

MAR 10 2026

SENATE 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
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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
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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
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12 WHEREAS, in 1896, the republican government banned the
13 teaching of Hawaiian language and required English language
14 instruction in Hawaii schools; and
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16 WHEREAS, the number of fluent speakers of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i
17 significantly declined following the ban on the Hawaiian
18 language; and
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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
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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
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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
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33 WHEREAS, in 1990, the United States Congress passed the
34 Native American Languages Act, recognizing the preservation,



1 use, and support of Native American languages, including
2 Hawaiian; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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38 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
39 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,
40 that the Department of Education is requested to require one
41 year of Hawaiian language instruction as a graduation
42 requirement in public schools; and

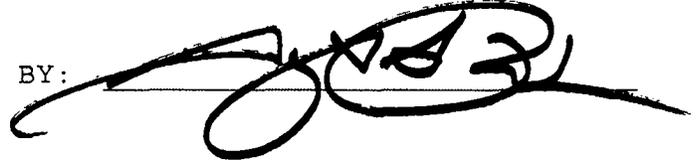


S.R. NO. 50

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this 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 'S', 'R', and '50'.