
HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC
FLEXIBILITY AND EQUITY FOR STUDENTS WITH CHRONIC AND
AUTOIMMUNE ILLNESSES.

1 WHEREAS, students in Hawaii are increasingly navigating
2 chronic and autoimmune illnesses that are episodic,
3 unpredictable, and often invisible, including illnesses such as
4 systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, and type I
5 diabetes; and

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7 WHEREAS, research indicates that Asian, Native Hawaiian,
8 and Pacific Islander populations experience higher rates and
9 more severe forms of certain autoimmune diseases, making these
10 conditions relevant to Hawaii's diverse student population; and

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12 WHEREAS, these conditions can cause periods of severe
13 fatigue, pain, hospitalization, and medical absences that
14 significantly disrupt academic continuity and student well-
15 being; and

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17 WHEREAS, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
18 provides important individual accommodations for students with
19 disabilities, yet implementation and awareness vary widely
20 across schools, particularly for students with episodic chronic
21 illnesses whose needs fluctuate over time; and

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23 WHEREAS, students managing chronic illness frequently
24 experience heightened academic stress, burnout, and mental
25 health challenges when attendance policies and assignment
26 deadlines are applied without flexibility during medically
27 documented flare-ups; and

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29 WHEREAS, students on neighbor islands face additional
30 barriers due to limited access to medical specialists and the
31 need for off-island travel, resulting in further academic and
32 social disruption; and



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WHEREAS, educational equity requires that students with chronic and autoimmune illnesses have fair access to rigorous learning and supportive school environments, consistent with the Department of Education's commitment to removing barriers to learning; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Education has existing authority to provide guidance and encourage best practices that support equitable access to education without requiring new appropriations; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, that the Department of Education is urged to support academic flexibility and equity for students with chronic and autoimmune illnesses; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education is urged to:

- (1) Encourage public schools to provide flexible academic pathways for students experiencing medically documented chronic illness flare-ups, including flexibility in attendance and assignment deadlines;
- (2) Promote consistent and non-punitive implementation of existing accommodations, including Section 504 plans, to ensure students are not academically penalized during periods of illness beyond their control; and
- (3) Encourage coordination between schools, students, and families to support continuity of learning during extended medical absences, particularly for students who must travel off-island for specialized care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of Education and Superintendent of Education.



H.R. NO. 99

OFFERED BY: *James S. Kay*
MAR 16 2026

