

COMMUNITY REPORT

SENATE DISTRICT 18 | SEPTEMBER 2025

Serving Mililani Town, Waipī'o Gentry, Crestview, Waikele, portion of Waipahu, Village Park, Royal Kunia



Michelle
KIDANI

Senate Vice President

Chair
Committee on Education

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Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

I hope you had a wonderful and refreshing summer. During this interim season, I am grateful for the opportunity to continue connecting with our neighbors, attend community events, and continue advancing progress for our schools, keiki, and the future of education in Hawai'i. I remain dedicated to uplifting public education and serving our community. Creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students continues to be a top priority of mine. That is why I am proud to share that under Act 139, introduced as Senate Bill 1300 which I authored this legislative session, students who qualify for reduced-price meals are now eligible to receive one free breakfast and one free lunch each school day at no cost. This Act benefits approximately 11,000 students who qualified for reduced-price meals last school year by offering free meal options this year. This school year, the Hawai'i State Department of Education is serving up new breakfast and lunch items that blend locally sourced ingredients with global flavors. The fresh dishes balance student favorites with innovative ideas inspired by food trends and student feedback. These efforts align with the Department's farm-to-school initiative and Act 175, which support student health while strengthening local agriculture. Students and families can check their school cafeteria menus for the new menu offerings!

A few are listed below:

- Local 'uala (sweet potato) yogurt bowl made with dragonfruit
- Mini blueberry pancakes
- Local 'ulu (breadfruit) banana bread
- Korean beef bowl made with local ground beef
- Hamburger curry or stew with local 'ulu (breadfruit) and kalo (taro)
- Scratch-made chicken adobo
- Local 'uala mash made from scratch or locally sliced sweet potatoes
- Scratch-made asian-style coleslaw with local cabbage
- Sour raisins (watermelon, blueberry and tropical flavors)

School Year 2025-2026 Meal Prices	
Student Type	Price
Breakfast	
Elementary student (PreK-8)	\$1.10
Secondary student (9-12)	\$1.10
Reduced-price student (PreK-12)	*No Charge
Free student (PreK-12)	No charge
Student Second Meal	*\$3.50
Adult Meal	*\$3.50
Lunch	
Elementary student (PreK-8)	\$2.50
Secondary student (9-12)	\$2.75
Reduced-price student (PreK-12)	*No Charge
Free student (PreK-12)	No charge
Entree	\$2.25
Student Second meal	*\$7.50
Adult Meal	*\$7.50

In community news, a recent proposal before the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has raised serious concerns for Central O'ahu residents. Blue Hawaiian Helicopters has requested an exemption to lower its minimum flight altitude from 1,500 feet to just 700 feet across parts of Hawai'i, including Central O'ahu. While the company claims these routes are "generally unpopulated," more than 85,000 residents live in Mililani, Waikele, Waipahu, Village Park, Royal Kunia, CORP, and Makakilo, communities that would be directly impacted by helicopters flying low over homes and schools. Although the company cites safety as its justification, residents and community leaders have voiced concerns about increased noise, safety risks, and the lack of public discussion. Thank you to Mililani Neighborhood Board No. 25, Chair Danielle Bass, who brought this issue to the attention of the legislature and community leaders, which allowed us to submit testimony in opposition to the FAA that reflected the strong concerns of the community.

Mahalo,

Michelle



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Kaua'i Island WAM Site Visit

On August 13th the Senate Committee on Ways and Means received updates from the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission (HSPCSC) on the perpetuation of Olelo Ni'ihau, also known as the Ni'ihau dialect, at Ke Kula Ni'ihau O Kekaha, a Pre-K-12 charter school in Kekaha. Ke Kula Ni'ihau O Kekaha and the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission are leading the way in preserving Olelo Ni'ihau, recognizing the importance of keeping this vital dialect accessible. It is our kuleana to provide the resources needed to keep this important dialect alive for our keiki and future generations.



Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee with students from Ke Kula Ni'ihau O Kekaha Charter School.

Wahiawā Center for Workforce Excellence Groundbreaking

On July 28th, I joined Governor Josh Green, Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, HIDOE Superintendent Keith Hayashi, UH President Wendy Hensel, State Librarian Stacey Aldrich, and other leaders to break ground for the Wahiawā Center for Workforce Excellence. This building will be a visionary 43,000-square-foot facility that will bring together educational services, workforce development and community spaces under one roof. This new hub will include:

- The Wahiawā Public Library, offering modern meeting rooms and flexible learning spaces on the ground floor.
- HIDOE administrative offices to support 20 schools across the Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua Complex with centralized services and training areas.
- UH Community College satellite classrooms on the third floor, including computer labs and a sensory lab designed to integrate with other UH facilities.

Construction begins now and is scheduled to conclude in about two years. It will also include a multi-level parking structure. I look forward to seeing this community resource take shape and benefit generations of learners!



[L-R] Superintendent Hayashi, UH President Hensel, Governor Green, Senator Dela Cruz, me, and State Librarian Aldrich



Me and Senator Dela Cruz

Aloha Straub Benioff Medical Center – Mililani Clinic & Urgent Care

On August 21st, I attended the blessing and grand opening of the newly expanded Straub Benioff Medical Center Mililani Clinic & Urgent Care. This state-of-the-art facility will provide Central O'ahu families with greater access to urgent and specialized care, reducing travel times and strengthening our community's health system. The expansion reflects a meaningful investment in the well-being of our kūpuna, keiki, and local families. It was inspiring to see the dedication of Straub Benioff's leadership, staff, and partners who made this event possible. I extend my warmest congratulations to Straub Benioff Medical Center for their continued commitment to serving the people of Hawai'i!



At the grand opening of the newly expanded center with Senators, Representatives and Straub staff

HIDOE Educational Leadership Institute 2025

The Hawai'i Department of Education's Educational Leadership Institute was held on July 24th at the Hawai'i Convention Center. It was a very insightful and inspiring experience. I enjoyed hearing from keynote speaker Shalinee Sharma, CEO and co-founder of Zearn, a leading nonprofit educational organization whose math platform supports 1 in 4 elementary students and over 1 million middle school students nationwide. The institute also featured a range of interactive workshops focused on best practices across state offices and schools. It was an opportunity to connect with other fellow leaders and educators who support and enrich our states students success!



[L-R]: With Deputy Superintendent Heidi Armstrong, and Shalinee Sharma



Photo Courtesy of DOE

Superintendent Keith Hayashi dressed up for ELI 2025 in a fun outfit with a boombox!



[L-R]: Dean Casupang, HIBOE member Elynne Chung, myself, HIBOE Chair Roy Takumi, and Superintendent Keith Hayashi

Ho'ākea Program at Educational Leadership Institute with Mark Ellis



Mark Ellis and myself at this year's 2025 ELI

Born and raised in Nu'uuanu, O'ahu, Mark Ellis has spent almost 20 years dedicating his life to the art and legacy of Polynesian voyaging. Since he first set his sails in 2007 on a wa'a kaulua, he has served the Polynesian Voyaging Society in many capacities from dry dock support to crew member, apprentice navigator, and now captain!

Mark continues to inspire the future generations as the Director of Voyaging Experiences at the Polynesian Cultural Center. Mahalo Mark for your dedication to leadership and passion in the spirit of voyaging.

I was honored to join DOE and the Polynesian Voyaging Society at this year's ELI 2025 to express my heartfelt gratitude for their continued leadership in establishing and stewardship of the Ho'ākea program. Ho'ākea offers students transformative learning experiences that seamlessly blend culture, community, and education. By weaving traditional knowledge into modern curriculum, the program empowers our keiki to deepen their sense of identity and kuleana, while equipping them to lead with compassion and courage. I was able to secure \$8 million in state funding over the next two years to ensure the continued growth and impact of the program. It is a movement to cultivate the navigator mindset in young students. Seeing our educators in action teaching with heart, leading with vision, and inspiring the next generation was truly powerful.



IBEW Local 1186 85th Anniversary

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 1186 celebrated its 85th anniversary on August 2nd. Founded in 1940 with just 19 civil service electricians at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, the union quickly grew to 295 members by 1941. Today, it has become a thriving organization of more than 3,500 members who power Hawai'i's communities every day, carrying forward its mission and serving as a powerful voice for Hawai'i's workforce.

Beyond the job site, IBEW Local 1186 has made a lasting impact through community service: organizing blood drives, school supply and food drives, and awarding \$1,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors. The union continues to strengthen its ties to local families through initiatives like Adopt-a-Highway, holiday giving programs, and annual member picnics across the islands. Congratulations to the Local 1186 'ohana on this incredible milestone, and mahalo for your decades of service, leadership, and aloha.



Elected officials, union leaders and department heads celebrating!



[L-R]: Senator Fevella, myself, Business Manager Financial Secretary Damien Kim, and Senator Dela Cruz

HIDOE Revitalizes Public School Menus to Support Local Farms

As Chair of the Senate Education Committee, I am proud to highlight an important step forward in how the Hawai'i State Department of Education is revitalizing school lunch menus to feature more locally grown and produced foods. The fresh dishes balance student favorites with innovative ideas inspired by food trends and student feedback. With support from legislative funding, through Act 137, sourcing 30% of school food locally by 2030 and 50% by 2050. HIDOE partnered with Kapi'olani Community College's Culinary Institute of the Pacific and the world-renowned Culinary Institute of America to create student-informed menus that reflect the unique tastes of Hawai'i. This initiative not only provides healthier meals for our students, but also strengthens Hawai'i's local farming economy. Students and families can check their school cafeteria menus for the new menu offerings. A few new menu items include local 'uala (sweet potato) yogurt bowl made with dragon fruit, local 'ulu (breadfruit) banana bread, scratch-made chicken adobo, scratch-made Asian-style coleslaw with local cabbage, hamburger curry or stew with local 'ulu (breadfruit) and kalo (taro), and more!



Pictures courtesy of DOE. New meals featured on the 2025-2026 school year menu!

Mililani HS Girls Softball O'ahu Interscholastic Association Division I Champions

On September 3rd, the Honolulu City Council honored the Mililani High School Girls Softball Team for their incredible season as the 2025 O'ahu Interscholastic Association Division I Champions! The Lady Trojans captured the title with a 10-0 victory over Moanalua High School in six innings at McKinley High School. This marks their second consecutive OIA Division I championship and the 13th overall in the program's history. It was a special honor to stand with the Lady Trojans and Coach Rose Antonio. As a manager and coach with the Mililani/Waipio Bobby Sox League, I coached hundreds of girls, including Coach Rose and her twin sister Joyce.

The accomplishments of the Mililani Lady Trojans show how far women's athletics have come thanks to the work of Patsy Mink, who co-authored Title IX which ensured equal opportunities in education and sports. Because of her legacy, generations of young women have been able to compete at high levels, earn scholarships, and pursue athletics on the same stage as men. That is why it was so meaningful for us to celebrate the Lady Trojans' success by taking a photo in front of Patsy Mink's statue, honoring the foundation she built for women in sports!



MHS Lady Trojans Softball Team and Coach Rose Antonio who championed Title IX.



Myself, Councilmember Val Okimoto, Coach Rose Antonio, Athletic Director Joy Matsukawa and the Mililani Girls Softball team at Honolulu Hale.

Waikele Elementary School's 8th Annual Career & College Fair

On September 10th, I was invited to attend Waikele Elementary School's 8th Annual Career & College Fair. All 539 students, from Pre-K through sixth grade were actively engaging with career and college professionals to explore the many opportunities available to them. This wonderful annual event directly supports Waikele's Academy Pathway Program, the first of its kind at an elementary school in Hawai'i, and is designed to prepare students as they transition to Waipahu Intermediate and High School. Through this program, students are introduced to six career pathways: Arts and Communication, Business, Health Services, Industrial and Engineering Technology, Natural Resources, and Public and Human Services. Mahalo to Principal Oshio and Vice Principal Kagamida, teachers, staff, and community partners who made this event possible, and for their continued commitment to supporting the future success of our keiki!



[L-R] Principal Oshio, me, and Vice Principal Kagamida

I had a great time exploring the booths and having conversations with students and local professionals!

Congratulations to Superintendent Hayashi, 2025 Most Admired Leader

Ho'omaika'i to Superintendent Keith Hayashi on being recognized as one of Pacific Business News' Hawai'i's Most Admired Leaders of 2025! On September 18th, I was honored to attend the celebration recognizing 15 outstanding individuals who embody leadership, service, and excellence in our community. Congratulations to all of Hawai'i's Most Admired Leaders on this well-deserved recognition!



Celebrating with the HDOE team!



Me and Superintendent Hayashi

PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT: Upcoming Improvements to Kamehameha Highway

I am pleased to share that the Department of Transportation is moving forward with a much-needed resurfacing, repaving, and rehabilitation project along Kamehameha Highway, from Waipahu Street to Ka Uka Boulevard. This project, currently in the design phase and anticipated to go out to bid in February 2026, will provide significant improvements to one of our community's most heavily used roadways. I was able to support the additional funding for this project through House Bill 300, Relating to the State Budget, to ensure that we continue investing in safer and more reliable infrastructure. I would like to extend a special mahalo to Senate WAM Chair Senator Dela Cruz and my House counterpart, Representative Chun, for their partnership in helping to secure this critical funding. I am delighted that we were able to move this long-awaited project forward. This investment is about improving safety, easing daily frustrations for drivers and commuters, and addressing the needs of our residents. I look forward to its completion and the positive impact it will bring to our community!



Celebrating Ann Freed, Mililani-Waipio-Melemanu Neighborhood Board No.25 Member

Ann Freed served nearly three decades in the U.S. Army, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and earning the Legion of Merit for her outstanding contributions. After her military career, she became a tireless advocate for women's rights, social justice, and community empowerment, co-founding the Hawai'i Women's Coalition and mentoring the next generation of leaders. Beyond advocacy, Ann is also an accomplished singer, a dedicated neighborhood board member, and a true champion for equity and opportunity. On her 80th birthday, we celebrate her remarkable achievements and the inspiration she continues to bring through her service, mentorship, and community engagement. Hau'oli Lā Hānau, Ann!

