



SISTER-STATE APPLICATION FORM

(Rev 7/24/2017)

Thank you for your interest in proposing a new Sister-State relationship for the State of Hawaii. In addition to completing this application form, please provide other pertinent information/supporting documentation that would be useful to the Hawaii Sister-State Committee during the decision-making process.

REQUIRED INFORMATION	
GENERAL INFORMATION	
Proposed Sister-State:	Okayama Prefecture in Japan
Name of Person Submitting Application:	Roberta Yorita
Title of Person Submitting Application:	President
Organization of Person Submitting Application:	Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai
Complete Address:	98-1843 Apelekoka St.
	Aiea, Hawaii 96701 USA
Telephone Number:	808-222-6260
FAX Number:	
Email Address:	bobbieyorita@gmail.com
List existing Sister-State relationships the proposed Sister-State already has:	
China:	Jiangxi Province
Australia:	State of South Australia
India:	Pune City, Pimpri-Chinchwad City (Maharashtra State)
South Korea:	South Gyeongsang Province
Explain why a Sister-State relationship with the State of Hawaii is important to the state/province/prefecture. (Attach official government documentation of proof of interest <u>from the provincial, prefecture, or state jurisdiction</u> to establish a Sister-State relationship with the State of Hawaii [legislation, letter(s) of support, etc.]). <i>Attach additional sheets if necessary.</i>	
Please see Attachment #1	

Explain how the State of Hawaii will benefit from this proposed Sister-State relationship. (Attach official resolution from the State of Hawaii legislature requesting the Sister-State Committee review and consider the establishment of a Sister-State relationship). *Attach additional sheets if necessary.*

Please see Attachment #2

Business organizations, academic organizations, civic and/or community organizations, international exchange organizations and affiliations in proposed Sister-State that *would play a significant role in cultivating and sustaining this Sister-State relationship*:

<u>Organizations in Proposed Sister-State</u>	<u>Mission</u>	<u>Nexus with Hawaii</u>
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Please see Attachment #3

Business organizations, academic organizations, civic and/or community organizations, international exchange organizations and affiliations in Hawaii that *would play a significant role in cultivating and sustaining this Sister-State relationship*:

<u>Organizations in Hawaii</u>	<u>Mission</u>	<u>Nexus with Proposed Sister-State</u>
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Please see Attachment #3

Please provide a brief description of any applicable historical facts and/or notable historical figures that will contribute to the proposed Sister-State relationship. Also, please explain any previous relationships or nexus with Hawaii that prompted your interest in forming a Sister-State relationship.

Please see Attachment #4

**Please return completed form to:
State of Hawaii Sister-State Committee
Business Development & Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism
PO Box 2359
Honolulu Hawaii 96804 USA**

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Official Language:	Japanese	Head of State:	IBARAGI Ryuta, Governor
Government System:	Constitutional Monarchy	Governmental Structure:	Parliamentary System
Legal System:	Based on Domestic Law	Transportation System:	Automobile, rail, air, ship
Demographic Information:	National Census 2020	Population:	1,888,432
Male:	908,045	Female:	980,387
Average Earnings:	\$25,159 USD (¥2.55M JPY) (per capita GDP)	Religions:	Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity
Ethnic Diversity:	Predominantly Japanese	Climate:	Warm and humid
Educational System:	Elementary schools (6yrs): 361 Junior high schools (3yrs): 165 High schools (3yrs): 88 Universities (4yrs): 18	Health/Medical System (hospitals/areas of expertise):	Hospitals: 158 (10.01.2024) National health insurance system
International Programs & Exchanges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies for the promotion of internationalization (international exchange, multiculturalism, international contribution, fostering internationally capable human resources) • 'Mirai e Tobitate! Okayama Study Abroad Support Program' (Scholarship system) 		
	<p><Reference></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs): 8 (8.01.2025) • Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs): 57 (8.01.2025) • Prefectural university students, etc. studying abroad: 997 (FY2024) • International students from abroad: 2,342 (FY2024) 		

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Major Industries (please list):

Heavy industries, automobiles, textiles & clothing, shipbuilding, agriculture (fruit), fishery, tourism

Please describe government policies, programs, etc. for the following categories:

Trade (free Trade Zone or Economic Zone):	Exports: \$8.18B USD (¥1.27T JPY) Imports: \$20.15B US (¥3.14T JPY) Comprehensive Special Zone: 'Hyper & Green Innovation; Mizushima Industrial Complex'	Environment:	Okayama Prefecture Environmental Plan: Eco-vision 2040 (Creating a sustainable society through improvement of the environment)
Labor:	Promotion of youth, elderly, and disability employment, promotion of improved work styles	Health:	Okayama Prefecture Health Plan 9th Ed. (Securing a system where all residents can continue living

Education (including global education programs):	<p><Employment breakdown> Primary sector: 4.2% Secondary sector: 27.0% Tertiary sector: 68.7%</p> <hr/> <p>Okayama Education Plan 4th Ed. (Raising youth who will boldly pave the way to the future while aiming for their dreams) <Exchange agreements between universities></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okayama University and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa • Kake Educational Institution and University of Hawai'i • Junsei Educational Institution and University of Hawai'i/ University of Hawai'i at Hilo 	<p>healthy and safe lives with access to high quality healthcare)</p> <hr/> <p>Strategic tourism promotion, tourist site development promotion, overnight tourism promotion, inbound tourism promotion <Events> Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama <Tourist sites> Okayama Korakuen Garden Kurashiki Bikan Historical Quarter Hiruzen Highlands</p>
Agriculture:	<p>Okayama Plan for Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery (Establishing agriculture, forestry, and fishery as profitable industries) <Breakdown of total agricultural shipment value> Chicken 27.2% Fruit 18.2% Vegetables 15.1% Rice 17.4% Other 22.1%</p>	<p>Tourism:</p> <hr/> <p>Creation and support for manufacturing technology (Industrial Technology Center of Okayama Prefecture)</p> <p>Science & Technology:</p>
Arts & Entertainment:	<p>Okayama Vision for Cultural Promotion (An Okayama where people build culture, and culture builds up people)</p>	<p>Fishery: 26 fishing harbors Forestry: 68% of land is forested</p> <p>Other Industries:</p>
MEDIA		
Official Website:	<p>https://www.pref.okayama.jp/</p> <hr/> <p>RSK Sanyo Broadcasting, FM Okayama, RadioMOMO, FM Kurashiki</p>	<p>Major Television Stations:</p> <p>NHK Okayama Broadcasting Station, Nishinippon Broadcasting, RSK Sanyo Broadcasting, Setonaikai Broadcasting, Okayama Broadcasting, TV Setouchi Broadcasting</p> <hr/> <p>Sanyo Shimbun newspaper</p> <p>Trade Publications:</p>
Major Radio Stations: Other Internet-based Media:	N/A	

OTHER IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS

Special Attractions and Cultural Diversity (ethnic groups, activities, etc.):

Museums:	Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art, Okayama Prefectural Museum, Hayashibara Museum of Art, Okayama Orient Museum, Ohara Museum of Art, etc.	Symphony:	Okayama Philharmonic Orchestra
Theatre & Performing Arts:	Okayama Symphony Hall, Okayama Performing Arts Theatre Harenowa	Folk Arts:	Shiraishi Odori Dance, Bicchu Kagura, Saidai-ji Eyo (Naked Man Festival)
Traditional Handicrafts:	Bizen Ware, Kurashiki Hariko papier-mache, <i>Igusa</i> Rush products, Natsukawa Uchiwa hand fans	Zoo:	Ikeda Zoo, Shibukawa Animal Park
Aquarium:	Shibukawa Marine Aquarium (Tamano Marine Museum)		

Other special attractions/examples of cultural diversity:

Notable Locations

Okayama Castle, Bicchu Matsuyama Castle, Kinojo Castle, Tsukuriyama Kofun burial mounds, Former Shizutani School, Ikurado Cave, Makido Cave, Three Mimasaka Hot Springs, Saijo Inari Temple

Cultural Traditions

The Legend of Momotaro: Okayama is well known as the origin of the traditional Japanese legend “Momotaro”, and there are a variety of ruins, shrines, and other locations tied to the legend throughout the prefecture. Since 2018, the Legend of Momotaro has been nationally recognized as a Japan Heritage cultural property.

Sports Teams/Sporting Events:

Professional:	Fagiano Okayama (soccer) Okayama Seagulls (women's volleyball) Okayama Yunogo Belle (women's soccer) Kibi International University Charme Okayama Takahashi (women's soccer) Tryhoop Okayama (basketball) Okayama Rivets (table tennis) Kurashiki Ablaze (women's volleyball)	Semi-Professional:	Baseball, soccer, track & fields, and other various teams staffed and managed by businesses and other private institutions.
Amateur:	Baseball, soccer, basketball, volleyball, handball, table tennis, track & field, swimming, kendo, and judo are popular sports.	Official Sport:	N/A
Sports Clubs: Those affiliated with the professional teams listed above			
Major Sporting Events: Marathons: Okayama Marathon, Soja Kibiji Marathon, Tsuyama Kamogo Full Marathon			

Attached Letters of Endorsement

Governor of Okayama Prefecture → Governor of the State of Hawaii
Governor of Okayama Prefecture → Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai
Governor of Okayama Prefecture → Hawaii State Senator Troy N. Hashimoto
Governor of Okayama Prefecture → Mayor of Kauai County
Governor of Okayama Prefecture → Consul-General of Japan in Honolulu
Governor of Okayama Prefecture → Director of the United Japanese Society of Hawaii



January 21, 2026

The Honorable Josh Green
Governor of Hawaii State

Dear Governor Green,

I am writing to officially inform you that we will be submitting an application to establish sister-state relations between the State of Hawaii and Okayama Prefecture.

Hawaii and Okayama share a deep bond forged over a long history of migration, dating back to the government-sponsored *Kanyaku Imin* immigration that began in 1885. Approximately 2,900 immigrants from Okayama had crossed over to Hawaii by 1905, and contemporary records identify as many as 260 Okayama natives residing in Hawaii in 1941. While these numbers may seem small when compared to immigration from some of the other regions in Japan, those hopeful individuals from Okayama still persevered through numerous hardships over multiple generations to have their descendants serve as valuable members of Hawaiian society today.

In 1927, immigrants from Okayama also formed the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai, whose long years of active service were recognized in 1989, when then President George Sadaharu Ishida was presented with Okayama Prefecture's most prestigious award: the Miki Memorial Award (for Contributions to International Goodwill).

The Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai still holds regular events to this day, and successive governors, vice-governors, and other ranking officials from Okayama Prefecture have visited Hawaii over the years to participate in their anniversary celebrations. I, myself, joined them for a luncheon during my visit to Hawaii last October, where we were able to once again deepen our connection through cultural exchange.

These historic ties between Hawaii and Okayama, with the Kenjinkai at their center, are a priceless treasure to everyone here in Okayama. More than ever, during my recent visit, I felt the importance of preserving this bond for future generations, reaffirming my conviction that Okayama Prefecture must continue to directly support the Kenjinkai's activities. Establishing a sister-state relationship would not only be the most impactful way to accomplish this, but would also be fulfilling the Kenjinkai's own wishes.

Additionally, Mimasaka City in Okayama established a sister-city agreement with Kauai County in Hawaii when County Mayor Derek Kawakami visited them directly in July 2025. Given our shared history, a sister-state agreement between Hawaii and Okayama would no doubt help drive momentum for new sister-city agreements in the future.

At the community level, the Kurashiki, Kojima, and Tamashima chapters of Junior Chamber International in Okayama have frequently conducted grassroots exchanges together with the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce (their sister chapter since 1985), including regular visits to the Okayama Prefecture Office alongside the annual Cherry Blossom Queen.

Furthermore, Okayama Prefecture manages an airport with the capability for receiving and sending international flights, and 52 charter flights carrying over 12,000 total passengers flew from this airport to Honolulu between 1991 and 2018, highlighting the superb potential for easy access to and from Hawaii.

Currently, the development of internationally capable talent is one of our highest priority policies in Okayama Prefecture, and we are actively working to expand English education and support study abroad opportunities created through sister-school relationships. Educational exchange between Hawaii and Okayama already exists at the university level, including an exchange agreement between Okayama University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Moving forward, we aim to develop new exchange agreements at the high school level as well, driven by the formation of sister-state relations.

Finally, in regard to athletics, Okayama holds a number of marathons every year that draw a sizable overseas crowd, foremost of which is the Okayama Marathon. Hawaii, of course, hosts the world-renowned Honolulu Marathon annually as well, and beginning with marathons like these, we believe that a sister-state relationship will open the door for a variety of athletic exchanges between us.

With all of these opportunities in mind, and with the bond forged over long years by the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai as the foundation, Okayama Prefecture is hoping to establish a thriving and lasting relationship with Hawaii that stretches across education, business, culture, athletics, tourism, and more, and we would therefore like to establish a sister-state agreement as the trigger to kick-off this new era of historic exchange.

While I know you must be exceptionally busy with your official duties, I hope I can count on your continued understanding and cooperation towards this goal.

My best wishes to you and the good people of the State of Hawaii.
Sincerely,



IBARAGI "Ray" Ryuta
Governor of Okayama Prefecture



January 21, 2026

Ms. Roberta "Bobbie" Yorita
President, Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai

Dear Roberta Yorita,

I am writing to request your support and cooperation for the establishment of a sister-state agreement between the State of Hawaii and Okayama Prefecture.

Beginning back in 1885 with the government-sponsored *Kanyaku Imin* immigration, a large number of Okayama natives have migrated to Hawaii, and their descendants continue to live there to this day. Those migrants also formed the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai in 1927, whose long years of active service were recognized in 1989, when then President George Sadaharu Ishida was presented with Okayama Prefecture's most prestigious award: the Miki Memorial Award (for Contributions to International Goodwill).

Okayama Prefecture has continued to walk alongside the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai over the years, through visits by Governors, Vice-Governors, and other officials to Hawaii, along with visits by the Kenjinkai to the Okayama Prefectural Office. Of course, I had the great pleasure of being welcomed by the Kenjinkai and yourself when I visited Honolulu last October. I was incredibly glad to have the opportunity to join you all for lunch and grow closer together through our exchanges.

These historic ties between Hawaii and Okayama, with the Kenjinkai at their center, are a priceless treasure to everyone here in Okayama. More than ever, during my recent visit to Hawaii, I felt the great importance of preserving this bond for future generations.

Furthermore, Mimasaka City in Okayama Prefecture and Kauai Country signed their own sister-city agreement in July of last year, drawing Hawaii and Okayama even closer than ever.

With the bond forged over long years by the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai as the foundation, Okayama Prefecture is hoping to establish a thriving and lasting relationship with Hawaii that stretches across education, business, culture, athletics, tourism, and more, and we would therefore like to establish a sister-state agreement as the trigger to kick-off this new era of historic exchange.

I hope I can count on the continued understanding and cooperation of the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai and yourself as we aim for this sister-state agreement.

Sending my warmest wishes to you and everyone at the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai.
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ibaragi Ryuta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

IBARAGI "Ray" Ryuta
Governor of Okayama Prefecture



January 21, 2026

The Honorable Troy N. Hashimoto
Senator, State of Hawaii, District 5

Dear Senator Hashimoto,

I am writing to request your support and cooperation for the establishment of a sister-state agreement between the State of Hawaii and Okayama Prefecture.

Hawaii and Okayama share a deep bond, forged over a long history of migration. Those hopeful individuals who migrated from Okayama had to overcome numerous challenges over multiple generations, so that their descendants could live as valuable members of Hawaiian society today.

In 1927, immigrants from Okayama also formed the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai, who still hold regular events to this day. Over the years, successive Governors, Vice-Governors, and other ranking officials from Okayama Prefecture have visited Hawaii to participate in their anniversary celebrations, and I, myself, joined them for a luncheon during my visit to Hawaii last October, where we were able to deepen our connection through cultural exchange.

On that same trip, I also had the great pleasure of reconnecting with you during the annual conference of the U.S.-Japan Council. I wanted to once again express my gratitude for all of the opportunities we had to discuss the relationship between our states.

These historic ties between Hawaii and Okayama, with the Kenjinkai at their center, are a priceless treasure to everyone here in Okayama. More than ever, during my recent visit, I felt the importance of preserving this bond for future generations, reaffirming my conviction that Okayama Prefecture must continue to directly support the Kenjinkai's activities. Establishing a sister-state relationship would not only be the most impactful way to accomplish this, but would also be fulfilling the Kenjinkai's own wishes.

Additionally, Mimasaka City in Okayama established a sister-city agreement with Kauai County in July of last year, drawing our two states even closer together.

At the community level, the Kurashiki, Kojima, and Tamashima chapters of Junior Chamber International in Okayama have frequently conducted grassroots exchanges together with the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce since becoming sister chapters in 1985.

Furthermore, Okayama Prefecture manages an airport with the capability for receiving and sending international flights, and 52 charter flights carrying over 12,000 total passengers flew from this airport to Honolulu between 1991 and 2018, highlighting the superb potential for easy access to and from Hawaii.

Currently, the development of internationally capable talent is one of our highest priority policies in Okayama Prefecture, and we are actively working to expand English education and support study abroad opportunities created through sister-school relationships. Educational exchange between Hawaii and Okayama already exists at the university level, including an exchange agreement between Okayama University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Moving forward, we aim to develop new exchange agreements at the high school level as well, driven by the formation of sister-state relations.

Finally, in regard to athletics, Okayama holds a number of marathons every year that draw a sizable overseas crowd, foremost of which is the Okayama Marathon. Hawaii, of course, hosts the world-renowned Honolulu Marathon annually as well, and beginning with marathons like these, we believe that a sister-state relationship will open the door for a variety of athletic exchanges between us.

With all of these opportunities in mind, and with the bond forged over long years by the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai as the foundation, Okayama Prefecture is hoping to establish a thriving and lasting relationship with Hawaii that stretches across education, business, culture, athletics, tourism, and more, and we would therefore like to establish a sister-state agreement as the trigger to kick-off this new era of historic exchange.

While I know you must be exceptionally busy with your official duties, I hope I can count on your continued understanding and cooperation towards this goal.

My best wishes to you and the good people of the State of Hawaii.
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ibaragi Ryuta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

IBARAGI "Ray" Ryuta
Governor of Okayama Prefecture



January 21, 2026

The Honorable Derek S.K. Kawakami
Mayor of Kauai

Dear Mayor Kawakami,

I am writing to request your support and cooperation for the establishment of a sister-state agreement between the State of Hawaii and Okayama Prefecture.

Hawaii and Okayama share a deep bond, forged over a long history of migration. Those hopeful individuals who migrated from Okayama had to overcome numerous challenges over multiple generations, so that their descendants could live as valuable members of Hawaiian society today.

In 1927, immigrants from Okayama also formed the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai, who still hold regular events to this day. Over the years, successive Governors, Vice-Governors, and other ranking officials from Okayama Prefecture have visited Hawaii to participate in their anniversary celebrations, and I, myself, joined them for a luncheon during my visit to Hawaii last October, where we were able to once again deepen our connection through cultural exchange.

These historic ties between Hawaii and Okayama, with the Kenjinkai at their center, are a priceless treasure to everyone here in Okayama. More than ever, during my recent visit, I felt the importance of preserving this bond for future generations, reaffirming my conviction that Okayama Prefecture must continue to directly support the Kenjinkai's activities. Establishing a sister-state relationship would not only be the most impactful way to accomplish this, but would also be fulfilling the Kenjinkai's own wishes.

Additionally, as you are well aware, Mimasaka City in Okayama Prefecture established a sister-city agreement with your own Kauai County in July of last year, and I have heard they are excited to conduct a wide variety of exchanges covering culture, education, arts and crafts, business, and more. I am certain that this agreement will have an immense impact on our own efforts to establish sister relations with Hawaii, and I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude.

At the community level, the Kurashiki, Kojima, and Tamashima chapters of Junior Chamber International in Okayama have frequently conducted grassroots exchanges together with the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce since becoming sister chapters in 1985.

Furthermore, Okayama Prefecture manages an airport with the capability for receiving and sending international flights, and 52 charter flights carrying over 12,000 total passengers flew from this airport to Honolulu between 1991 and 2018, highlighting the superb potential for easy access to and from Hawaii.

Currently, the development of internationally capable talent is one of our highest priority policies in Okayama Prefecture, and we are actively working to expand English education and support study abroad opportunities created through sister-school relationships. Educational exchange between Hawaii and Okayama already exists at the university level, including an exchange agreement between Okayama University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Moving forward, we aim to develop new exchange agreements at the high school level as well, driven by the formation of sister-state relations.

Finally, in regard to athletics, Okayama holds a number of marathons every year that draw a sizable overseas crowd, foremost of which is the Okayama Marathon. Hawaii, of course, hosts the world-renowned Honolulu Marathon annually as well, and beginning with marathons like these, we believe that a sister-state relationship will open the door for a variety of athletic exchanges between us.

With all of these opportunities in mind, and with the bond forged over long years by the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai as the foundation, Okayama Prefecture is hoping to establish a thriving and lasting relationship with Hawaii that stretches across education, business, culture, athletics, tourism, and more, and we would therefore like to establish a sister-state agreement as the trigger to kick-off this new era of historic exchange.

While I know you must be exceptionally busy with your official duties, I hope I can count on your understanding and cooperation towards this goal.

My best wishes to you and the good people of Kauai.
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ibaragi Ryuta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

IBARAGI "Ray" Ryuta
Governor of Okayama Prefecture



January 21, 2026

The Honorable CHOTOKU Hideaki
Consul-General of Japan in Honolulu

Dear Consul-General Chotoku,

I am writing to request your support and cooperation for the establishment of a sister-state agreement between the State of Hawaii and Okayama Prefecture.

Hawaii and Okayama share a deep bond forged over a long history of migration, dating back to the government-sponsored *Kanyaku Imin* immigration that began in 1885. Approximately 2,900 immigrants from Okayama had crossed over to Hawaii by 1905, and contemporary records identify as many as 260 Okayama natives residing in Hawaii in 1941. While these numbers may seem small when compared to immigration from some of the other regions in Japan, those hopeful individuals from Okayama still persevered through numerous hardships over multiple generations to have their descendants serve as valuable members of Hawaiian society today.

In 1927, immigrants from Okayama also formed the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai, whose long years of active service were recognized in 1989, when then President George Sadaharu Ishida was presented with Okayama Prefecture's most prestigious award: the Miki Memorial Award (for Contributions to International Goodwill).

The Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai still holds regular events to this day, and successive governors, vice-governors, and other ranking officials from Okayama Prefecture have visited Hawaii over the years to participate in their anniversary celebrations. I, myself, joined them for a luncheon during my visit to Hawaii last October, where we were able to once again deepen our connection through cultural exchange.

On that trip I also had the great honor of meeting with former Consul-General Kodama and Ambassador Yamada, and I was extremely grateful to receive their valuable advice regarding the relationship between Okayama Prefecture and Hawaii.

These historic ties between Hawaii and Okayama, with the Kenjinkai at their center, are a priceless treasure to everyone here in Okayama. More than ever, during my recent visit, I felt the importance of preserving this bond for future generations, reaffirming my conviction that Okayama Prefecture must continue to directly support the Kenjinkai's activities. Establishing a sister-state relationship would not only be the most impactful way to accomplish this, but would also be fulfilling the Kenjinkai's own wishes.

Additionally, in July of last year, Mimasaka City in Okayama established a sister-city agreement with Kauai County in Hawaii, drawing the two states even closer together.

At the community level, the Kurashiki, Kojima, and Tamashima chapters of Junior Chamber International in Okayama have frequently conducted grassroots exchanges together with the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce since becoming sister chapters in 1985.

Furthermore, Okayama Prefecture manages an airport with the capability for receiving and sending international flights, and 52 charter flights carrying over 12,000 total passengers flew from this airport to Honolulu between 1991 and 2018, highlighting the superb potential for easy access to and from Hawaii.

Currently, the development of internationally capable talent is one of our highest priority policies in Okayama Prefecture, and we are actively working to expand English education and support study abroad opportunities created through sister-school relationships. Educational exchange between Hawaii and Okayama already exists at the university level, including an exchange agreement between Okayama University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Moving forward, we aim to develop new exchange agreements at the high school level as well, driven by the formation of sister-state relations.

Finally, in regard to athletics, Okayama holds a number of marathons every year that draw a sizable overseas crowd, foremost of which is the Okayama Marathon. Hawaii, of course, hosts the world-renowned Honolulu Marathon annually as well, and beginning with marathons like these, we believe that a sister-state relationship will open the door for a variety of athletic exchanges between us.

With all of these opportunities in mind, and with the bond forged over long years by the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai as the foundation, Okayama Prefecture is hoping to establish a thriving and lasting relationship with Hawaii that stretches across education, business, culture, athletics, tourism, and more, and we would therefore like to establish a sister-state agreement as the trigger to kick-off this new era of historic exchange.

While I know you must be exceptionally busy with your official duties, I hope I can count on your understanding and cooperation towards this goal.

My best wishes to you and everyone at the Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu.
Sincerely,



IBARAGI Ryuta
Governor of Okayama Prefecture



January 21, 2026

Ms. Nikki Thompson
Director of Community Outreach, Hawaii Global Education Foundation
Director, United Japanese Society of Hawaii

Dear Nikki Thompson,

I am writing to request your support and cooperation for the establishment of a sister-state agreement between the State of Hawaii and Okayama Prefecture.

Hawaii and Okayama share a deep bond forged over a long history of migration, dating back to the government-sponsored *Kanyaku Imin* immigration that began in 1885. Approximately 2,900 immigrants from Okayama had crossed over to Hawaii by 1905, and contemporary records identify as many as 260 Okayama natives residing in Hawaii in 1941. While these numbers may seem small when compared to immigration from some of the other regions in Japan, those hopeful individuals from Okayama still persevered through numerous hardships over multiple generations to have their descendants serve as valuable members of Hawaiian society today.

In 1927, immigrants from Okayama also formed the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai, whose long years of active service were recognized in 1989, when then President George Sadaharu Ishida was presented with Okayama Prefecture's most prestigious award: the Miki Memorial Award (for Contributions to International Goodwill). The late Ishida was also president of the United Japanese Society of Hawaii for 2 years starting in 1980, forming a historical connection between Okayama Prefecture and the USJH.

The Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai still holds regular events to this day, and successive governors, vice-governors, and other ranking officials from Okayama Prefecture have visited Hawaii over the years to participate in their anniversary celebrations. I, myself, joined them for a luncheon during my visit to Hawaii last October, where we were able to once again deepen our connection through cultural exchange. At that time, I also heard that the Kenjinkai had officially applied to join the United Japanese Society of Hawaii, and that they intended to ramp up their activities going forward.

The historic ties between Hawaii and Okayama, with the Kenjinkai at their center, are a priceless treasure to everyone here in Okayama. More than ever, during my recent visit, I felt the importance of preserving this bond for future generations, reaffirming my conviction that Okayama Prefecture must continue to directly support the Kenjinkai's activities. Establishing a sister-state relationship would not only be the most impactful way to accomplish this, but would also be fulfilling the Kenjinkai's own wishes.

Additionally, during my recent visit I was able to tour Kaimuki High School and directly observe some of their classes thanks to your kind assistance. Along with the opportunity to speak together with Principal Aiwohi about future high school exchanges, I would like to express my sincere gratitude once more for all of your support.

Currently, the development of internationally capable talent is one of our highest priority policies in Okayama Prefecture, and we are actively working to expand English education and support study abroad opportunities created through sister-school relationships. Educational exchange between Hawaii and Okayama already exists at the university level, including an exchange agreement between Okayama University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Moving forward, we aim to develop new exchange agreements at the high school level as well, driven by the formation of sister-state relations.

With the bond forged over long years by the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai as the foundation, Okayama Prefecture is hoping to establish a thriving and lasting relationship with Hawaii that stretches across education, business, culture, athletics, tourism, and more, and we would therefore like to establish a sister-state agreement as the trigger to kick-off this new era of historic exchange.

While I know you must be exceptionally busy, I hope I can count on your understanding and cooperation towards this goal.

My best wishes to you, and everyone at the Hawaii Global Education Foundation and the United Japanese Society of Hawaii.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ibaragi Ryuta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

IBARAGI "Ray" Ryuta
Governor of Okayama Prefecture

Sister-State Application Form P.2

Explain how the State of Hawaii will benefit from this proposed Sister-State relationship.

A sister-state relationship would strengthen the bond between the State of Hawaii and Okayama Prefecture even further, while also promoting lasting educational, economic, cultural, and sports exchanges moving forward.

Specifically, the following benefits can be expected:

1. Promotion of Next-generation Exchange

While visiting Hawaii in October of 2025, the governor of Okayama Prefecture took additional time to tour the facilities of two local high schools and meet directly with the principal of each school to discuss future opportunities for academic exchange.

As a result, a clear path to future sister-school relationships has opened up, with Kaimuki High School having reached out after the visit to follow-up on their interest in pursuing international exchange opportunities with Okayama.

A sister-state relationship would help accelerate these developments even further, helping establish sister-school agreements between high schools in Hawaii and Okayama, which in turn would lead to an increase in reciprocal youth visits through student exchanges and school trips.

Furthermore, Okayama Prefecture already conducts ongoing online exchanges at the high school level with schools in South Australia, one of their current sister-states. This experience and know-how could be immediately applied to create effective digital opportunities for cultural exchange, allowing an even greater number of students to engage in these valuable experiences.

2. Supporting the Nikkei Community

Around 320,000 Nikkei currently live in the State of Hawaii (roughly 22% of the total population of 1.44M), where they continue to play significant roles in both the political and economic spheres.

The Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai, comprised of Hawaiian Nikkei with roots in Okayama, would be empowered by a sister-state relationship to expand their activities, helping them to establish a sustained presence in the Nikkei community through various events and other cultural contributions.

3. Stimulation of Private & Grassroots Exchange

With a sister-state relationship acting as a catalyst, an increase in private sector exchange through groups such as junior chambers can be expected, alongside an increase in visitors to the State of Hawaii by way of Okayama Airport. Furthermore, exchange at the private citizen level could also be boosted by leveraging the shared sporting and athletic resources of both states such as marathons.

Sister-State Application Form P.2

Business organizations, academic organizations, civic and/or community organizations, international exchange organizations and affiliations in proposed Sister-State that would play a significant role in cultivating and sustaining this Sister-State relationship:

Organizations in Proposed Sister-State (Okayama Prefecture)	Mission	Nexus with Hawaii
Okayama Prefecture Board of Education	Creation of educational policies	*
Public Interest Corporation Okayama Tourism Federation	Promotion of tourism resources	*
General Incorporated Foundation Okayama Prefecture International Exchange Foundation	Promotion of international exchange, international understanding, international cooperation and contribution, and multiculturalism	*
Public Interest Corporation Junior Chamber International Kurashiki	Promotion of children and youth's healthy development and international mutual understanding	Sister chapters with the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce since 1985
General Incorporated Foundation Junior Chamber International Kojima		
General Incorporated Foundation Junior Chamber International Tamashima		
General Incorporated Foundation Okayama Japan-America Cultural Exchange Society	Promotion of international understanding education mainly targeted at youth	*

Note: Organizations marked with an asterisk (*) under 'Nexus with Hawaii' currently have limited direct relations with the State of Hawaii, however their relations can be expected to deepen significantly once a sister-state relationship has been formed.

Sister-State Application Form P.2 *Cont.*

Business organizations, academic organizations, civic and/or community organizations, international exchange organizations and affiliations in Hawaii that would play a significant role in cultivating and sustaining this Sister-State relationship:

Organizations in Hawaii	Mission	Nexus with Proposed Sister-State (Okayama Prefecture)
Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu	Protection of Japanese nationals, handling of trade disputes, collection and spreading of political, economic, and other information as well as cultural activities	Prefectural visit to the Consulate-General in October, 2025
Japan-America Society of Hawaii	Promotion of understanding and friendship between the United States and Japan	*
United Japanese Society of Hawaii	Advance the welfare of the Japanese and their descendants in Hawaii and develop better understanding and friendship between Japan and Hawaii	President from 1980-1981 was 2 nd -generational Nikkei from Okayama, George Sadaharu Ishida
Honolulu Japanese Chamber of Commerce	Promotion of business and economic growth in Hawaii, under the principle of "members supporting members"	*
Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce	Creating opportunities for personal growth and professional development, instilling leadership skills, and contributing to society by providing meaningful services to regional communities	Sister chapters with the Kurashiki, Tamashima, and Kojima chapters of Junior Chambers International since 1985
Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii	Embracing diversity while respecting the traditional culture of the Nikkei community, and passing both ideals to the next generation	*

Note: Organizations marked with an asterisk (*) under 'Nexus with Proposed Sister-State' maintain relations with all of Japan, including Okayama Prefecture.

Sister-State Application Form P.2

Please provide a brief description of any applicable historical facts and/or notable historical figures that will contribute to the proposed Sister-State relationships. Also, please explain any previous relationships or nexus with Hawaii that prompted your interest in forming a Sister-State relationship.

1. Historical Background

Migration from Okayama Prefecture to the State of Hawaii goes back to the beginning of the Kanyaku Imin immigration, with around 2,900 migrants having made the trip from Okayama by 1908. Historical documents from 1941 also confirm that at least 260 residents from Okayama were living in Hawaii at that time.

Since then, migrants from Okayama and their descendants have continued living and working in Hawaii, while participating in and contributing to a wide variety of fields, such as retail operation.

In 1927 the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai was founded by these migrants, and went on to conduct various activities over the years. In recognition of the Kenjinkai's many years of service, in 1989 the president of the Kenjinkai at that time, George Sadaharu Ishida, was presented with Okayama Prefecture's most prestigious award; the Miki Memorial Award (for Contributions to International Goodwill). The Kenjinkai continues to be active today, holding events such as a yearly picnic.

Furthermore, successive generations of Governors, Vice-governors, and other officials from Okayama Prefecture have continued to visit Hawaii and meet with the Kenjinkai there. Along with visits to the Prefectural Government Office by Kenjinkai members, exchange between Okayama and the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai has continued to deepen over the years, with the current Governor of Okayama, Ryuta Ibaragi, having joined the Kenjinkai for a luncheon in October, 2025.

In order to ensure that this bond between Hawaii and Okayama cultivated over decades of exchange carries on into the future, Okayama Prefecture must continue to support the activities of the Hawaii Okayama Kenjinkai.

2. Involvement of Municipalities in Okayama Prefecture

In July 2025, the city of Mimasaka in the north of Okayama Prefecture formed a sistership agreement with Kauai County in Hawaii, strengthening relations between Hawaii and Okayama at the municipal level.

A sister-state relationship would help drive momentum for new sister city agreements with the municipalities of Okayama Prefecture in the future.

3. Citizen Exchange

The Kurashiki, Tamashima, and Kojima chapters of Junior Chamber International in Okayama Prefecture have had a sister chapter relationship

with the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce since 1985, and they have continued reciprocal visits and other forms active exchange for over 40 years, surviving through even the Covid-19 pandemic.

Notably, during regular visits of the Cherry Blossom Queen to Okayama, the visiting group is given a homestay experience at a Japanese home and provided with a variety of Japanese cultural experiences. Additionally, the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Cherry Blossom Queen have also made courtesy visits to the Okayama Prefectural Office.

The formation of a sister-state relationship would help further invigorate citizen-level exchange between the two states and open up the potential for more public-private collaborations.

Furthermore, while currently only two companies from Okayama have expanded into Hawaii at this time, the number can be expected to rise with a sister-state relationship acting as a catalyst to strengthen the economic ties between the parties.



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII SISTER-STATE AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS COMMISSION
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

SISTER-STATE APPLICATION FORM

(Rev 2/2/26)

Thank you for your interest in proposing a new Sister-State relationship for the State of Hawai'i. In addition to completing this application form, please provide other pertinent information/supporting documentation that would be useful to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission during the decision-making process.

REQUIRED INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

Proposed Sister-State:	Yamagata prefecture, Japan		
Name of Person Submitting Application:	Milton Kwock		
Title of Person Submitting Application:	Secretary-Treasure		
Organization of Person Submitting Application:	Hawaii Yamagata Kenjin Kai		
Complete Address:	c/o 3337 Emekona Place		
	Honolulu, HI 96822		
Telephone Number:	808-384-1111	FAX Number:	
Email Address:	Milton.kwock@gmail.com		

List existing Sister-State relationships the proposed Sister-State already has:

United States of America: Colorado State

China: Heilongjiang Province

Indonesia: Papua Province

Explain why a Sister-State relationship with the State of Hawai'i is important to the state/province/prefecture. (Attach official government documentation of proof of interest from the provincial, prefecture, or state jurisdiction to establish a Sister-State relationship with the State of Hawai'i [legislation, letter(s) of support, etc.]). *Attach additional sheets if necessary.*

See attached letter

Explain how the State of Hawai'i will benefit from this proposed Sister-State relationship. (Attach official resolution from the State of Hawai'i legislature requesting the Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission review and consider the establishment of a Sister-State relationship). *Attach additional sheets if necessary.*

State of Hawaii

Business organizations, academic organizations, civic and/or community organizations, international exchange organizations and affiliations in proposed Sister-State that would play a significant role in cultivating and sustaining this Sister-State relationship:

<u>Organizations in Proposed Sister-State</u>	<u>Mission</u>	<u>Nexus with Hawaii</u>
(1) National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations Yamagata	(1,2,3) Promotion of Trade	
(2) Yamagata International Economic Development Support Organization (YES)		
(3) Yamagata Prefecture Brewery Association	(4) Promotion of Tourism	
(4) Yamagata Prefecture Tourism and Local Products Association	(5) Exchange of Goodwill	
(5) Association of International Relations Yamagata	(6) Education Exchange	
(6) Tohoku University of Community Service and Science		

✘At present, our direct ties with Hawaii State are limited ; however we hope to further deepen our relationship through the establishment of this agreement.

Business organizations, academic organizations, civic and/or community organizations, international exchange organizations and affiliations in Hawaii that would play a significant role in cultivating and sustaining this Sister-State relationship:

<u>Organizations in Hawaii</u>	<u>Mission</u>	<u>Nexus with Proposed Sister-State</u>
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State of Hawaii

Please provide a brief description of any applicable historical facts and/or notable historical figures that will contribute to the proposed Sister-State relationship. Also, please explain any previous relationships or nexus with Hawaii that prompted your interest in forming a Sister-State relationship.

Yamagata Prefecture and State of Hawaii

- Since 2015, Yamagata Prefecture has continuously conducted promotional activities in Hawaii for its local products, starting with 'Tsuyahime' rice. With the cooperation of local import partners such as Wakka USA and Sun Noodle, as well as with help from restaurants and the Yamagata Kenjinkai, the amount of exports has increased significantly. Alongside holding a promotion regarding the 10-year anniversary of 'Tsuyahime' being exported to Hawaii, visits to Kapiolani Community College were made and exchanges centered around food were carried out, contributing to mutual exchanges between the two regions.
- In 2025, Senator Ronald Kouchi, as well as students and faculty members from Leeward Community College from Hawaii visited Yamagata Prefecture and participated in study-tours and hands-on-experience related to culinary culture, agriculture and tourism.

Please return completed form to:
State of Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission
Business Development & Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism
PO Box 2359
Honolulu Hawaii 96804 USA

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Official Language:	Japanese	Head of State:	Mieko Yoshimura, Governor
Government System:	Constitutional Monarchy	Governmental Structure:	Parliamentary System
Legal System:	Based on the Japanese constitution and Domestic Law	Transportation System:	Automobile, Rail, Airplane, Boat
Demographic Information:	Based on January 1 st , 2026, statistics	Population:	991,279
Male:	481,411	Female:	509,868
Average Earnings:	Based on 2023 Yamagata Prefectural Economic Accounts: US \$20,522 per capita.	Religions:	Due to being on the side of the Sea of Japan, winter is very cold with tremendous snowfall, and in the summer
Ethnic Diversity:	99% Japanese	Climate:	

due to being inland it is extremely hot.

According to 2025 School Survey

According to 2022 Medical Facilities Survey

Elementary Schools: 221

Number of Hospitals: 67

Middle Schools: 95

Health/Medical System (hospitals/areas of expertise):

High Schools: 58

Educational System:

International Programs & Exchanges:

- Promotion of international exchange (such as language courses and multicultural courses) between foreign residents and Yamagata locals via the Association of International Relations Yamagata.
- Assigned 9 Staff for International Exchange
- Assigned 90 Assistant Language Teachers (ALT)
- Foreign Study-Abroad Students: 293

※Statistics regarding International Exchange Staff and ALTs are as of August 2025. Foreign Study-Abroad Student statistics are as of May 1st, 2024.

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS Yamagata

Major Industries (please list): Manufacturing Industry (Electronic Parts, Food Processing), Wholesales • Retail

※According to 2023 Yamagata Prefectural Economic Accounts

Please describe government policies, programs, etc. for the following categories:

Trade (free Trade Zone or Economic Zone):	Promotion of local produce and local goods.	Environment:	Promotion of sustainable region development and that protects the regions rich natural environment and the global environment.
Labor:	Promotion of the retention of young people and return to the region, as well as the expansion of the foreign worker population.	Health:	Realization of becoming Japan's leading region for health and safety by working alongside public health, medical care and welfare services.
Education (including global education programs):	Cultivation of human resources for a global society via the promotion of multicultural learning, the creation of	Tourism:	Stimulation of the regional economy through the expansion of tourism and exchanges from within Japan and overseas.

	opportunities to learn overseas cultures, and the development of practical foreign language education.	
Agriculture:	Development of production technologies adapted to climate change; development and spread of new crop varieties; and promotion of high-profitability agriculture.	Science & Technology: Promotion of industrial clusters originating from research at local universities and other local institutions, including biotechnologies and electronics.
Arts & Entertainment:	Promotion of cultural arts and the preservation and utilization of cultural properties.	Other Industries:

MEDIA Yamagata Prefecture

Official Website:	https://www.pref.yamagata.jp/	Major Television Stations:	NHK, Yamagata Broadcasting (YBC), Yamagata TV, Tv-U Yamagata, Sakuranbo Television
Major Radio Stations:	Yamagata Broadcasting (YBC), FM Yamagata	Trade Publications:	Yamagata Shimbun (Yamagata newspaper)
Other Internet-based Media:			

OTHER IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS Yamagata Prefecture

Special Attractions and Cultural Diversity (ethnic groups, activities, etc.):

Museums:	Yamagata Prefectural Museum, Yamagata Museum of Art	Symphony:	Yamagata Symphony Orchestra
Theatre & Performing Arts:	Yamagin Kenmin Hall, Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival	Folk Arts:	Hanagasa Odori Dance

Traditional Handicrafts:	Yamagata cast iron, Tendo Shogi Pieces, Sasano Itto bori Carvings	Zoo:	Kahoku Children's Zoo
Aquarium:	Kamo Aquarium		
Other special attractions/examples of cultural diversity:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual and cultural heritage originating from mountain worship, as well as world renowned landscapes including the 'snow monsters' of Zao and Ginzan Onsen. Additionally, regional resources, like ramen, soba, cherries and La France pears which give Yamagata the names of 'Ramen Prefecture and Soba Kingdom'. • Food culture (Rice(Tsuyahime,Yukiwakamaru), Yamagata beef, Japanese sake and fruits(cherries, La France pears)). 			

Sports Teams/Sporting Events: Yamagata Prefecture			
Professional:	Montedio Yamagata (J2 League Pro Soccer Club)	Semi-Professional:	—
	Passlab Yamagata Wyverns (B League Pro Basketball)		
	Aranmare Yamagata (SV League Women's Volleyball)		
Amateur:	—	Official Sport:	—
Sports Clubs:	—		
Major Sporting Events: Women's Ski Jump World Cup, SEA TO SUMMIT, Yamagata City Marugoto Marathon			

YAMAGATA PREFECTURE

2-8-1 Matsunami
Yamagata City, Yamagata
990-8570 JAPAN
TEL 81-23-630-2129
FAX 81-23-630-2092



山形県

Dear Mr. Josh Green,
The Governor of the State of Hawaii

I hope this letter finds you well and that all your affairs are prospering during this time

On behalf of Yamagata Prefectural Government, I would like to respectfully express thankfulness for the conclusion of the agreement between the State of Hawaii and Yamagata Prefecture.

Over the years, exchanges in the fields of education and academia have been carried out between institutions in Hawaii and Yamagata Prefecture. Building upon this foundation, in 2015 we conducted our first full-scale promotional campaign in Hawaii for our premium rice brand, Tsuyahime. Since then, we have steadily strengthened our ties not only with members of the Hawaii Yamagata Kenjinkai, but also with local distributors and consumers

In 2025, we proudly marked the 10th anniversary of the launch of Tsuyahime sales in Hawaii. To commemorate this significant milestone, we held the anniversary reception in Hawaii, where many distinguished guests joined us in reflecting upon the progress achieved over the past decade. We were also honored to welcome President Ronald D. Kouchi of the Hawaii State Senate and representatives of Leeward Community College to Yamagata. During their visit, they experienced our prefecture's rich culinary culture and natural environment, and engaged in meaningful exchanges with local farmers, chefs, and residents

Furthermore, in November of last year, Shonai Town in Yamagata Prefecture officially signed a friendship city agreement with the City and County of Honolulu, reflecting the steady expansion of exchanges between our communities

In this context, I am sincerely grateful for the support expressed by residents of Hawaii who have long supported Yamagata Prefecture and whom look forward to the conclusion of a formal agreement between our two governments. I would be most pleased to express my endorsement for such an initiative

Looking ahead, we hope to further strengthen the relationship we have cultivated with the State of Hawaii and expand our exchanges across a wide range of fields, including tourism, culture, and education

I respectfully ask for your continued understanding and valued support in advancing the relationship between the State of Hawaii and Yamagata Prefecture

March 2026

YOSHIMURA Mieko
The Governor of Yamagata Prefecture

山形県知事 吉村美栄子