

JAN 22 2026

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## 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;



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

§304A-B Hawaii climate institute; faculty; support

16 **positions.** (a) The Hawaii climate institute shall include two  
17 administrative, professional, and technical staff positions for  
18 institute operations and research coordination.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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.

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INTRODUCED BY: Mike Gabbard



# S.B. NO. 2484

**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.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

