

## ACT 24

S.B. NO. 2841

A Bill for an Act Relating to Water Safety Day.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:*

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that drowning is a tragic but preventable source of injury and death in the State, especially among children. Specifically, the department of health found that drowning was the leading cause of death for children one to seventeen years of age in Hawaii between 2018 and 2022. In fact, more children died by drowning than in motor vehicle and pedestrian accidents combined. Further, although non-resident visitors comprised a slight majority of the adult (eighteen years of age or older) fatal drownings that occurred in the State between 2018 and 2022, an alarmingly large proportion of fatal child drownings—eighty-eight per cent—were among local resident children. The legislature finds that it is critically important to increase water safety awareness to help prevent and reduce the number of fatal and non-fatal child drowning incidents in the State.

The legislature further finds that International Water Safety Day, celebrated on May 15 of each year, is a worldwide effort to spread global awareness of drowning and to educate youth in becoming safer in and around the water. Community organizations such as the International Water Safety Foundation and American Red Cross, among others, believe that water safety is a life skill that can be taught and that water safety education and awareness can help curb the number of child drowning fatalities. Historically, Hawaii has one of the strongest waterperson cultures in the world. The legislature therefore finds that, as an island state, it is vital to both the local community and culture for Hawaii's children to learn and be aware of the basics of aquatic safety.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish May 15 of each year as Water Safety Day to spread awareness of drowning and educate Hawaii's youth in becoming safer in and around the water.

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

“§8- **Water Safety Day.** May 15 of each year shall be known and designated as “Water Safety Day” to spread awareness of drowning and educate Hawaii's youth in becoming safer in and around the water. This day is not and shall not be construed to be a state holiday.”

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.<sup>1</sup>

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

(Approved May 15, 2024.)

**Note**

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.