

JAN 17 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the department of
2 education's program -- Hoakea: mauka to makai navigating our
3 future -- is designed to educate students by integrating core
4 educational concepts in math, science, social studies, civics,
5 leadership, language, and literacy with cultural practices and
6 traditions in aina (land) and community settings. In
7 partnership with the Polynesian Voyaging Society, the Hoakea
8 program is designed to connect school communities with the
9 values and mission of malama honua (care for the earth). Lesson
10 plans also integrate environmental stewardship, climate change,
11 Native Hawaiian practices, responsibility to care for community,
12 total well-being, and a sense of place.

13 The legislature also finds that Hokulea's Moananuiakea
14 voyage to "ignite a movement of ten million 'planetary
15 navigators' who will pursue critical and inspiring 'voyages' to
16 ensure a better future for the earth" aligns with the department
17 of education's priorities as articulated in the 2023-2029



1 strategic plan: "that every student in Hawai'i's public school
2 system – regardless of their geographic location, background,
3 economic standing or whether they are in English or Hawaiian
4 language pathways – must have the opportunity to discover and
5 pursue their passions and see first-hand how their interests can
6 translate into successful and meaningful careers that positively
7 impact Hawai'i's future and our global society. We envision a
8 [kindergarten through grade twelve] public education system that
9 prepares all graduates to be [g]lobally [c]ompetitive, [l]ocally
10 [c]ommitted. That means our students not only have the academic
11 knowledge and skills to thrive and be successful, but also
12 possess that special sense of responsibility to give back to our
13 communities and island home".

14 When educational content is relevant to the student's home
15 and culture, students become more engaged and curious about the
16 lessons taught. In addition, indigenous knowledge and practices
17 are a key source to understanding climate change because it
18 provides a deep understanding of local ecosystems. Indigenous
19 knowledge can include early warning signs of environmental
20 shifts and offer insight on sustainable land management
21 practices developed through generations of living in harmony



1 with nature. Incorporation of modern and indigenous knowledge
2 allows for more effective adaptation and mitigation strategies
3 against climate change impacts.

4 Presently, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students
5 have a disproportionately high rate of absenteeism and lower
6 educational achievement. Na Hopena Ao, a department-wide
7 framework to develop skills, behaviors, and dispositions that
8 honor the qualities and values of the indigenous language and
9 culture of Hawaii, provides schools with values to enrich
10 student learning, promote emotional and physical well-being, and
11 a strengthened sense of place and belonging. Recognizing that
12 the board of education formally adopted Na Hopena Ao as a policy
13 in 2015, the department has prioritized Na Hopena Ao in its
14 current strategic plan. By making educational material more
15 relevant and engaging, including the creation of conditions that
16 make students feel safe and honors their heritage and culture,
17 students are naturally more engaged and excited about learning.
18 Through the establishment of a Na Hopena Ao environment for
19 learning, the legislature believes that not only will students
20 graduate prepared for college and careers, but also for
21 community and civic engagement. The legislature believes these



1 lessons will endure as students become leaders, stewards, and
2 critical thinkers when they become graduates and begin
3 navigating the world.

4 The legislature further finds that the Polynesian Voyaging
5 Society and the ohana of waa (canoe) were established as
6 organizations with educational missions to engage students in
7 learning through indigenous voyaging practices. Recognizing
8 that Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian students represent a
9 significant proportion of students who attend public schools,
10 incorporation of authentic learning experiences like waa and
11 aina provides students with culturally relevant education.
12 Further, educators and principals have responded to the growing
13 demand for educational programs aligned with Na Hopena Ao by
14 partnering with organizations to start a program within the
15 department of education called Hoakea.

16 Over the past two years the department of education has
17 partnered with the ohana (family) of waa and aina organizations
18 in communities where its schools are located to design and
19 deliver engaging and rigorous, authentic learning experiences
20 for its students in a variety of delivery methods. The first
21 includes Hoakea, which connects students and teachers with their



1 community's waa and local aina organizations to teach Hawaiian
2 navigation and voyaging, moolelo (stories), and history. The
3 second includes student-focused authentic learning experiences
4 that occur in spaces outside the formal classroom setting and
5 out of school time such as after school, or during the summer,
6 spring, and winter breaks. These experiences further reinforce
7 traditional classroom work with authentic real-world situations
8 in local communities. The third includes teacher-focused
9 professional development opportunities to connect cultural
10 lesson plans in ainao -based settings.

11 Since its inception, the Hoakea program has reached over
12 three thousand two hundred students, nearly one thousand three
13 hundred teachers, and engaged more than fifty organizations
14 across the State. There is increasing demand from schools for
15 aina-based learning experiences. However, the department of
16 education cannot meet this growing demand with existing
17 resources. Therefore, the legislature believes that with
18 sufficient funding, the Hoakea program can triple its engagement
19 with students and aina-based educational opportunities.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
2 funds to the department of education for it to expand its Hoakea
3 program.

4 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$4,000,000 or so much
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
7 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
8 2026-2027 for the expansion and continuation of the Hoakea
9 program.

10 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
11 of education for the purposes of this Act.

12 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

13
INTRODUCED BY: Michelle N. Kidani



S.B. NO. 529

Report Title:

DOE; Hoakea; Appropriations

Description:

Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for its Hoakea Program.

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