

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CLIMATE RESILIENCE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that climate change is
2 already imposing multi-billion dollar economic losses on the
3 State through a combination of catastrophic events and slow
4 onset impacts, including up to \$12 billion in recovery costs
5 from the 2023 Maui wildfires, \$180 million in damages from the
6 2018 Kauai "rain bomb", more than \$19 billion in coastal assets
7 threatened by 3.2 feet of sea level rise, and an estimated \$1.3
8 billion per year in projected losses from coral reef decline by
9 2050. These direct damages are compounded by drought-driven
10 agricultural impacts, such as \$44.5 million in lost ranching
11 revenue and twenty thousand cattle lost during the 2007 to 2014
12 drought. Escalating droughts and other climate-related natural
13 disasters also require increasing amounts of federal and state
14 relief funds. Together with wildfire suppression, freshwater
15 scarcity, flooding of critical infrastructure, and looming
16 federal cuts to climate research, these climate impacts create
17 an extraordinary threat to the State's economic security and



1 underscore the urgent need for sustained state investment in
2 climate resilience and research to avoid even larger long-term
3 economic burdens.

4 The legislature further finds that the State continues to
5 face escalating impacts of climate change and variability,
6 including sea level rise, declining rainfall, and increasing air
7 and sea surface temperatures. These impacts include an
8 increased likelihood of extreme events such as flooding,
9 hurricanes, droughts, wildfires, heat waves, storms, and coastal
10 erosion. These catastrophic events have obvious impacts to
11 property and infrastructure but may also lead to growing public
12 health risks, threatening lives, ecosystems, cultural heritage,
13 and economic stability across the State.

14 The legislature recognizes that the university of Hawaii is
15 uniquely positioned to integrate advanced scientific analysis,
16 Hawaiian knowledge systems, and community partnerships to inform
17 action. Building this capacity will require developing and
18 sustaining a skilled, homegrown, climate-literate workforce that
19 is capable of applying research to real-world resilience
20 challenges.



1 The legislature also finds that recently proposed federal
2 funding cuts to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
3 Administration's climate research and services would dismantle
4 key functions, such as climate data collection, modeling, and
5 regional projections. These cuts and shifting priorities at the
6 federal level are creating critical voids in authoritative
7 climate information essential for disaster preparedness,
8 agriculture, and infrastructure adaptation planning.

9 The legislature additionally finds that there is no state
10 agency tasked with developing the climate science that underpins
11 the State's resilience and adaptation planning. The State will
12 be vulnerable to increasing natural hazards if the gaps created
13 by federal funding cuts are not offset by state support for
14 locally derived climate assessments, robust and granular
15 forecasts, and adaptation tools. The legislature therefore
16 finds that establishing a body to coordinate and lead climate
17 resilience research is a matter of statewide concern pursuant to
18 article X, section 6, of the Hawaii State Constitution.

19 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish the
20 Hawaii climate institute at the university of Hawaii to
21 consolidate expertise, attract federal and philanthropic funding



1 to expand climate and community resilience research, train the
2 next generation of climate professionals, and deliver locally
3 derived solutions for issues specific to the State and the
4 Pacific region.

5 SECTION 2. Chapter 304A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
6 amended by adding a new subpart to part IV be appropriately
7 designated and to read as follows:

8 "Subpart . Hawaii Climate Institute

9 **§304A-A Hawaii climate institute; establishment.** (a)

10 There is established at the university of Hawaii, Manoa campus,
11 the Hawaii climate institute. The institute shall be
12 administered by a director to be appointed by the board of
13 regents upon recommendation by the president. The institute
14 shall be administratively affiliated with the school of ocean
15 and earth science and technology at the university of Hawaii at
16 Manoa.

17 (b) The Hawaii climate institute shall:

18 (1) Foster cross-disciplinary collaboration across the
19 university of Hawaii system;



- (2) Provide granular, artificial intelligence-enabled climate projections for use in planning, health, resource management, and policy decisions;
- (3) Develop degree programs and curricula that integrate climate resilience and Hawaiian knowledge;
- (4) Support internships, fellowships, and field-based learning opportunities;
- (5) Build a climate-literate workforce pipeline by preparing the next generation of Hawaii-based scientists, planners, health professionals, and community leaders for careers in climate adaptation and sustainability across all sectors;
- (6) Attract and leverage federal and philanthropic resources to expand climate and community resilience research; and
- (7) Elevate the university of Hawaii's leadership role in global climate adaptation.

§304A-B Faculty and staff; support positions. The director of the institute shall appoint the professional members of the staff and other employees. The faculty of the Hawaii climate institute shall include two administrative,



1 professional, and technical staff positions whose duties shall
2 include maintaining institute operations and coordinating
3 research.

4 **§304A-C State agencies; duty to cooperate; collaboration**
5 **with the Hawaii climate institute.** (a) The Hawaii climate
6 institute shall receive the full cooperation of all state
7 agencies in the use of staff members, facilities, and other
8 resources necessary to accomplish the purposes of this subpart.

9 (b) The school of ocean and earth science and technology,
10 Thompson school of social work and public health, John A. Burns
11 school of medicine, hawaiiinuiakea school of Hawaiian knowledge,
12 and college of tropical agriculture and human resilience at the
13 university of Hawaii at Manoa shall collaborate with the Hawaii
14 climate institute to provide expert faculty support as
15 appropriate."

16 SECTION 3. All rights, powers, functions, and duties of
17 the international Pacific research center at the school of ocean
18 and earth science and technology at the university of Hawaii at
19 Manoa are transferred to the Hawaii climate institute at the
20 university of Hawaii at Manoa established pursuant to section
21 304A-A, Hawaii Revised Statutes.



1 All officers and employees whose functions are transferred
2 by this Act shall be transferred with their functions and shall
3 continue to perform their regular duties upon their transfer,
4 subject to the state personnel laws and this Act.

5 No officer or employee of the State having tenure shall
6 suffer any loss of salary, seniority, prior service credit,
7 vacation, sick leave, or other employee benefit or privilege as
8 a consequence of this Act, and such officer or employee may be
9 transferred or appointed to a civil service position without the
10 necessity of examination; provided that the officer or employee
11 possesses the minimum qualifications for the position to which
12 transferred or appointed; and provided that subsequent changes
13 in status may be made pursuant to applicable civil service and
14 compensation laws.

15 An officer or employee of the State who does not have
16 tenure and who may be transferred or appointed to a civil
17 service position as a consequence of this Act shall become a
18 civil service employee without the loss of salary, seniority,
19 prior service credit, vacation, sick leave, or other employee
20 benefits or privileges and without the necessity of examination;
21 provided that such officer or employee possesses the minimum



1 qualifications for the position to which transferred or
2 appointed.

3 If an office or position held by an officer or employee
4 having tenure is abolished, the officer or employee shall not
5 thereby be separated from public employment, but shall remain in
6 the employment of the State with the same pay and classification
7 and shall be transferred to some other office or position for
8 which the officer or employee is eligible under the personnel
9 laws of the State as determined by the head of the department or
10 the governor.

11 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
13 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to
14 hire faculty to support the Hawaii climate institute in
15 fulfilling its functions; provided that the sum shall be
16 expended as follows:

17 (1) \$ to establish four full-time (4.0 FTE)
18 faculty positions within the school of ocean and earth
19 science and technology at the university of Hawaii at
20 Manoa;



(2) \$ to establish one full-time (1.0 FTE) faculty position within the Thompson school of social work and public health at the university of Hawaii at Manoa;

(3) \$ to establish one full-time (1.0 FTE) faculty position within the John A. Burns school of medicine at the university of Hawaii at Manoa;

(4) \$ to establish one full-time (1.0 FTE) faculty position within the hawaiiinuiakea school of Hawaiian knowledge at the university of Hawaii at Manoa; and

(5) \$ to establish one full-time (1.0 FTE) faculty position within the college of tropical agriculture and human resilience at the university of Hawaii at Manoa.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to be expended as follows:



(1) \$ to support the core operations of the
Hawaii climate institute; and

(2) \$ for collaborative research and community
engagement projects by the Hawaii climate institute.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of
Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 6. If any provision of this Act, or the
application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held
invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or
applications of the Act that can be given effect without the
invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions
of this Act are severable.

SECTION 7. In codifying the new sections added by section
2 and referenced by section 3 of this Act, the revisor of
statutes shall substitute appropriate section numbers for the
letters used in designating the new sections in this Act.

SECTION 8. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 3030

Report Title:

UH; Manoa; Hawaii Climate Institute; Establishment; Transfer;
Positions; Appropriations

Description:

Establishes the Hawaii Climate Institute at the University of Hawaii. Transfers the functions of the International Pacific Research Center at the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa to the Hawaii Climate Institute. Establishes positions. Appropriates funds.

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