HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL

KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

No. 25-35

RESOLUTION

REAFFIRMING ʻŌLELO HAWAIʻI AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE STATE OF HAWAIʻI.

WHEREAS, following the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, the Hawaiian language ("ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi") was effectively banned as a language of education in Hawaiʻi's public schools in 1896; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to preserve and promote Hawaiian culture, history, and language, the 1978 State of Hawaiʻi ("State") Constitutional Convention proposed several amendments that were later ratified by voters at the 1978 general election, including an amendment, codified as Article XV, Section 4 of the State Constitution, officially recognizing ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi as one of two official languages of the State; and

WHEREAS, another amendment, codified as Article X, Section 4 of the State Constitution, required the State to promote the study of Hawaiian culture, history, and language in public schools, with the purpose of revitalizing the Hawaiian language through language programming; and

WHEREAS, following a profound decline in the use of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi that led to its near extinction by the 1980s, a number of historic initiatives were launched to revive ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi, including the establishment of the ʻAha Pūnana Leo and its Statewide network of Pūnana Leo preschools and the State Department of Education's Hawaiian language immersion program that built upon the Hawaiian language programs of the University of Hawaiʻi System; and

WHEREAS, the federal *Native American Languages Act of 1990 (NALA)* established a policy that included preserving, protecting, and promoting the right of Native Hawaiians to use ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi as a protected language within the United States; and

WHEREAS, two gubernatorial proclamations prepared in both ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi and English were issued to recognize February 1994 and February 1995 as "Hawaiian Language Month in Hawaiʻi," followed by a third gubernatorial proclamation that was issued to recognize 1996 as the "Year of the Hawaiian Language"; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, the State Legislature passed Act 315, Session Laws of Hawaii 1997, establishing the Ka Haka ʻUla O Keʻelikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo, supporting its Hale Kuamoʻo Hawaiian Language Center that provides curriculum development and materials for immersion

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programs Statewide, and eventually establishing the Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education program, the nation's first teacher education program taught in an indigenous language; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i established the Hawai'inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge, with a mission focused on revitalizing all forms of Hawaiian knowledge, including 'Ōlelo Hawai'i; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, Act 28, Session Laws of Hawaii 2013, the first bilingual statute in 70 years, was enacted designating February as Mahina 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian Language Month) to celebrate and encourage the use of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Hawai'i Supreme Court, in *Clarabal v. Department of Education of the State of Hawai'i, et al.*, 446 P.3d 986 (Haw. 2019), held that the State is constitutionally required to make all reasonable efforts to provide students access to Hawaiian language immersion education in public schools in order to revive 'Ōlelo Hawai'i; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the City Council ("Council") adopted Resolution 22-34 and enacted Ordinance 22-9, designating every February as "'Ōlelo Hawai'i Month" in the City and County of Honolulu ("City"); and

WHEREAS, despite efforts to revitalize 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, it is still classified as a "critically endangered" language by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) based on the low, albeit growing, number of native Hawaiian speakers, a direct consequence of language suppression following the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, according to the State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism's April 2016 report, *Non-English Speaking Population in Hawai'i*, the Hawaiian language represented one of the most common non-English languages spoken at home and the most prevalent non-English language spoken at home among children ages five to 17 years; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that, in addition to official recognition, providing spaces and opportunities to speak, use, and celebrate 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is necessary to preserve Native Hawaiian cultural understanding and identity and to ultimately advance 'Ōlelo Hawai'i from a "critically endangered" language status towards a "safe" language status with uninterrupted generational transmission; and

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WHEREAS, in furtherance of this objective, the Council allows the provision of and accepts public testimony in either English or ʻŌlelo Hawaʻi at meetings of the Council and its committees to honor the language's cultural and historical significance and to support its continued use in public discourse; and

WHEREAS, the Council condemns any mischaracterization of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi as a "dead" language and encourages its use in order to perpetuate Hawaiian culture and achieve complete revitalization of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that it reaffirms ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi as an official language of the State of Hawaiʻi; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Mayor, the Managing Director, and the Governor.

INTRODUCED BY:

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

JAN 23 2025
Honolulu, Hawaiʻi

Councilmembers

CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII

CERTIFICATE

RESOLUTION 25-35

Introduced: 01/23/25 By: TOMMY WATERS
ESTHER KIA'ĀINA
Committee: COUNCIL (CCL)

Title: REAFFIRMING 'ŌLELO HAWAI'I AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE STATE OF HAWAI'I.

Voting Legend: * = Aye w/Reservations

01/23/25	INTRO	Introduced.
01/29/25	CCL	Adopted. 9 AYES: CORDERO, DOS SANTOS-TAM, KIA'ĀINA, NISHIMOTO, OKIMOTO, TULBA, TUPOLA, WATERS, WEYER

I hereby certify that the above is a true record of action by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu on this RESOLUTION.

GLEN I. TAKAHASHI, CITY CLERK

TOMMY WATERS, CHAIR AND PRESIDING OFFICER