

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that, as the indigenous
2 people of Hawaii, Native Hawaiians have a unique historical,
3 cultural, and political relationship with the State of Hawaii.
4 This relationship is rooted in the recognition of Hawaii as an
5 independent nation prior to its unlawful overthrow in 1893, the
6 subsequent annexation, and the continued commitment of the State
7 of Hawaii to support Native Hawaiian advancement, as codified in
8 the Hawaii State Constitution and Hawaii Revised Statutes.

9 The legislature further finds that providing a tuition
10 waiver or remission program for Native Hawaiians at the
11 university of Hawaii system is consistent with the policies
12 adopted in other states that recognize indigenous populations.
13 Just as Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, and Montana have enacted
14 laws to ensure access to higher education for Native American
15 and Alaska Native students, Hawaii should create a parallel
16 tuition benefit for Native Hawaiians.



1 The legislature additionally finds that Native Hawaiian
2 education is currently under threat from ongoing inequities,
3 reduced resources, and the erosion of programs specifically
4 designed to serve Native Hawaiian students, and is a matter of
5 statewide concern pursuant to article X, section 6, of the
6 Hawaii State Constitution.

7 The legislature further finds that Princess Bernice Pauahi
8 Bishop's vision and legacy, through the Kamehameha Schools, was
9 to provide educational opportunities to Native Hawaiians so they
10 could thrive in their homeland. The establishment of a tuition
11 waiver for Native Hawaiians enrolling within the university of
12 Hawaii system would take her vision to the next step, ensuring
13 higher education access across the public university system,
14 strengthening pathways from kindergarten through twelfth grade
15 to higher education, and fulfilling the State's constitutional
16 mandate to promote the well-being of Native Hawaiians.

17 The legislature notes that the university of Hawaii has not
18 fully paid its obligations for the use of public trust lands
19 that are designated for the betterment of Native Hawaiians, as
20 required by the Hawaii State Constitution and Hawaii Revised
21 Statutes. This ongoing failure underscores the importance of



1 creating a tuition waiver program as one way to rectify historic
2 and current shortcomings in advancing Native Hawaiian education
3 and equity.

4 The purpose of this Act is to require the university of
5 Hawaii to provide higher education tuition waivers for
6 qualifying native Hawaiian and Hawaiian students enrolled in the
7 university of Hawaii system.

8 SECTION 2. Chapter 304A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
9 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
10 and to read as follows:

11 "§304A- **Tuition waivers; Native Hawaiian; Hawaiian.**

12 (a) Any law to the contrary notwithstanding, the board of
13 regents shall grant a waiver on all tuition for a student
14 enrolled at a campus within the university of Hawaii system who
15 is native Hawaiian or Hawaiian, as those terms are defined in
16 section 10-2; provided that the student is in possession of a
17 card issued by the office of Hawaiian affairs identifying the
18 student as a person included in the Hawaiian registry under
19 section 10-19 shall constitute conclusive proof that the student
20 is native Hawaiian or Hawaiian.



1 (b) The university shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter
2 91 necessary to implement this section."

3 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

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

5 INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 2155

Report Title:

University of Hawaii; Board of Regents; Tuition Waiver; Native Hawaiians

Description:

Requires the Board of Regents to grant a waiver on all tuition for qualifying native Hawaiian and Hawaiian students enrolled within the University of Hawaii System.

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