculty; support positions. (a) The Hawaii climate institute shall include two administrative, professional, and technical staff positions for institute operations and research coordination.

(b) The president shall allocate funds and hire the following positions to support the Hawaii climate institute:



(1) Four faculty positions at the university of Hawaii at Manoa school of ocean and earth science and technology specializing in climate change and variability impacts and community resilience;

(2) One faculty position at the university of Hawaii at Manoa Thompson school of social work and public health specializing in the intersection of public health and climate change;

(3) One faculty position at the university of Hawaii John A. Burns school of medicine specializing in the impacts of climate change on human health;

(4) One faculty position at the university of Hawaii at Manoa Hawai'inuiākea school of Hawaiian knowledge specializing in the intersection of Hawaiian knowledge systems and climate change; and

(5) One faculty position in the university of Hawaii at Manoa college of tropical agriculture and human resilience specializing in climate change impacts on Pacific Island agriculture.

§304A-C Hawaii climate institute; tax revenues;

allocation. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, including



1 section 37-79, six per cent of the additional revenue
2 cumulatively generated by any increase to the transient
3 accommodations tax rates pursuant to section 237D-2(a)(6) and
4 (c)(4) beginning on January 1, 2026, and section 237D-2(e)
5 beginning on July 1, 2026, and by assessment of the transient
6 accommodations tax on gross rental proceeds derived from cruise
7 fares pursuant to section 237D-2(a) shall be allocated to the
8 university of Hawaii annually to support the programs and
9 operations of the Hawaii climate institute."

10 SECTION 3. The international pacific research center of
11 the university of Hawaii at Manoa's school of ocean and earth
12 sciences and technology shall be transferred and integrated into
13 the Hawaii climate institute established pursuant to section
14 304A-A, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

15 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,000,000 or so much
17 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to support
18 the core operations of the Hawaii climate institute.

19 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of
20 Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.



1 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,000,000 or so much
3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to support
4 collaborative research and community engagement projects of the
5 Hawaii climate institute.

6 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of
7 Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

8 SECTION 6. If any provision of this Act, or the
9 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held
10 invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or
11 applications of the Act that can be given effect without the
12 invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions
13 of this Act are severable.

14 SECTION 7. In codifying the new sections added by section
15 2 and referenced in section 3 of this Act, the revisor of
16 statutes shall substitute appropriate section numbers for the
17 letters used in designating the new sections in this Act.

18 SECTION 8. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

19
INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 16 2026



H.B. NO. 1598

Report Title:

University of Hawaii; Hawaii Climate Institute; International Pacific Research Center; Transient Accommodations Tax; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Hawaii Climate Institute at the University of Hawaii to support climate resilience and adaptation initiatives of the University and the State. Requires six per cent of the revenue generated by any increase to the Transient Accommodations Tax rates beginning on January 1, 2026, and by assessment of the Transient Accommodations Tax on gross rental proceeds derived from cruise fares to be allocated to the University of Hawaii annually to support the programs and operations of the Hawaii Climate Institute. Transfers the International Pacific Research Center of the University of Hawaii at Manoa's School of Ocean and Earth Sciences and Technology to the Hawaii Climate Institute. Appropriates funds.

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