

MAR 10 2026

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO REQUIRE ONE YEAR OF
HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AS A GRADUATION REQUIREMENT
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

1 WHEREAS, 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, the Hawaiian language, is the
2 native language of the Native Hawaiian people; and
3

4 WHEREAS, Hawaiian was a prevalent language throughout the
5 Kingdom of Hawai'i, becoming the language of government and the
6 general public; and
7

8 WHEREAS, after the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai'i and
9 annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, English became the official
10 language for government operations and society; and
11

12 WHEREAS, in 1896, the republican government banned the
13 teaching of Hawaiian language and required English language
14 instruction in Hawaii schools; and
15

16 WHEREAS, the number of fluent speakers of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i
17 significantly declined following the ban on the Hawaiian
18 language; and
19

20 WHEREAS, the Hawaiian language was considered to be nearly
21 extinct by the 1980s, when there were fewer than fifty fluent
22 speakers under the age of eighteen; and
23

24 WHEREAS, in 1978, to recognize the importance of the
25 Hawaiian language, the Hawaii State Constitution was amended to
26 include the Hawaiian language as one of the two official
27 languages of the State; and
28

29 WHEREAS, Hawai'i is the only state in the United States that
30 has designated a native language as one of its two official
31 state languages; and
32



1 WHEREAS, in 1990, the United States Congress passed the
2 Native American Languages Act, recognizing the preservation,
3 use, and support of Native American languages, including
4 Hawaiian; and
5

6 WHEREAS, educational initiatives such as 'Aha Pūnana Leo's
7 Hawaiian language immersion preschools, the Department of
8 Education's Hawaiian language immersion program, and Hawaiian
9 language programs at University of Hawai'i System schools have
10 been instrumental in saving and revitalizing the Hawaiian
11 language; and
12

13 WHEREAS, article X, section 4, of the Hawaii State
14 Constitution, requires the State to "provide for a Hawaiian
15 education program consisting of language, culture and history in
16 public schools."; and
17

18 WHEREAS, the Department of Education's Hawaiian Studies
19 Program and Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai'i, the Hawaiian Language
20 Immersion Program, were established in 1980 to promote the study
21 of Hawaiian culture, language, and history for students in
22 grades kindergarten through twelve; and
23

24 WHEREAS, as of June 2025, there are twenty-two Department
25 of Education schools and seven charter schools that offer
26 Hawaiian language immersion education to students in grades
27 kindergarten through twelve; and
28

29 WHEREAS, while the Kaiapuni educational program is
30 recognized globally as a successful language revitalization
31 program, study of the Hawaiian language remains optional for
32 students at public schools; and
33

34 WHEREAS, requiring the Department of Education to make
35 'Ōlelo Hawai'i a required course for graduation will promote a
36 basic understanding of the Hawaiian language and further ensure
37 the longevity and prosperity of the Hawaiian language; now,
38 therefore,
39

40 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
41 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, the
42 House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of



1 Education is requested to require one year of Hawaiian language
2 instruction as a graduation requirement in public schools; and

3
4
5
6
7
8
9

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

OFFERED BY:

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is highly cursive and difficult to decipher, but appears to contain the letters 'J', 'A', and 'D'.