

Hawai'i Student Voice Alliance Ambassador Program: Connecting Students to Education Policies

Summary

This initiative seeks to establish sustainable pathways for student engagement in state-level policymaking through the Hawai'i State Legislature. By empowering students with knowledge of education policy and providing them with structured opportunities to contribute in decision-making processes, the project aims to foster civic responsibility, amplify student voices, and improve state-level education policies.

Introduction

The Hawai'i State Legislature plays a pivotal role in shaping laws, budgets, and priorities that directly affect student learning; however, student perspectives are often absent from these discussions. The Hawai'i Student Voice Alliance Ambassador Program seeks to address this gap by creating a structured program where students are able to participate in the legislative decision-making process.

Project Goals and Objectives

- Strengthen student representation in educational decision-making processes.
- Educate students about public school laws and governance, along with civic engagement.
- Build leadership capacity among Hawai'i public school students.

Student Ambassador Program

At the heart of this initiative is the Student Ambassador Program. Students will be recruited from diverse regions of Hawai'i, at least one from each of the local complex areas, and will serve as liaisons between their peers and the State Legislature: attending committee meetings, reporting outcomes, and ensuring student perspectives are represented. Recruitment will be conducted through engaging non-profit education organizations, youth organizations, and social media.

Prospective ambassadors must be high schoolers who are enrolled in a public or charter school.

Training and Capacity Building

To prepare ambassadors for their roles, they will undergo a virtual training program, which includes instruction on:

- Education policy and governance in Hawai'i.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Hawai'i State Legislature specifically.
- Public speaking, debate, and advocacy skills.
- Professional ethics and conduct in civic settings.

- Limits of comments under a 501(C)(4) non-profit.

Advocacy in the Hawai‘i Legislature

At the heart of the legislative process are committee meetings. Students will be organized to attend selected hearings of the House and Senate Education Committee Meetings. Utilizing their perspectives as students, and data on their peer’s perspectives (ex. HI Student Voice Alliance surveys), the students will offer their views on pending bills related to education that they feel a student perspective should be offered. Input can come from spoken and written comments, and through meetings with their members.

Conclusion

The Hawai‘i Student Voice Alliance Ambassador program envisions a future where student voices are a routine and respected component of education governance. By equipping students with knowledge, skills, and platforms, the initiative strengthens democratic participation and improves decision-making for the benefit of all stakeholders in Hawai‘i Public Schools.