



SENATE DISTRICT 18 COMMUNITY REPORT

FEBRUARY 2023 – *Serving Mililani Town, Koa Ridge, Waipi'o Gentry, Crestview, Waikele, portion of Waipahu, Village Park & Royal Kunia*

Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

It has been nearly two months into session, and there are several bills where important changes have been made to improve the lives of our residents. With the progress of bills changing quickly in recent weeks, I encourage you to follow my Senate Facebook Page, the Hawai'i Senate Democrats page, as well as the Hawai'i State Legislature Website for additional updates and resources that I hope you may find helpful. Here are some of the bills that have passed second reading in their respective committees and have been referred to the Ways and Means committee as we approach the second half of the 2023 session:

SB154: RELATING TO EDUCATION

After the challenges of the pandemic, we realized more than ever the importance of ensuring our keiki are nurtured and nourished. This bill requires the Department of Education to develop and implement a School Meal Subsidy Program to provide school lunch subsidies to children whose families do not otherwise qualify for free lunch under the federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program. These meals proved to be an invaluable necessity for many children and families throughout the pandemic, and we would like to see these meals continue to provide for our keiki.

SB1023: RELATING TO EARLY LEARNING

At the start of this legislative session, Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke unveiled the Ready Keiki initiative, her multi-faceted plan to expand high-quality child care and preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds. The plan identifies sites for additional classrooms, increases provider subsidies to expand access to children from lower-income households and envisions educational partnerships to train new preschool teachers and assistants. This bill appropriates money for the Preschool Open Doors Program and Executive Office on Early Learning to expand access to preschool.

SB941 SD1: RELATING TO THE SCHOOL FACILITIES AUTHORITY

Teacher housing is a key strategy for teacher recruitment and retention of educators. I introduced this bill to authorize the School Facilities Authority to partner with public and private agencies to develop teacher and educator housing and to provide the authority with powers necessary to expedite these projects to start on the following campuses: Mililani high school, Nānākuli high school, and Waipahu high school.

SB140 SD1: RELATING TO THE HOUSING SHORTAGE

One of the most important issues plaguing local residents here in Hawai'i is the current housing crisis. This bill requires the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to analyze existing and projected housing needs and identify adequate sites for sufficient housing to meet demands for all income levels. As we continue to address this crisis and seek solutions for our community, we will continue providing updates on the status of this bill.

SB1191 SD1: RELATING TO TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

In addition to addressing the housing crisis and the issue of affordable housing in Hawai'i, this bill appropriates funds for statewide planning and coordination for transit-oriented development projects identified in the state strategic plan.

Ours is a community founded upon the values of 'ohana and aloha, and I remain committed to representing the constituents of Senate District 18 with integrity. As we head into the second half of the Legislative Session, I send my sincere mahalo to each and every one of you for the trust you have bestowed upon me as your Senator and will continue to work to earn the trust and privilege of this position.



SENATE VICE PRESIDENT

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Committee on Education

Vice Chair:
Committee on
Higher Education

Member:
Committee on
Ways and Means

Member:
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MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATION BY BRUCE VOSS

One of the recent highlights of the month was the poignant Moment of Contemplation speech delivered on the senate floor by the Board of Education chair, Bruce Voss. A dedicated champion of our educators and students, Bruce is a remarkable leader who advocates for our education industry. He opened the beginning of session by sharing reflections of hope in a post-pandemic world, as education works through academic setbacks along with social and emotional difficulties recovering from the pandemic. He shared reflections on phase one of the BOE's strategic education plan for public education in Hawai'i. It was deeply moving and inspiring, so much so that I felt it worth sharing as we continue striving to innovate the vision of education for our students. Here is an excerpt from his moving speech:



“This plan represents hope. It contains our core values, which are rooted in the strength of Hawai‘i’s people and places, and builds on the knowledge passed on through ‘ōlelo no‘eau. The plan describes our vision for our public education system—an exemplary one where students are engaged in inspiring, personalized, and cultural responsive education. A plan that fosters creative and critical thinkers who are prepared for college and career success, and community and civic engagement. Now comes the hard part...making the plan a reality for our students, under the guidance of our Superintendent, Keith Hayashi.

To those who are reflexively hyper-critical, or cynical, about our public schools, I remind them: Teaching kids is hard work. So is running a school, and restructuring a school system. To achieve the very ambitious outcomes we are seeking for our public school students over the six-year term of the plan, we are going to need the support of everyone.

This Legislature led the way with its support last year, fully funding the schools budget, increasing pay for teachers, increasing funding for school repair and maintenance, and funding construction of pre-K classrooms, which are critical to our goal of having all public school students read on grade level by the third grade. I want to thank each and every one of you for that support.

With that kind of continued support, commitment and passion, here in this chamber and throughout the State, we can have public schools that we are all proud of, that are the first choice for all our families. And in so doing, we can—and we will—take this plan beyond just hope, change both the perception and the reality of public schools in Hawai‘i, and give our students the education they deserve.”

—Dr. Bruce Voss, Board of Education Chairperson

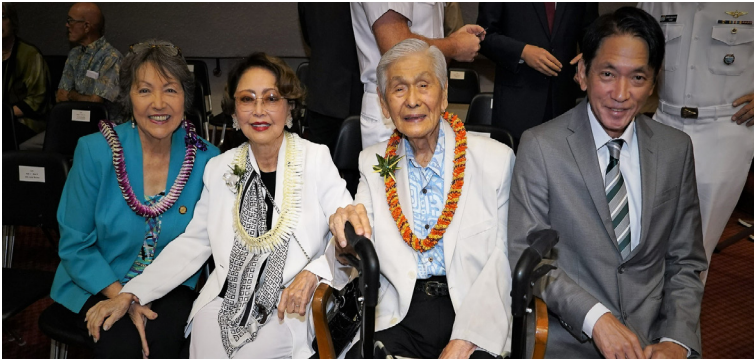


HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD MEETING

This month I met with members of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to discuss some of the important education efforts affecting our teachers, including teacher licensing, recruitment and mental health resources. I am truly grateful for our educators and am eager to provide greater support for their success. (L-R: Dawn Raymond, Kristi Miyame, myself, Executive Director Felicia Villalobos, Chair Branden Kawazoe and Raymond Rodriguez)

2023 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Legislators, former governors, state and city and county officials, and community members gathered to welcome Governor Green and Lieutenant Governor Luke for the 2023 State of the State address. It was a joyous occasion to celebrate the new administration as they outlined their goals and vision. It filled us with hope and promise for the State's bright future ahead to be able to gather for the occasion once again and to share in our collective optimism for the future of our keiki and community here in Hawai'i.



L-R: Sharing a warm welcome with former Governor George Ariyoshi First Lady Jean Ariyoshi, and their son Ryozo; Councilmember Cordeiro, Senator San Buenaventura, myself, Senator Kim, Representative Bellati, Senator Inouye and Senator Fukunaga sharing a moment of celebration with Lieutenant Governor Luke; Office of Hawaiian Affairs Chair Hulu Lindsey and I visiting with Lieutenant Governor Luke; greeting HPD Chief of Police Arthur Logan after the ceremony; all smiles catching up with former First Lady Jean Ariyoshi after the festivities.



WAIPAHU HIGH 2023 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

CONGRATULATIONS to the 10 graduating seniors from Waipahu High School who are among the 29 public school candidates in the 2023 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program! Scholars are selected on the basis of superior academic achievements, leadership qualities, strong character and involvement in community and school activities. These students represent Waipahu with so much pride and I am thrilled to recognize them for their deserving achievements: **Rovialyn Arciaga, Harold Jay Cacal, Audrey Dagdagan, Ciara Mae Francisco, Mya Habon-Godding, Danica Regine Ilaga, Janine Lei Lopez, Sean Michael Valencia Monte, Hunter Von Tungeln, and Maverick Yasuda!**

SECONDARY STUDENT CONFERENCE



I was so happy to welcome students and staff to the Capitol for the opening of the Secondary Student Conference. This annual conference selects a handful of students from each public high school to discuss current youth issues and ideas for possible change using current legislation. The conference focuses on exposing delegates to the legislative process and gives them an opportunity to talk about issues which matter most to DOE students, and promote positive change within their schools and community. It's important to educate and equip students with knowledge to become civically minded and engaged, well-rounded individuals. I am so grateful to these students, teachers and staff for their commitment to education, their participation in the conference, and for their exuberant visit! Thank you to Mililani High School's Janet Ward and Danielle Castro for organizing this activity each year at the State Capitol.



READY KEIKI INITIATIVE

I was proud to stand alongside legislators, educational leaders and community members as Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke announced the Ready Keiki initiative to expand early learning opportunities for our keiki. As the Education Chair, it is a priority to ensure access to early childhood education for our future generation. Many local families leave Hawai'i due to the high cost of living, where childcare can represent 20-25% of a family's income. Expanded access to preschool will also allow for much-needed spaces for training our educators and providing spaces for keiki to jump start their education.

Expanding the availability of pre-K to our children is an important first step to ensure later academic and career success, and that pre-kindergarten expansion will be an excellent first example of how the School Facilities Authority and Department of Education can work together to create facilities for our keiki. This plan is an important step in achieving the ambitious goal set by the Legislature in 2020, and I congratulate all of the Ready Keiki partners for coming together for the good of our young learners. It all starts at one of our first pilot sites here at Lincoln Elementary School, and we look forward to further expanding educational spaces in our community.



MILILANI HIGH SCHOOL EARNS TOP STATE HONORS

CONGRATULATIONS to **Principal Fred Murphy**, the dedicated faculty and staff of Mililani High School, who recently took top honors as the highest ranking Hawai'i public school in the state! Placing #1 on the NICHE ranking of 2023 Hawai'i DOE and charter schools. Based on statistics and opinions from students and parents, schools were evaluated on factors like academic proficiency, culture and safety, student-teacher ratio, reviews and more. Mililani High School ranked #1 as the Best Public High School in Hawai'i, #1 Best College Prep Public High School in Hawai'i, and #4 Best High School for Athletes of Hawai'i. I am so incredibly proud of the school community and our extraordinary

