

JAN 28 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that language access is
2 essential to ensuring equitable access to education, healthcare,
3 legal services, emergency services, agricultural programs, and
4 government programs for Hawaii's diverse communities. Hawaii's
5 multilingual population requires a trained and culturally
6 competent workforce of translators and interpreters.

7 The legislature commends the department of education for
8 recognizing high school graduates with the seal of biliteracy.
9 These students, who have demonstrated proficiency in English and
10 at least one additional language, represent a valuable pipeline
11 for meeting the State's language access workforce needs.

12 The legislature also finds that providing a structured
13 pathway, including training and paid internship opportunities,
14 will help develop qualified bilingual workers who strengthen
15 workforce development, expand language access services, and
16 create meaningful career opportunities for the State's
17 residents.



1 The legislature declares that establishing a biliteracy
2 program within the university of Hawaii is a matter of statewide
3 concern.

4 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a
5 program that enables eligible high school graduates who have
6 earned the seal of biliteracy and community members with
7 demonstrated biliteracy competency to be recognized as qualified
8 translators and interpreters.

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

12 "**§304A-** **Language access education and workforce**
13 **development program; established.** (a) There is established
14 within the university of Hawaii the language access education
15 and workforce development program.

16 (b) The language access education and workforce
17 development program shall be administered by the university of
18 Hawaii SEED office in collaboration with academic departments on
19 all campuses, the department of education, department of labor
20 and industrial relations, and other relevant public and private
21 entities.



1 (c) The language access education and workforce
2 development program shall provide a curriculum for training
3 eligible participants to be recognized as qualified translators
4 and interpreters. The curriculum shall include:
5 (1) Training in translation and interpretation, including
6 ethics, standards, and best practices;
7 (2) Specialized instruction and opportunities for
8 interpretation in public service settings, including
9 settings related to education, healthcare, social
10 services, legal services, agriculture, and government
11 services; and
12 (3) A certificate of completion of program requirements
13 for qualified translation and interpretation
14 proficiency;
15 provided that participants shall complete educational
16 requirements, including internship opportunities through the
17 hawaiian program of the department of labor and industrial
18 relations.
19 (d) Priority for admission to the language access
20 education and workforce development program shall be given to
21 applicants who have earned the seal of biliteracy issued by the



1 department of education. All other applicants shall demonstrate
2 as requirements of admission proficiency in English and at least
3 one additional language, as determined by program standards or
4 by obtaining the Global Seal of Biliteracy credential."

5 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
7 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to
8 carry out the purposes of this Act, including the establishment
9 of three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE) positions.

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

12 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

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

14

INTRODUCED BY: *Rashid Jafar*



S.B. NO. 3238

Report Title:

UH; Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawaii. Appropriates moneys.

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