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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. This Act shall be known and may be cited as the  
2 Hawaii Braille Literacy Education Act.

3       SECTION 2. The legislature finds that literacy skills are  
4 fundamental to success in education, employment, and life for  
5 all members of society, including individuals with low vision  
6 and blindness. Braille is a tactile writing system that allows  
7 low vision and blind individuals to read by touch, using a  
8 system of raised dots that represent letters, numbers, and  
9 symbols. Braille literacy skills are widely understood as  
10 essential for low vision and blind students to actively learn,  
11 seek and maintain remunerative employment, engage in cultural  
12 enrichment and hobbies, and access opportunities in life  
13 regardless of disability.

14       According to a 2018 study reported in the Journal of  
15 Blindness Innovation and Research, "individuals who were primary  
16 Braille readers since childhood had greater life satisfaction,  
17 self-esteem, and job satisfaction than individuals who reported



1 not using Braille as their primary reading medium during  
2 childhood." Additionally, the study reported that "findings  
3 support the premise that Braille literacy is key to life  
4 satisfaction and self-esteem in addition to academic and job  
5 success" and that those who are braille literate are more likely  
6 to gain high-quality employment.

7 According to the Centers for Disease Control and  
8 Prevention, more than twenty-four thousand people statewide  
9 report low vision or blindness. The exceptional support branch  
10 of the department of education helps complex areas and schools  
11 in planning and implementing programs that increase achievement  
12 for students with disabilities, including students with low  
13 vision or blindness. Presently, one hundred seventy students in  
14 kindergarten through twelfth grade are registered with the  
15 American Printing House for the Blind to receive special  
16 education materials. However, only about ten per cent of those  
17 registered have braille services in their special education  
18 programs, creating a significant gap for students to receive  
19 equitable educational opportunities. With limited resources  
20 contingent upon individual student needs, a proactive approach  
21 is imperative to ensure equity for students with low vision or



1 blindness and help those students succeed in the classroom and  
2 prepare for future careers and life goals.

3 The legislature further finds that it is in the interest of  
4 the State to make braille literacy educational services  
5 available to all students and members of the greater educational  
6 community. Therefore, it is necessary for the State to promote  
7 braille instruction and timely access to braille instructional  
8 materials for low vision or blind students, parents, teachers,  
9 and other school personnel.

10 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the  
11 department of education to:

- 12 (1) Include the instruction of braille and provision of  
13 braille instructional materials under certain  
14 circumstances;
- 15 (2) Provide braille literacy support services;
- 16 (3) Cooperate with the department of human services when  
17 requested to submit information necessary to maintain  
18 a register of the blind in the State;
- 19 (4) Provide comprehensive information about braille  
20 literacy services, assistive technology devices, and



1           assistive technology services, including educational  
2           programming options; and

3           (5) Participate in the development of section 504 plans  
4           and individualized education programs.

5           SECTION 3. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
6           amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and  
7           to read as follows:

8                               **"PART       .   BRAILLE SERVICES**

9           **§302A-       Policy.** It is a policy of the State to promote  
10          braille literacy and support the provision of braille  
11          educational services needed for eligible low vision or blind  
12          students to fully participate in school and prepare students for  
13          life beyond the classroom.

14          **§302A-       Definitions.** For the purposes of this part:

15          "Braille" has the same meaning as in section 302A-442.5.

16          "Braille educational services" means:

17          (1) Assessment of an eligible low vision or blind student  
18               to evaluate the student's reading and writing ability,  
19               needs, and appropriate reading and writing media,  
20               including assessment of the student's current and



1 future needs for instruction in braille or the use of  
2 braille;

3 (2) Instruction in braille reading and writing; and

4 (3) Provision of braille instructional materials.

5 "Braille instructional materials" means print instructional  
6 materials, as defined in section 302A-442.5, that are produced  
7 in braille.

8 "Eligible low vision or blind student" means an eligible  
9 student, as defined in section 302A-442.5.

10 "Individualized education program" and "individualized  
11 education program team" have the same meanings as in section  
12 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20  
13 U.S.C. section 1414(d)), as amended.

14 "Section 504 plan" and "section 504 plan team" mean the  
15 documentation of needs and provision of services developed by a  
16 team assembled to ensure equal educational opportunity to  
17 students with disabilities pursuant to section 504 of the  
18 Rehabilitation Act 1973 (29 U.S.C. section 791), as amended.

19 **§302A- Low vision or blind students; braille**

20 **instruction; braille instructional materials; educational**

21 **services.** (a) The department shall ensure that the section 504



1 plan or individualized education program for an eligible low  
2 vision or blind student provides each student with the  
3 opportunity to receive braille educational services in  
4 accordance with this part.

5 (b) Any section 504 plan or individualized education  
6 program prepared for an eligible low vision or blind student  
7 shall consider results of the initial or most recent assessments  
8 of the student's reading and writing ability, needs, and  
9 appropriate reading and writing media, using one or more reading  
10 assessment tools, which have been approved by the department as  
11 validated for use with eligible low vision or blind students.

12 (c) Braille educational services that include braille  
13 instruction and braille instructional materials shall be  
14 provided under an individualized education program prepared for  
15 the student, unless the individualized education program team  
16 finds that braille instructional services or braille  
17 instructional materials are not appropriate as determined  
18 pursuant to subsection (e).

19 (d) Each section 504 plan or individualized education  
20 program that includes the provision of braille instructional  
21 materials shall include an assurance that the materials, or



1 substitute braille instructional materials, when original  
2 materials have not arrived at the student's school, shall be  
3 provided concurrently with the distribution of print  
4 instructional materials for all other students in accordance  
5 with section 302A-442.5(e).

6 (e) Subsection (c) may not apply if consideration of the  
7 initial or most recent assessments required under subsection (b)  
8 support a determination by the section 504 plan team or  
9 individualized education program team that braille instruction  
10 or braille instructional materials are not appropriate for the  
11 student, as documented in the section 504 plan or individualized  
12 education program. This determination shall be supported by  
13 documentation of:

14 (1) The student's visual functioning behaviors and skills  
15 in school, including but not limited to ocular motor  
16 function and near, distance, and field of vision, to  
17 ensure that the student's visual needs are addressed;

18 (2) Results of reading and writing skills and media  
19 assessments, identifying the assessment tools and  
20 methods used;



(3) Results of assessments of the student's current and future needs for braille instruction and the use of braille;

(4) Identification of all accommodations and services provided to meet the student's reading and writing needs resulting from the student's low vision or blindness; and

(5) The date of any new assessment agreed upon by the section 504 plan team or individualized education program team.

**§302A- Braille literacy support services.** (a) Braille literacy support services shall be provided by the department and shall include:

(1) One or more reading media assessment tools validated for use with low vision or blind students;

(2) Braille instructional materials as needed to fulfill section 504 plans and individualized education programs; provided that preference shall be given to braille instructional materials provided by in-state suppliers when possible; and





- 1           (3) Authoritative information about the efficacy of  
2           braille educational services.
- 3           (b) The department shall:
- 4           (1) Cooperate with the department of human services when  
5           requested to submit information necessary to maintain  
6           the register of the blind in the State pursuant to  
7           section 347-6;
- 8           (2) Provide eligible low vision or blind students' parents  
9           or legal guardians, and the students, as appropriate,  
10          with comprehensive information about braille literacy  
11          services, assistive technology devices, and assistive  
12          technology services, including educational programming  
13          options; and
- 14          (3) Participate in the development of section 504 plans  
15          and individualized education programs.
- 16          (c) The department may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91  
17          to carry out the purposes of this part."

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



# H.B. NO. 1894

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INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

JAN 23 2026



# H.B. NO. 1894

**Report Title:**

DOE; Braille Instruction; Braille Instruction Materials; Section 504 Plans; Individualized Education Programs; Braille Literacy Support Services

**Description:**

Requires the Department of Education to include the instruction of braille and provision of braille instructional materials under certain circumstances; provide braille literacy support services; cooperate with the Department of Human Services when requested to submit information necessary to maintain a register of the blind in the State; provide comprehensive information about braille literacy services, assistive technology devices, and assistive technology services, including educational programming options; and participate in the development of section 504 plans and individualized education programs.

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