

Overview: 2026 Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda

The eleventh annual Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda, convened by Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! (HCAN Speaks!), contains 11 top priorities of Community Champion members. The Agenda reflects the input of over 60 member organizations and individuals committed to improving the lives of keiki by promoting public policy changes that benefit children's health, safety, education, and economic security. View the full agenda online: speaks.hawaii-can.org/agenda2026.

Child Safety and Welfare

- **E-Bike Regulations** would update laws for e-bikes and micromobility devices by establishing age, helmet, supervision, and sidewalk-use requirements to improve safety for keiki and the broader community.
- **Legal Counsel for Foster Care Youth** would create a working group to expand foster youth access to legal representation, ensuring their voices are heard, rights are protected, and outcomes—like timely exits, reunification, and school stability—are improved.

Economic Security and Equity for Children

- **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit Fix** would increase the maximum percent of care expenses that can be claimed, allowing working families to get more badly-needed help with their child care costs.
- **Free Public Bus Access for Youth** would create a pilot program providing year-round, fare-free public transit for residents age 18 and under, increasing youth mobility, independence, and access to education, programs, and opportunities across Hawai'i.
- **Tax Credit for Diapers** would establish a state tax credit for the purchase of diapers, helping Hawai'i families afford this essential childcare item, reduce missed work, and protect infant health.
- **Youth Housing Stability Assistance Program** would provide stipends, case management, and support services to help young adults—especially those exiting foster care or experiencing homelessness—secure housing and build the skills needed for successful adult living.

(Overview: 2026 Hawai'i Children's Policy Agenda – continued)

Health and Wellness for Children

- **Banning Flavored Tobacco** would end the sale of flavored tobacco in Hawai'i to reduce youth nicotine addiction, support quitting, and address the disproportionate impact on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.
- **Mental Health Digital Platforms** would improve youth access to mental health services and information through trusted platforms, addressing gaps in care and responding to priorities identified by young people.

Pre-K to 12 Education

- **Community Schools** would expand and provide funding for this evidence-based strategy to have schools become the hub of their community and coordinate relationships and resources to accelerate equitable outcomes in health, education, and employment.
- **Constitutional Amendment on Property Tax to Fund Education** would authorize the Legislature to tax certain residential investment properties to help address chronic underfunding of public schools, improving facilities, teacher pay, and resources for Hawai'i's K-12 students.
- **Free School Meals for Charter Students** would provide free school meals to charter school students under 300% of the federal poverty level, building on last session's expansion for public schools and closing gaps for rural and Native Hawaiian communities.

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