

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



GOV. MSG. NO. 1325

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

July 9, 2026

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate,
and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker, and Members of the
House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Aloha President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

This is to inform you that on July 9, 2026, the following bill was signed into law:

H.B. NO. 1974, H.D. 1, S.D. 1,
C.D. 1

RELATING TO HEALTH.
ACT 223

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Green M.D." in a cursive style.

Josh Green, M.D.
Governor, State of Hawai'i

on JUL 9 2026

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026
STATE OF HAWAII

ACT 223
H.B. NO. 1974
H.D. 1
S.D. 1
C.D. 1

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that hearing loss is a significant public health concern that affects individuals of all ages, from keiki to kupuna. National and state-level data indicate that tens of thousands of Hawaii residents experience some degree of hearing loss, including many who report serious hearing difficulty or deafness. Hearing loss becomes increasingly common with age, affecting roughly one-third of adults in their sixties, a majority of adults in their seventies, and most adults in their eighties.

The legislature further finds that despite the prevalence of hearing loss, it remains widely underdiagnosed and undertreated. Although newborn hearing screenings are in place, Hawaii lacks a coordinated statewide approach to screening and follow-up for school-age children and adults. Primary care providers often receive limited training and reimbursement incentives to screen for hearing loss, hearing aids and assistive devices remain prohibitively expensive for many



1 residents, and pathways to diagnosis and treatment are
2 frequently fragmented and difficult to navigate. Untreated
3 hearing loss increases risk of cognitive decline and dementia,
4 falls, social isolation and mental health issues, reduced
5 workforce participation, caregiver burden, and costly
6 institutional care. There is critical need for a coordinated
7 statewide strategy to address these medical, social,
8 educational, and economic impacts.

9 The purpose of this Act is to require the state health
10 planning and development agency to develop a comprehensive state
11 plan on hearing loss focused on improving access, affordability,
12 awareness, and early detection of hearing loss in collaboration
13 with community stakeholders, relevant advisory boards, and state
14 agencies.

15 SECTION 2. Chapter 323D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
16 amended by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately
17 designated and to read as follows:

18 "§323D- State plan on hearing loss. (a) The state
19 agency shall develop and publish a state plan on hearing loss.
20 The state plan on hearing loss shall include but not be limited
21 to:



- 1 (1) An assessment of current policies, efforts, and
- 2 initiatives addressing hearing loss in the State;
- 3 (2) Epidemiological data on hearing loss in the State,
- 4 including prevalence by age group, geographic area,
- 5 and socioeconomic status;
- 6 (3) An analysis of public awareness and social perception
- 7 of hearing loss;
- 8 (4) The identification of gaps in screening and early
- 9 detection for school-age children, adults, and the
- 10 elderly;
- 11 (5) Information on access to care and treatment, including
- 12 hearing aids, cochlear implants, and audiological
- 13 services;
- 14 (6) Information on workforce development and training for
- 15 primary care providers, educators, and hearing health
- 16 professionals;
- 17 (7) The identification of associated health concerns,
- 18 including cognitive decline, dementia, mental health
- 19 impacts, fall risk, and communication barriers;
- 20 (8) Recommendations for improving access to services, the
- 21 affordability of assistive technologies, and the



1 availability of communication supports, including

2 state policy suggestions; and

3 (9) Recommendations for pilot or demonstration projects to

4 expand hearing screening, tele-audiology access, and

5 community-based outreach.

6 (b) In developing the state plan on hearing loss, the

7 state agency may consult with pertinent stakeholders, including:

8 (1) Community-based organizations serving individuals with

9 hearing loss;

10 (2) Health care providers, audiologists, and speech-

11 language pathologists; and

12 (3) Individuals experiencing hearing loss.

13 (c) The state agency shall publish and submit an initial

14 state plan on hearing loss to the legislature no later than

15 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of

16 2027.

17 (d) No later than twenty days prior to the convening of

18 the regular session of 2029 and each odd-numbered regular

19 session thereafter, the state agency shall submit an update

20 report on the state plan on hearing loss covering the most

21 recently completed fiscal biennium. The update report shall



1 include information on progress made toward the goals of the
2 state plan on hearing loss. In addition, each update report
3 shall include:

4 (1) An implementation work plan specifying the tasks,
5 timelines, and milestones for each goal;

6 (2) Efforts taken by the State to achieve the goals and
7 strategies identified in the most recent state plan on
8 hearing loss;

9 (3) Recommendations for state policy, program development,
10 or legislation relating to hearing loss and
11 communication access; and

12 (4) A review of services and initiatives coordinated among
13 public and private agencies to meet the needs of
14 individuals with hearing loss and their families."

15 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$100,000 or so much
17 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the
18 state health planning and development agency to develop and
19 publish the state plan on hearing loss, including:



- 1 (1) Coordinating the development of the state plan on
2 hearing loss through project management and
3 interagency collaboration;
- 4 (2) Engaging stakeholders statewide, including kupuna,
5 health care providers, educators, and community-based
6 organizations, to identify needs, gaps, and
7 opportunities;
- 8 (3) Consulting with experts and technical advisors in
9 hearing health, aging, and disability services to
10 inform plan recommendations; and
- 11 (4) Drafting, reviewing, and publishing the state plan on
12 hearing loss for submission to the legislature.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the state health
14 planning and development agency for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

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



H.B. NO. 1974
H.D. 1
S.D. 1
C.D. 1

APPROVED this 9th day of July, 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Green". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "G".

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF HAWAII

HB No. 1974, HD 1, SD 1, CD 1

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF HAWAII

Date: May 6, 2026
Honolulu, Hawaii

We hereby certify that the above-referenced Bill on this day passed Final Reading in the House of Representatives of the Thirty-Third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026.



Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker
House of Representatives



Brian L. Takeshita
Chief Clerk
House of Representatives

THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF HAWAI‘I

Date: May 6, 2026
Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96813

We hereby certify that the foregoing Bill this day passed Final Reading in the Senate
of the Thirty-Third Legislature of the State of Hawai‘i, Regular Session of 2026.


President of the Senate


Clerk of the Senate