

MAR 16 2026

SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO ALLOW AN OLELO HAWAII
PATHWAY UNDER THE NIIHAU DIALECT.

1 WHEREAS, Olelo Hawaii is a unique marker of Hawaiian
2 identity and the proud heritage of the Hawaiian people; and
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4 WHEREAS, native speakers of the Niihau dialect come from a
5 genealogy of continued use of Hawaiian as their primary language
6 of cognition; and
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8 WHEREAS, except for Niihau, Hawaiian pronunciation among
9 native speakers on all islands underwent a period of conformance
10 to the English alphabet; and
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12 WHEREAS, even when the medium of education on Niihau
13 eventually shifted to English, families on the island continued
14 to use Olelo Niihau as their primary language; and
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16 WHEREAS, the isolation of the Niihau community has allowed
17 Olelo Niihau to flourish as its own dialect, significantly
18 distinct from the Olelo Hawaii commonly found in immersion
19 schools and mainstream educational settings; and
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21 WHEREAS, various state agencies have continually
22 acknowledged and supported Olelo Niihau as a dialect distinct
23 from Olelo Hawaii, primarily by providing live interpreters to
24 facilitate communication between Olelo Niihau speakers and
25 health providers, schools, and other community institutions; and
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27 WHEREAS, the level of competence which native speakers of
28 Olelo Niihau possess even today is a testament to the formidable
29 instinct of the Niihua community to preserve their connection to
30 the Hawaiian language of their ancestors; and
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1 WHEREAS, there is emerging external pressure to integrate
2 newly invented vocabulary and concepts produced by new speakers
3 of the Hawaiian language on to the Niihau community; and
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5 WHEREAS, pressure to instill new linguistic characteristics
6 on Niihau youth, whose language has been learned from their
7 kupuna, risks attrition of Olelo Niihau by interpolation; and
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9 WHEREAS, simultaneously, Hawaiian language revitalization
10 initiatives have largely moved away from consulting Niihau
11 community members as language resources; and
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13 WHEREAS, Hawaiian language initiatives from outside of the
14 Niihau community have enjoyed the support of legislation and
15 policy by this body, while the specific linguistic needs of the
16 Niihau community have been ignored or dismissed; now, therefore,
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18 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
19 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,
20 that the University of Hawaii is requested to allow an Olelo
21 Hawaii Pathway concentrating specifically on Olelo Niihau; and
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23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
24 Resolution be transmitted to the President of the University of
25 Hawaii System.
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OFFERED BY: _____

