

JAN 17 2025

---

# A BILL FOR AN ACT

---

RELATING TO SKILLS-BASED HIRING.

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

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that an over-emphasis on  
2 degree requirements in the labor market has historically limited  
3 opportunities and diversity in the workforce. A 2017 study by  
4 Harvard Business School found that sixty-one percent of hiring  
5 managers had rejected ideal candidates with the skills and  
6 experience to succeed because they lacked a four-year degree.  
7 This bias is further reflected in the "degree gap" -- the  
8 discrepancy between the percentage of job postings for positions  
9 requiring a college degree and the percentage of current  
10 employees in that position with a degree -- also found by the  
11 study. Larger degree gaps make positions more difficult to  
12 fill, contributing to inefficiency and stagnancy in the hiring  
13 process.

14       The legislature further finds that many employers, across  
15 both public and private sectors have begun to recognize the  
16 value of and shift towards skills-based hiring. In the private  
17 sector, a 2023 survey found that fifty-five per cent of



1 companies removed degree requirements, primarily for entry- and  
2 mid-level positions to create a more diverse workforce and  
3 expand the applicant pool. Companies that recently eliminated  
4 degree requirements for many positions include IBM, Delta  
5 Airlines, Google, and Bank of America. In the public sector, as  
6 of October 2023, at least sixteen states had taken action to  
7 remove four-year degree requirements for most state jobs.

8 The legislature also finds that the State is facing a  
9 significant labor shortage within state agencies that may worsen  
10 in the future. The department of human resources reported an  
11 increase in vacant positions within state agencies in recent  
12 years, from eighteen per cent in 2019 before the COVID-19  
13 pandemic to twenty-seven per cent in 2023. While the COVID-19  
14 pandemic may have contributed to this uptick, the department  
15 also reported that thirty per cent of existing state employees  
16 will be eligible for retirement in the next five years. The  
17 legislature recognizes that to fill this gap, continue to  
18 operate at maximum efficiency, serve the residents of the State,  
19 and keep pace with the broader labor market, a new focus on  
20 skills-based hiring is necessary.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to incorporate  
2 skills-based hiring for public employment by prohibiting the  
3 State or its departments, agencies, and political subdivisions  
4 from requiring a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility  
5 when hiring for a position in state employment.

6 SECTION 2. Chapter 78, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended  
7 by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to  
8 read as follows:

9 "§78- Bachelor's degree requirements for state  
10 employment; prohibition. (a) The State or any of its  
11 departments, agencies, or political subdivisions shall not  
12 require a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility for  
13 hire to a position in state employment.

14 (b) Subsection (a) shall not apply if skills-based hiring  
15 is not a viable option because the knowledge, skills, or  
16 abilities required for the position for which an applicant is  
17 applying can only reasonably be obtained, as determined by the  
18 appointing authority, through a course of study in pursuit of,  
19 and culminating in the award of, a bachelor's degree."

20 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

2

INTRODUCED BY:

309-



# S.B. NO. 1065

**Report Title:**

State Employees; Hiring Requirements; Skills-based Hiring;  
Bachelor's Degree; Prohibition; Exemption

**Description:**

Prohibits the State or any of its departments, agencies, or political subdivisions from requiring a bachelor's degree as a condition of eligibility for hire to a position in state employment. Establishes exemptions.

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

