

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CIVIC EDUCATION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that a thriving democracy
2 depends on an engaged, informed, and empowered citizenry. Yet
3 the systems that sustain democratic participation—critical
4 thinking, media literacy, collaborative problem-solving, and
5 knowledge of governmental processes—must be intentionally
6 cultivated. For students, education received in middle school
7 or intermediate school is a pivotal period in which young people
8 form lasting understandings of their role in public life and
9 their connection to community, government, and aina. To meet
10 this moment, Hawaii's public schools require stable, dedicated
11 resources that expand opportunities for students to develop
12 civic knowledge and the habits of democratic participation.

13 The legislature further finds that existing funding
14 structures do not adequately support the development of civic
15 knowledge for students. Civic education is often reliant on
16 uneven school-level capacity, discretionary funds, or short-term
17 grants that cannot sustain long-range program design. These



1 structural gaps limit access to experiential civic learning,
2 professional development for social studies teachers, and
3 curriculum aligned with Hawaii's civic-mission priorities.
4 Without a reliable funding mechanism, the State's obligation to
5 prepare young people for informed participation in our shared
6 governance is weakened, and disparities in civic opportunity
7 widen.

8 The legislature also finds that to address the systemic
9 challenges that impede the pursuit of civic knowledge, a special
10 fund dedicated solely to advancing civic education in Hawaii's
11 public middle and intermediate schools is needed. By
12 establishing a permanent, purpose-restricted funding source, the
13 legislature affirms that civic education is a core public good
14 essential to the health of our democratic systems and will
15 ensure that every middle and intermediate school student in
16 Hawaii, regardless of geography, income, or school resources,
17 has meaningful access to high-quality civic-learning
18 opportunities that prepare them to participate fully in the life
19 of the State's democracy.

20 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to strengthen
21 Hawaii's civic infrastructure by establishing a civic education



1 grant program and civic education trust fund and dedicating
2 their use exclusively to support civic education in Hawaii's
3 public middle and intermediate schools.

4 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
5 amended by adding two new sections to be appropriately
6 designated and to read as follows:

7 **"§302A-A Civic education grant program; establishment;**
8 **administration.** (a) There is established within the department
9 for administrative purposes a civic education grant program, to
10 be administered by the department's office of curriculum and
11 instructional support services, to support public middle and
12 intermediate schools in providing civic education to students
13 through department approved programming.

14 (b) Applications for grants shall be made to the
15 department. At a minimum, the applicant shall:

16 (1) Provide a detailed plan outlining the scope,
17 objectives, and projected impact of the project or
18 projects and a clear breakdown of how grant funds will
19 be used;

20 (2) Agree to use state funds exclusively for the purposes
21 of this program;



- 1 (3) Indicate capability to properly use the grant for the
2 purpose of the grant program;
- 3 (4) Comply with all applicable federal and state laws
4 prohibiting discrimination against any person on the
5 basis of race, color, national origin, religion,
6 creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or
7 any other characteristic protected under applicable
8 federal or state law;
- 9 (5) Agree not to use state funds for purposes of
10 entertainment or perquisites;
- 11 (6) Comply with other requirements as the department may
12 prescribe;
- 13 (7) Comply with all applicable federal, state, and county
14 statutes, rules, and ordinances;
- 15 (8) Agree to indemnify and save harmless the State of
16 Hawaii and its officers, agents, and employees from
17 and against any and all claims arising out of or
18 resulting from activities carried out or projects
19 undertaken with funds provided hereunder and procure
20 sufficient insurance to provide this indemnification
21 if requested to do so by the department; and



1 (9) Agree to make available to the department all records
2 the applicant may have relating to the grant to allow
3 state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance
4 with this subsection.

5 (c) Grant awards shall be funded by the civic education
6 trust fund established pursuant to section 302A-B; provided that
7 no grant shall be awarded without the approval of a social
8 studies educational specialist pursuant to section 302A-B(d).

9 (d) Each participating school shall submit an annual
10 report to the department no later than December 1 of each year
11 on how awarded grant funds were used to further civic education,
12 including updates or status reports on the following:

13 (1) Implementation of civic education programming and
14 curriculum;

15 (2) Teacher development; and

16 (3) Progress in meeting any evaluation metrics for civic
17 education programming as established by the
18 department.

19 (e) The department of education shall compile the reports
20 received from participating schools pursuant to subsection (d)
21 into one report and submit the report to the legislature no



1 later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular
2 session.

3 (f) The department may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91
4 necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.

5 **§302A-B Civic education trust fund; established.** (a)
6 There is established within the state treasury a civic education
7 trust fund to be administered by the office of curriculum and
8 instructional support services of the department.

9 (b) The civic education trust fund shall consist of:

10 (1) Any appropriations made by the legislature;

11 (2) Grants, gifts, and donations from public sources,
12 including federal funding, or private sources; and

13 (3) Interest or other income earned from the investment of
14 moneys in the fund.

15 (c) The department shall expend moneys in the civic
16 education trust fund exclusively to support civic education
17 programming, curriculum implementation, teacher professional
18 development, and student civic-learning opportunities in public
19 middle and intermediate schools, including through the provision
20 of funding for grants under the civic education grant program
21 established pursuant to section 302A-A.



1 (d) Expenditures from the civic education trust fund shall
2 be approved by a social studies educational specialist, as
3 designated by the superintendent.

4 (e) The department shall submit an annual report on the
5 civic education trust fund to the legislature no later than
6 twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session. The
7 report shall include:

8 (1) Expenditures from and contributions to the trust fund
9 during the preceding fiscal year; and

10 (2) Results and outcomes achieved from expenditures from
11 the trust fund.

12 (f) Moneys deposited into or appropriated to the trust
13 fund shall remain available until they are obligated or until
14 the trust fund is terminated. If the trust fund is terminated,
15 all funds, including interest or other income earned from the
16 investment of moneys in the fund, shall be transferred to the
17 general fund."

18 SECTION 3. In codifying the new sections added by section
19 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute
20 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating
21 the new sections in this Act.



S.B. NO. 2827

1 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

2 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

3

INTRODUCED BY: Karl Rhoads



S.B. NO. 2827

Report Title:

Department of Education; Civic Education; Public Middle Schools;
Public Intermediate Schools; Civic Education Grant Program;
Civic Education Trust Fund

Description:

Establishes a Civic Education Grant Program to provide support to public middle and intermediate schools in providing civic education to students through department approved programming. Establishes a Civic Education Trust Fund.

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

