



Island Community Report: Moloka‘i

Executive Summary



This Executive Summary of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' (OHA) Island Community Report presents an annual overview of key issues affecting Native Hawaiian communities on Moloka‘i. It highlights community concerns monitored by OHA, current Native Hawaiian data, and updates on OHA’s grant and loan initiatives. The topics covered align with OHA’s four Strategic Directions: Educational Pathways, Health Outcomes, Quality Housing, and Economic Stability.

Current Conditions

The island of Moloka‘i has a Native Hawaiian population of 4,374, representing 65% of the island’s total population (6,710) and 1% of the state’s total Native Hawaiian population (2017-2021).¹



Educational Pathways Data

- Approximately 40% of Maui County Native Hawaiian public high school graduates enrolled in colleges across the nation, compared to 52% of all Maui County public school graduates, and 36% of all Native Hawaiians statewide.²
- There is currently one Hawaiian Focused Charter School and three Hawaiian-medium programs on Moloka‘i (SY22-23).³



Health Outcomes Data

- 74% of Native Hawaiian adults on Moloka‘i report having a physical checkup in the past year, compared to 73% of all Moloka‘i residents and 74% of Native Hawaiians statewide (2021-2023).⁴
- 56% of Native Hawaiians in Maui County reported that they are able to converse ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i at a beginner level with others, compared to 7% non-Hawaiian Maui County residents, and 50% of Native Hawaiians statewide (2025).⁵



Quality Housing Data

- 36% (1,308 of 3,593) of Native Hawaiian renters in Maui County paid affordable rent (<30% of household income toward rent), compared to 41% (7,976 of 19,483) of all households in Maui County, and 42% (13,778 of 32,538) Native Hawaiian renters statewide (2017-2021).⁶
- 61% (5,523 of 9,116) of Native Hawaiian households in Maui County owned their homes, compared to 64% (34,436 of 53,919) of all households in Maui County, and 57% of all Native Hawaiian households statewide (43,870 of 76,408) (2017-2021).⁷
- 8% (837) of all Department of Hawaiian Homelands leases statewide (10,048) are on Maui (2024).⁸



Economic Stability Data

- Native Hawaiian median household income in Maui County was \$86,968 or 99% of the countywide median household (\$88,249) (2017-2021).⁹
- There are 1,942 Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs in Maui, Kalawao, & Kaua‘i Counties. This is 19% of the 10,193 Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs statewide (2021).¹⁰

Current Opportunities and Challenges / OHA Activities

This section outlines key opportunities and challenges affecting beneficiaries on the island of Molokaʻi, organized according to OHA's four strategic directions. OHA continues to monitor these issues closely and respond with appropriate actions as needed.

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

Early Learning Apprenticeship Program

The shortage of early learning professionals has forced preschools to close across the state, including on Molokaʻi. Throughout the 2025 legislative OHA provided written testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 549, Relating to an Early Learning Apprenticeship Program, which would provide financial support to early learning service providers to participate in federal and state apprenticeship programs, expanding the number of qualified early learning professionals in the state. Although this bill died in conference committee, it will be automatically reintroduced in 2026 and OHA will continue to work with advocates throughout the year to plan how to advance this measure.

Teacher Education Subsidy

Due to a shortage of qualified teachers, more than 60,000 Hawaiʻi students have teachers that do not meet state certification levels, and the rate of qualified teachers leaving Hawaiʻi continues to accelerate.¹¹ HB1345, Relating to Teacher Education, would grant a tuition waiver and mandatory fee waiver to resident students enrolled in the College of Education at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa for the semester or term in which they complete their student teaching requirement. OHA supported this bill in written testimony throughout the 2025 session and it made it to the conference committee, but did not pass out. This bill will automatically be reintroduced in 2026 and OHA will continue to work with advocates throughout the year to plan how to advance this measure.

Healthcare Workforce Initiative

The 2024 Healthcare Workforce Initiative survey from the Healthcare Association of Hawaiʻi found that there are nearly 4,700 openings for non-physician, patient-facing positions in hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and other health care facilities in the state.¹² The Hawaiʻi Healthcare Workforce Initiative has played a crucial role in mitigating this issue through various workforce development programs. Two key programs offered by the association are the public high school health care certificate programs and the certified nursing assistant to licensed practical nurse glidepath program. In the 2025 session OHA provided written testimony in support of HB714, Relating to Health Care Workforce Development, which would have appropriated funding to continue these and other programs in the Hawaiʻi Healthcare Workforce Initiative. This bill died in conference committee but will be automatically reintroduced in 2026.

HEALTH OUTCOMES

Protecting Molokaʻi Burials at St. Joseph Cemetery

The University of Hawaiʻi–West Oʻahu is conducting research at St. Joseph Cemetery in Kamalō, funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), raising concerns due to potential ground disturbance at a culturally sensitive site. The project initially lacked compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 process. In response, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Compliance Team contacted NSF, citing its award policy requirements and relaying community concerns. Following review, NSF initiated the Section 106 consultation in January 2024, with OHA participating actively. OHA advocated for non-invasive alternatives such as LiDAR, requested a clear and detailed work plan, and recommended the presence of a cultural monitor during any ground disturbance. These recommendations were formally submitted to NSF on May 24, 2024. OHA will continue to monitor the consultation to ensure the draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), anticipated in January 2025, is finalized and that mitigation measures are implemented as the project moves forward.

Expanding Access to Telehealth Medical Care Across Molokaʻi

Molokaʻi's rural isolation and limited healthcare infrastructure have long posed serious challenges for the wellbeing of its Native Hawaiian population. In conversations with beneficiaries during community meetings on Molokaʻi in 2024, OHA heard firsthand about the health struggles residents face, including the need to fly off-island for basic medical services. In response, OHA has advocated for solutions that include increasing telehealth capacity. In 2025, OHA championed the expansion of broadband and telehealth capacity on Hawaiian homelands and supported Senate Bill (SB) 1281_SD2_HD2_CD1, Relating to Telehealth. This bill extends the sunset date of Act 107 from Dec. 31, 2025, to Dec. 31, 2027, to allow insurance to continue to cover and reimburse the cost of telehealth services. To support this vital measure, OHA submitted written testimony and a request to sign form to the Governor on May 9, 2025. The bill is on the governor's desk for his consideration.

Recruiting Physicians and Dentists to Serve on Molokaʻi

Native Hawaiians on Molokaʻi, as well as the broader community, face significant health disparities, including limited access to essential healthcare services. The island's healthcare system has struggled for years with shortages of medical professionals, particularly physicians and dentists, which directly impacts the quality and accessibility of care. These shortages are exacerbated by geographic isolation, financial constraints, and limited opportunities for residents to pursue careers in healthcare. SB557, Relating to Health, would require Huli Au Ola to conduct a study on physician and dentist recruitment and retention to serve the island of Molokaʻi and appropriate funds to support this study. This bill died in the Senate Ways and Means Committee but will be automatically reintroduced in 2026. OHA submitted written testimony in support of this measure, recognizing this study is a critical step in identifying the barriers and challenges that prevent physicians and dentists from practicing on Molokaʻi and understanding the unique needs of the island's population. By examining factors that influence recruitment and retention, the study would have provided valuable data to inform targeted strategies and policies aimed at ensuring that Molokaʻi has an adequate number of healthcare providers to meet the needs of its residents, particularly Native Hawaiians.

Molokaʻi Transportation Issues

Molokaʻi is home to one of the highest percentages of Native Hawaiian residents in the state. However, persistent transportation challenges on the island have created serious barriers to health, education, economic stability, and overall wellbeing for the Molokaʻi community. OHA has engaged with the Molokaʻi community to understand these concerns. At an OHA community meeting in Kaunakakai in October 2024, organized by Trustee Luana Alapa, "reliable interisland transportation" topped the agenda, together with other infrastructure needs. U.S. Representative Jill Tokuda was in attendance, along with OHA's CEO, Trustee Keoni Souza, and OHA staff. Tokuda spoke to her efforts both at the federal and state levels, while OHA shared its actions. Pouhana Ferreira spoke with Ed Sniffen, Director of the Department of Transportation and Louis Saint-Cyr, President of Hawaii Operations Mokulele Airlines to ascertain what solutions were being implemented to address the frequent flight cancellations and delays. Saint-Cyr responded with an action plan that included scheduling regular town hall meetings in Molokaʻi and Lanaʻi, providing a forum for direct communication with community members. Mokulele Airlines will also establish a community advisory board with local representatives, ensuring that community voices are heard at the highest levels of their decision-making process. A planned expansion will gradually increase Mokulele's Caravan fleet size, ensuring that Mokulele can meet demand for both scheduled and charter flights. Additionally, the action plan includes implementation of new maintenance protocols to improve aircraft reliability and set up a real-time performance dashboard accessible to the public via the Mokulele website. By the first quarter of 2025, Maokulele aimed to achieve a 95% completion factor.

Molokaʻi Island Burial Council Vacancies

The Molokaʻi Island Burial Council, entrusted with the responsibility to safeguard iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains), currently faces a critical operational standstill due to prolonged vacancies. For over two years, the council has been unable to achieve quorum, rendering it incapable of making essential decisions regarding the treatment and protection of Native Hawaiian burial sites. This impasse has resulted in a backlog of at least 22 unresolved burial cases, some dating back three decades, leaving numerous iwi kūpuna without appropriate cultural care. OHA is deeply concerned about the vacancies on the Molokaʻi Island Burial Council, which have prevented the council from fulfilling its critical role in protecting iwi kūpuna. OHA has actively sought to address this issue by recruiting and recommending qualified candidates for appointments to the council. In early 2025, OHA submitted 15 nominations for burial councils statewide, with ten advancing to Senate for consideration. OHA's Molokaʻi nominee advanced to the senate for advise and consent, unfortunately the nominee withdrew her nomination. The council has one carryover member until 2027, but has been unable to meet quorum. OHA's efforts to resolve these challenges have also included supporting legislative measures such as Senate Concurrent Resolution 161, which proposes a collaborative working group to explore transferring certain burial site duties from the State Historic Preservation Division to OHA.

QUALITY HOUSING

Kūpuna Rent Supplement

Hawaiʻi continues to experience a housing crisis that disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiian communities, including those on Molokaʻi. For Molokaʻi kūpuna, who often live on fixed retirement incomes, any increase in rent can quickly outpace their ability to pay and leave them vulnerable to displacement and homelessness. The continuation of the State Rent Supplement Program for kūpuna through 2028 (HB 703_HD1_SD1_CD1) is one of the most important housing solutions passed this legislative session. OHA supported this bill through written testimony, emphasizing the importance of preserving kūpuna independence and dignity through stable housing. This measure is currently on the governor's desk for his consideration.

Kauhale and 'Ohana Zones Initiatives

The growing affordable housing problem is one of the most critical issues on Moloka'i, especially for Native Hawaiian communities. To address this issue OHA supported HB431_HD2_SD2_CD1, which will appropriate funds to continue the Kauhale and 'Ohana Zones initiatives, establishes the 'Ohana Zones program as a permanent program within the State Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions, and makes other amendments to the pilot and permanent programs including reporting requirements to allow for greater transparency, accountability for contractors and vendors, as well as legislative oversight of the program. This bill is on the governor's desk for his consideration. Once enacted, OHA will continue to work with advocates throughout the year to monitor implementation of the program.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Maui Based Nursing Program

Hawai'i faces a growing nursing workforce shortage, with the current demand for nurses exceeding supply by approximately one thousand positions and The County of Maui is the largest county in the state without a college-level Bachelor of Science in Nursing program to train local students to compete in this high-paying employment field. SB 119_SD1_HD1_CD1, Relating to Nursing, would establish a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the University of Hawai'i Maui to increase access to healthcare education, reduce the nursing workforce shortage, and enable Maui students to stay at home while receiving quality job training. OHA submitted written testimony in support of this bill for each of its committee hearings and submitted a 'sign' recommendation form to the Governor on May 9, 2025.

OHA Funding Activities for Moloka'i

OHA disbursed nearly \$14.2M in funds to 15 grantees providing services on Moloka'i that range from supporting educational services Kaiapuni students and 'ohana, funding 'ōlelo Hawai'i programming, to supporting health education place-based programming, and supporting child abuse prevention. Of the 15 OHA grantees servicing Maui beneficiaries, five are exclusive to Maui.

- 15 active grantees provide services on Moloka'i; \$14,207,614 total funds disbursed;
- Five of these grants are exclusive to Moloka'i; \$3,190,000 total funds disbursed.

OHA offers a variety of personal and business loans designed to support the financial wellbeing of Native Hawaiians. These loans can be used for purposes such as consolidating debt, covering educational expenses, making home improvements, or addressing personal emergencies. OHA disbursed \$1.4M in loan funds to 14 borrowers on Moloka'i through the Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund program. Active loans included eight home improvement loans and six debt consolidation loans.

- 14 active Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund/Consumer Micro Loan Program loans;
- In total, \$264,809 total dollars disbursed.

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

GRANTING ACTIVITIES

Moloka'i Island Only

- Hui Makua O Ke Kula Kaiapuni O Kualapu'u (\$140,000)
- Ho'okāko'o Corporation (\$350,000)

Multi-Island/Statewide, including Moloka'i

- Kanu o ka 'Āina Learning 'Ohana [Per Pupil] (\$2,709,614)^a
- Kanu o ka 'Āina Learning 'Ohana [Facilities] (\$2,850,000)^a
- Kanu o ka 'Āina Learning 'Ohana [Federal Advocacy] (\$500,000)^a
- Keiki o Ka Aina (\$410,000)

LOAN ACTIVITIES

Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund (NHRLF) Mālama Education Loan Activity on Moloka'i

- No open or new NHRLF Mālama Education Loans as of 5/27/25

HEALTH OUTCOMES

GRANTING ACTIVITIES

Moloka'i Island Only

- Ka Ipu Makani Cultural Heritage Center (\$100,000)
- Ka Honua Momona International (KHM) (\$200,000)
- Molokai Child Abuse Prevention Pathways (MCAPP) (\$2,400,000)

Multi-Island/Statewide, including Moloka'i

- Polynesian Voyaging Society (\$200,000)

LOAN ACTIVITIES

OHA Consumer Micro Loan Program Loan Activity on Moloka'i (for funeral and emergency health purposes)

- No open or new Funeral and Health Consumer Micro Loans as of 5/27/25

QUALITY HOUSING

GRANTING ACTIVITIES

Moloka'i Island Only

- No active Quality Housing grants only providing services to Moloka'i

Multi-Island/Statewide, including Moloka'i

- Hawai'i Community Lending (\$398,000)

LOAN ACTIVITIES

NHRLF Mālama Home Improvement Loans on Moloka'i

- Open Mālama Home Improvement Loans as of 5/27/25: eight loans, total disbursed \$173,034
- New Mālama Home Improvement Loans in FY25, 7/1/24 to 5/27/25: four loans, total disbursed \$88,035

NHRLF OHA Consumer Micro Loans for unexpected home repair purposes on Moloka'i

No open or New Consumer Home Repair Micro Loans as of 5/27/25

ECONOMIC STABILITY

GRANTING ACTIVITIES

Moloka'i Island Only

- No active Economic Stability grants only providing services to Moloka'i

Multi-Island/Statewide, including Moloka'i

- Hawaiian Community Assets (\$1,660,000)^a
- Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association (\$250,000)
- Homestead Community Development Corporation: Residential Employment Living Improvement Program (\$500,000)
- Hawaiian Community Assets, Inc. (\$1,500,000)

LOAN ACTIVITIES

NHRLF Debt Consolidation Loans on Moloka'i

- Open Debt Consolidation Loans as of 5/27/25: six loans, total disbursed \$91,775
- New Debt Consolidation Loans in FY25, 7/1/24 to 5/27/25: three loans, total disbursed \$49,461

NHRLF OHA Consumer Micro Loans on Moloka'i (for auto repair, CDL, apprenticeship program, or career development course purposes)

- No open or new Consumer Economic Stability Micro Loans as of 5/27/25

NHRLF Mālama Business Loans on Moloka'i (Loan amounts from \$2,500 to \$100,000)

- No open or new Mālama Business Loans as of 5/27/25

NHRLF Hua Kanu Loans on Moloka'i (Loan amounts from \$150,000 to \$1,000,000)

- No open or new Mālama Business Loans as of 5/27/25

GRANTING ACTIVITIES ENDNOTES

^a Grants awarded, contract execution in progress

SOURCES

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³ Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission. (2023). *2023 annual report* [PDF file]. Accessed May 14, 2025.

<https://www.chartercommission.hawaii.gov/images/for-staff-and-schools/reports/2023-Annual-Report-Final.pdf>

⁴ Annual physical checkup rate among adults reflects adults who have visited a doctor for a routine health checkup within the past year in the state of Hawai'i. Hawai'i State Department of Health, Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Preventive services- checkup within the past year, Age Adjusted by Year, Adults who have visited a doctor for a routine health checkup within the past year, Filter: Indicator = Yes, Year = 2021-2023, Island = Molokai, Display By (category): DOH Race/Ethnicity. Accessed May 06, 2025. https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/brfss/ChkupPastYear/ChkupPastYearAA11_.html

⁵ Kamehameha Schools' Strategy & Transformation Group, Lili'uokalani Trust, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and Papa Ola Lokahi. (2023). *Kamehameha Schools' Strategy & Transformation Group, Lili'uokalani Trust, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, & Papa Ola Lokahi. (2025). 2021 to 2025 'Imi Pono Analytic Dataset* [Unpublished dataset; to be made publicly available at a later date].

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