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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE.

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

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawaiian  
2 language is Hawaii's indigenous and first language, as well as  
3 the original language of Hawaii's executive, judicial, and  
4 legislative branches. During his reign, King Kamehameha III  
5 famously declared, "He aupuni palapala ko'u", or "Mine is the  
6 kingdom of education", in reference to the high literacy rate in  
7 the Kingdom of Hawaii. This level of literacy continued into  
8 the 1900s, as 95.3 per cent of Native Hawaiians were literate,  
9 according to the 1910 United States Census. However, due to a  
10 myriad of political, economic, and social pressures, the  
11 Hawaiian language was materially marginalized, leading to its  
12 atrophy and eventual formal and practical exclusion from public  
13 and civic spaces. Nevertheless, due to the Hawaiian language  
14 community's efforts and resilience, the existence of the  
15 Hawaiian language has been maintained and its vitality restored  
16 for future generations.



1       The legislature recognizes that Hawaiian language  
2 practitioners generally employ two written orthographies, namely  
3 unmarked language and marked language. The unmarked orthography  
4 was the first writing system of Hawaiian language. The marked  
5 orthography, which includes the kahakō and 'okina, was created as  
6 a means to help learners of Hawaiian language determine when to  
7 elongate a vowel or where to insert a glottal stop. The intent  
8 of this measure is not to claim the superiority of one version  
9 of orthography over the other, or to invalidate communities with  
10 an unbroken lineage of Hawaiian speakers who do not follow  
11 contemporary Hawaiian writing or structures, as communities such  
12 as these are vital to Native Hawaiian culture and the State as a  
13 whole. Rather, the intent of this measure is to establish a  
14 standard for the spelling and punctuation of Hawaiian names and  
15 words when they appear in letterheads created by state and  
16 county agencies for the purposes of consistency and uniformity.  
17 Furthermore, this Act is intended to provide equal support and  
18 standing for both native speakers and second language speakers  
19 of Hawaiian language.

20       Additionally, the intent of this Act is not to require that  
21 legislative bills and other official documents be written in



1 Hawaiian as well as English; rather, if letterheads prepared by  
2 or for state or county agencies or officials contain Hawaiian  
3 names and words, this Act only requires that the Hawaiian names  
4 and words be written in a consistent manner. This measure  
5 further clarifies that Hawaiian spelling not in conformance with  
6 the standards established by this measure will not invalidate an  
7 official document, nor will it allow a cause of action to arise.  
8 Finally, this measure intends that consistent spelling and  
9 punctuation of Hawaiian names and words be used only for the  
10 letterheads of certain designated state officials created on or  
11 after January 1, 2023, or when there is a need to reprint or  
12 revise existing letterheads of certain designated state  
13 officials.

14 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require all  
15 letterheads of the State and counties that include Hawaiian  
16 names and words to include Hawaiian names, words, spelling, and  
17 punctuation consistent with certain references.

18 SECTION 2. Section 1-13.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
19 amended to read as follows:

20 "[~~§~~1-13.5~~§~~] Hawaiian language; spelling. (a) [~~Maerons~~  
21 ~~and glottal stops~~] Kahakō and 'okina may be used in the spelling



1 of words or terms in the Hawaiian language in documents prepared  
2 by or for state or county agencies or officials.

3 (b) Effective January 1, 2023, all letterheads prepared by  
4 or for state or county agencies or officials, to the extent that  
5 the letterheads contain Hawaiian language names or words, those  
6 Hawaiian names and words shall be used consistently and the  
7 Hawaiian spelling and punctuation shall also be consistent,  
8 including kahakō and 'okina that punctuate the name or word to  
9 which they relate, except for letterheads specifically designed  
10 for the benefit of native speakers of Hawaiian; provided that  
11 any revision to conform any letterhead existing before  
12 January 1, 2023, to the requirements of this section may be  
13 implemented when the letterhead requires replacement or  
14 reprinting or otherwise requires revision; provided further that  
15 any document submitted to state or county agencies or officials  
16 by members of the general public shall not require the use of  
17 kahakō or 'okina.

18 (c) Any rule, order, policy, or other act, official or  
19 otherwise, that prohibits or discourages the use of [these  
20 symbols] kahakō and 'okina or consistent Hawaiian names and  
21 words, as provided by this section, shall be void.



1        (d) For the purposes of consistency, Hawaiian names and  
2 words used in letterhead subject to subsection (b) shall be  
3 printed in conformance with:

4        (1) "Hawaiian Dictionary: Hawaiian-English, English-  
5 Hawaiian", by Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert,  
6 University of Hawai'i Press, copyright 1986;

7        (2) "Place Names of Hawaii", by Mary Kawena Pukui, Samuel  
8 H. Elbert, and Esther T. Mookini, University of Hawai'i  
9 Press, copyright 1974, as revised and expanded in  
10 1976;

11        (3) Any other commonly used Hawaiian-language dictionary;

12        (4) Consultations from members of the Hawaiian-speaking  
13 language community, including native speakers;

14        (5) Consultations with the Hawaii board on geographic  
15 names for the names and spellings of geographic  
16 features in Hawaii; or

17        (6) Historical documents, such as Na Nupepa Olelo Hawaii,  
18 the Hawaiian newspaper collection.

19        (e) Any Hawaiian names and words that are spelled or  
20 punctuated inconsistently with subsection (d) within a  
21 letterhead subject to subsection (b) shall not be deemed to



1 invalidate the document or render it unenforceable. No cause of  
2 action shall arise against the State, any county, or any state  
3 or county agency, official, or employee for any Hawaiian names  
4 and words that are spelled or punctuated inconsistently with  
5 subsection (d).

6 (f) If there is a conflict between words used by native  
7 speakers and second language speakers in a document covered by  
8 this section, two versions of the document may be made available  
9 to the public upon request if the affected department has  
10 sufficient resources to do so.

11 (g) For the purpose of this section, "native speakers"  
12 means speakers of the Hawaiian language who come from an  
13 unbroken lineage of primary speakers of the Hawaiian language."

14 SECTION 3. Section 5-6.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
15 amended to read as follows:

16 "[~~5~~]§5-6.5[~~7~~] State language. (a) The Hawaiian language  
17 is the native language of Hawaii and may be used on all emblems  
18 and symbols representative of the State[~~7~~] and its departments,  
19 agencies, and political subdivisions.



1        (b) This section shall not be construed to require that  
2        the full text of legislative bills and other official documents  
3        be written in Hawaiian.

4        (c) For the purpose of this section, "native speakers"  
5        means speakers of the Hawaiian language who come from an  
6        unbroken lineage of primary speakers of the Hawaiian language."

7        SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
8        and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

9        SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2044.



**Report Title:**

Hawaiian Language; Official Websites; Letterhead; Translation;  
University of Hawaii

**Description:**

Requires all letterheads of the State and counties to include  
consistent Hawaiian names, spelling, and punctuation. Effective  
7/1/2044. (SD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is  
not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

