
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that hotter temperatures
2 induced by climate change affect a student's ability to play,
3 gather, and learn outside while attending school. To reduce the
4 effect of hotter temperatures on students at department of
5 education schools, the department can take a more proactive
6 approach to increase the tree canopy on school campuses. In
7 addition to lowering the temperature on campuses through shade,
8 transpiration, and reduction of the heat island effect, trees
9 will also absorb storm water, clean the air, beautify campuses,
10 and help reach county and state environmental goals.
11 Furthermore, planting and caring for trees on campuses provide a
12 multitude of learning opportunities, including learning the role
13 trees play in the overall health of the ecosystem, cultural uses
14 of indigenous trees, tree propagation and care, and commercial
15 uses of trees.
16 The legislature further finds that, during the regular
17 session of 2021, the legislature adopted House Concurrent



1 Resolution No. 68, which requested that the department of
2 education create a landscape management plan with goals to
3 increase tree canopies on public school grounds, document
4 existing inventory and talent, and identify additional resources
5 required to implement and sustain the plan.

6 The department of education facilities development branch
7 has subcontracted a thorough professional inventory of campus
8 trees. The inventory includes digital maps and information on
9 each tree, including a risk assessment, note of structural
10 defects, entity assigned responsibility for maintenance, pruning
11 contracts, and contact for emergency help. As of the end of
12 August 2025, one hundred forty-seven school inventories have
13 been completed and an additional two or three will be added each
14 month going forward. The inventory will be used to identify
15 schools with few trees and allow landscape architects to
16 identify good spots for new trees.

17 The legislature additionally finds that the department of
18 education can utilize management of the tree inventory as an
19 educational opportunity. There are twenty-nine existing
20 agriculture and natural resource programs in schools statewide.
21 These agriculture and natural resource programs can support



1 educational activities and encourage propagation of native or
2 fruit trees that can be planted and shared with department of
3 education schools and communities.

4 The legislature finds that the department of land and
5 natural resources division of forestry and wildlife has an
6 existing community forestry program that works with schools to
7 plant native plants. As such, the division can provide
8 technical assistance and supplies within its budget to add the
9 trees recommended or approved by facilities in locations in
10 which the tree canopy will be expanded in a manner that is safe,
11 prevents damage to infrastructure, prevents liability for the
12 school and department of education, and maintains open outdoor
13 space for school use.

14 The purpose of this Act is to authorize the department of
15 education, in collaboration with the department of land and
16 natural resources division of forestry and wildlife, to
17 establish the shade and fruit tree program to support
18 educational activities and encourage propagation of native shade
19 trees and fruit trees on department of education campuses.

20 SECTION 2. (a) There is established in the department of
21 education a shade and fruit tree program that may:



7 (2) Encourage the propagation of native shade trees and
8 fruit trees appropriate to each school's climate; and
9 (3) Encourage the inclusion of students of all grades and
10 ages to participate in the care of native trees and
11 fruit trees.

12 (b) The department of education shall collaborate with
13 collaborate with the department of land and natural resources
14 division of forestry and wildlife in establishing the shade and
15 fruit tree program.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

17

INTRODUCED BY:

Wier Maelzer

JAN 27 2026



H.B. NO. 2374

Report Title:

DCE; DLNR; Division of Forestry and Wildlife; Shade and Fruit Tree Program

Description:

Authorizes the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife, to establish the Shade and Fruit Tree Program to support educational activities and encourage propagation of native shade trees and fruit trees for planting in Department of Education schools.

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