

COMMUNITY REPORT

SENATE DISTRICT 18 | MARCH 2025

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



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Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

We are halfway through the legislative session, and I am very happy to share the latest updates and highlights from our community. We continue to focus on key priorities that will impact our families, schools, and businesses. Education remains at the forefront of our work, as we advocate for funding and policies that strengthen our public schools and support our dedicated teachers. Our students deserve the best opportunities to succeed, and I am committed to ensuring that our education system remains strong and well-resourced.

The highlight of March is the Education Week celebration at the Capitol. This annual event, traditionally held during the Department of Education's Spring Break, is co-sponsored by myself and Representative Justin Woodson. The event is dedicated to recognizing the exceptional educators, students, administrators, and staff who make a positive impact on our public education system. It also serves as a time of appreciation and reflection on the strides we've made in supporting our schools. Each day of Education Week, outstanding individuals are honored on the Senate and House floors, including the State Teacher of the Year, National Blue Ribbon Schools, and Principals and Assistant Principals of the Year. Their dedication and excellence are what drive us to continue advocating for stronger policies, better resources, and equitable opportunities for all students in Hawai'i. In addition to these well-deserved recognitions, Education Week featured interactive events such as the Friends of the Library Book Fair, an educational policy booth by the Hawai'i State Teachers Association, and the Hawai'i Public Education Student Showcase. These gatherings provided an invaluable opportunity for educators, students, and the community to engage in meaningful discussions about the future of education in our state.

March has also been an eventful month; highlighting the importance of community safety and consumer protection during the National Consumer Protection Week Fair at the Capitol. The week provided an opportunity for learning how important it is to equip our residents with the tools they need to make informed decisions and protect their rights.

I also was privileged to attend the HHSAA and Seattle Seahawks' free girls flag football camp, and I couldn't be more excited for the opportunities this brings to young athletes across our state. With roughly 300 girls statewide participating in this two-day event, it's clear that there is incredible enthusiasm for the inaugural HHSAA girls' flag football season! As an athlete myself growing up, I know firsthand the value of sports in building confidence, leadership, and lifelong friendships. These camps are a fantastic way for high school girls to sharpen their skills, learn the game, and be part of something historic.

Mahalo for giving me the opportunity to serve Mililani and Waipahu and I look forward to continuing to advocate for my community and for education this legislative session.



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HHSAA and Seattle Seahawks' Free Girls' Flag Football Camp

The Hawaii High School Athletic Association (HHSAA), in collaboration with the **NFL's Seattle Seahawks**, hosted a series of free girls flag football camps in preparation for the inaugural HHSAA girls' flag football season. This was a key step in preparing for Hawai'i's first-ever high school girls' flag football season. Nearly 300 girls from across the state took the field with excitement and determination-- It was truly inspiring to watch.

I understand firsthand how sports can shape confidence, leadership, and resilience, and I'm so grateful to see opportunities like this opening up for young women in Hawai'i. Girls now have access to a sport that not only builds athletic skills but also fosters teamwork and empowerment. A special mahalo to former **Seattle Seahawks All-Pro Michael Bennett** for joining the camp to coach these young athletes. His presence and guidance were a reminder of what is possible when we invest in our student-athletes.

With Hawai'i becoming the 12th state to officially sanction girls' flag football, we are witnessing history in the making. These young women are trailblazers, paving the way for future generations of female athletes. This is just the beginning for girls' flag football in Hawai'i. The season kicked off the week of February 24, leading up to the state tournament on April 26.



[L-R]: Seahawks mascot, Superintendent Hayashi, HHSAA Executive Director Christopher Chun, former Seattle Seahawks All-Pro Michael Bennett, and Seattle Seahawks Vice President of Community Engagement and Legends Mario Bailey.



Former Seattle Seahawks Bennett led practices for student athletes to learn and practice flag football skills.



Student participants registered at no cost to participate in football camps in preparation for the inaugural HHSAA girls' flag football season.

Honoring Women's Leadership during International Women's Month



Women legislators pose for a photo before Senate floor session.

During International Women's Month at the state legislature, we honor the trailblazing women who have shaped Hawai'i's history and continue to lead us forward. From the legacy of the late Congresswoman Patsy Mink, champion of Title IX, to the many women leaders who serve our communities today, we celebrate the resilience and contributions of women in every field. As a Co-Convener of the Hawai'i Women's Legislative Caucus, I remain committed to advancing policies that uplift women, families, and future generations.

2025 EDUCATION WEEK

Education Week at the State Capitol is one of my favorite annual events. As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I am honored to co-sponsor this special week to celebrate the wonderful work of our educators, students, and school staff. From March 17 to 21, we recognized outstanding individuals who exemplify dedication, leadership, and a deep commitment to student success. From the State Teacher of the Year to National Blue Ribbon Schools, and from distinguished principals to dedicated school counselors, these honorees represent the very best of our education system.

Beyond the award presentations during our daily Senate and House sessions, Education Week included engaging public events such as the Friends of the Library Book Fair, an informational booth hosted by the Hawai'i State Teacher's Association, and a Hawai'i Public Education Student Showcase. These activities provided an opportunity to highlight the work being done in our schools and to discuss ways we can continue to support our educators and students.



With Kanoelani Elementary [L-R]: Pearl City Complex Area Supt. Richard Fajardo, Principal Neil Blomberg, Vice Principal Lisa Tominaga.



Education Week awardees [L-R]: Koko Head El. Principal Kevin Dias, Kauai District Complex Area Teacher of the Year Leah 'Aiwohi, Senate Youth Delegate Ethan Yang, Prudential Emerging Visionary Genshu Price.



[L-R]: Mililani Middle School (MMS) Principal Shannon Tamashiro, MMS Vice Principal Jeffrey Horstman, HASSA Assistant Principal of the Year.



Learning from Kanoelani El. students at the Public Education Student Showcase. More than 120 students from 36 public and charter schools, representing 14 complex areas, participated in the showcase. Their projects highlighted the dedication and commitment of our educators in preparing students to become successful, engaged members of our community.

Honoring Fellow Governor & UH Champion Michael Unebasami

I had the privilege of recognizing Mike Unebasami on the Senate floor as he prepares for his well-earned retirement. As a fellow Farrington High School graduate, it was especially meaningful for us to honor someone who has dedicated 56 years to serving the University of Hawai'i system—31 of those as Associate Vice President for Administrative Affairs.

The impact of Michael's leadership extends from Leeward Community College to UH Maui College and beyond, helping to shape the institutions that provide opportunities for so many of our students pursuing higher education. Mike was a strong advocate at the Legislature, ensuring that our community colleges had the funding and resources they needed to succeed.



[L-R]: Michael Unebasami and Senate Committee on Higher Education Chair Donna Mercado Kim.



Visiting booths at the 20th NCPW fair.

DCCA Consumer Protection Week Fair

The 20th Annual National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW) Fair was hosted by the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA), to support efforts in educating our community about consumer rights and fraud prevention. With scams and fraudulent activities becoming more sophisticated, it's more important than ever to ensure our community has the knowledge and tools to stay protected. The fair brought together government agencies, consumer advocacy organizations, and community groups, all committed to providing valuable information on recognizing scams, avoiding fraud, and understanding consumer rights.

Talk Story with Adult Friends for Youth Students

I gathered with students from Adult Friends for Youth (AFY) who visited the Capitol. I shared a little about my own journey—growing up in Kalihi and public housing—and how programs like AFY provide essential health and safety support, as well as developmental opportunities for our keiki. Through their programs, AFY empowers students to take charge of their lives and future.

Their stories, their goals, and their hopes for the future were inspiring to hear. These young leaders remind us why we must continue investing in education, mentorship, and community programs that uplift our youth.



Senator Kidani, foreground, listening to AFY students' stories.

Mililani Complex Choral Festival

I attended a very special event at Mililani High School, where our talented students filled the gym with music, harmony, and heart. In the midst of a busy legislative session, it is uplifting to see our keiki showcase their hard work and passion for the arts. This concert featured students from the following Mililani Complex schools: Kipapa Elementary School, Mililani 'Ike Elementary School, Mililani Mauka Elementary School, Mililani Uka Elementary School, Mililani Waena Elementary School, Mililani Middle School, Mililani High School.

A huge mahalo to the dedicated music teachers, parent volunteers, and our incredible young performers for making the night so memorable. Your talent and commitment to arts education is inspiring, and I'm grateful to support such an enriching program in our community.