

# COMMUNITY REPORT

## SENATE DISTRICT 18 | SEPTEMBER 2024

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



Michelle  
**KIDANI**

**Senate Vice  
President**

**Chair**  
Committee on  
Education

**Vice Chair**  
Committee on  
Higher Education

**Member**  
Committee on  
Ways and Means

**Join our monthly  
digital mailing list!**

To subscribe to our monthly digital newsletters, email [senkidani@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:senkidani@capitol.hawaii.gov) with your name, email, and mailing address.

### *Aloha Friends and Neighbors,*

I am thrilled to spotlight an exceptional achievement from one of our local students. Harper Okamoto, a spring 2024 graduate of the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu (UHWO), won Carissa Moore's Moore Aloha Foundation Packaging Design Contest. Harper's vibrant and meaningful design, inspired by the mission of Carissa Moore's foundation and the spirit of aloha, is now featured on Honolulu Cookie Company's Moore Aloha Surfboard Tin! This contest provided students with the chance to showcase their creative talents and gain real-world experience in product development, and Harper's design stood out for its fun, bright representation of these values.

This accomplishment is even more special because Harper completed this project while studying in the Creative Media program at UHWO—a program housed in a state-of-the-art Creative Media Facility made possible through capital improvement project (CIP) funding that I championed. Securing this funding was a top priority for me because I believe that creating modern, well-equipped learning environments is essential for fostering the next generation of creative professionals. The Creative Media Facility has become a hub for innovation and imagination, and Harper's success is a testament to how important it is to invest in our educational infrastructure. Seeing our students thrive from this investment is incredibly rewarding. Congratulations, Harper, on your well-deserved recognition!

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I was honored to join several community events, continuing my priority to support programs that uplift and empower our keiki. I was happy to attend the Waikele Elementary School Career and College Fair, where our Pre-K to 6th-grade students explored a variety of career paths, as well as the East-West Center's Hawai'i Youth Summit, which brought together high school students from across the state to engage in global discussions. These events highlight the importance of equipping our youth with the tools and support they need to thrive.

Looking ahead, I remain committed to supporting our communities at every level. Our Senate Ways and Means Committee recently visited Maui to assess ongoing recovery efforts during a joint site visit. It is clear that investing in both our students and our broader communities is key to ensuring our youth can thrive as future leaders. In this newsletter, you will also find updates on education initiatives, including the Grow Our Own Teachers program, and details about the newly elected members of the Hawai'i State Board of Education and the Charter School Commission. Mahalo for your ongoing support as we continue to provide our students with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.



*Above left: Surfing's first Olympic Gold medalist and 5-time World Surfing Champion Carissa Moore and I in 2021; Above middle: Harper's design on Honolulu Cookie Company's Moore Aloha Surfboard Tin; Above right: at the grand opening of the UHWO Creative Media Facility in 2022.*

**Address**  
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 214

**Phone**  
(808) 586-7100

**Email**  
[senkidani@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:senkidani@capitol.hawaii.gov)

**Website**  
[www.bit.ly/senkidani](http://www.bit.ly/senkidani)



## East-West Center Hawai'i Youth Summit

I spent a wonderful afternoon at the East-West Center (EWC) for the 2nd Annual Hawai'i Youth Summit. This event brought together over 90 high school students from across our state, providing a fantastic opportunity for them to engage with peers and leaders from around the world. The Summit's theme, "Inspiring Global Citizenship," underscores the importance of our youth remaining rooted in their local culture while engaging with global issues, a relevant skill in today's interconnected world.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I firmly believe in promoting this global perspective among our students. Hawai'i holds a unique position as a bridge between the United States and the world, placing our young people in a special role to lead locally and globally. I commend the EWC, President Suzanne Vares-Lum, the Department of Education, and our community partners for their commitment to ensuring our students are a vital part of that connection.

I was inspired after witnessing our students' eagerness to learn and participate. Their discussions with peers and professionals were not only informative but also demonstrated their potential to make significant contributions to our state and beyond. The Summit has provided a platform where students can broaden their horizons, develop leadership abilities, and gain a deeper understanding of global networks.



*Above left (L-R): EWC President Suzanne Vares-Lum and I; Above middle: myself with participants of the Hawai'i Youth Summit and Director and EWC Director and Dean of Professional Development and Education Ann Hartman; Above right: Hawai'i State Board of Education member Dr. Mary Hattori, EWC Dean Hartman, and I with high school teachers and advisors.*

## Senate Joint Committees Visit Maui Sites

This month, I participated in a site visit of Hawaiian Electric Company's (HECO) facilities on Maui, coordinated by the Senate Committees on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism (EET), Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN), and Ways and Means (WAM). Our focus was to understand HECO's ongoing efforts to reduce wildfire risk and strengthen the resilience of their electrical infrastructure.

In the aftermath of the devastating wildfires that have deeply impacted our neighbors on Maui, many of you have shared concerns about wildfire risks in our district. As a member of the WAM Committee, this tour provided my colleagues and me with a comprehensive overview of the proactive steps HECO is taking to address these environmental challenges on Maui and across the state. With wildfires becoming an increasing concern, the insights from this visit underscored the urgent need to fortify our electrical grid against future risks. The knowledge we gained will be instrumental in shaping the Senate's legislative priorities, as we remain committed to enhancing the safety and resilience of Hawai'i's energy infrastructure to protect our communities and support ongoing recovery efforts.



*Above left (L-R): Hawaiian Electric Senior Vice President of Planning and Technology Colton Ching, Sen. Fevella, and I; Above right: members of the Senate Committees on Ways and Means; Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism; and Commerce and Consumer Protection with leadership and staff of Hawaiian Electric and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local Union 1260.*



# Waikele Elementary School Career and College Fair

Waikele Elementary School held its 7th Annual Career & College Fair, which was an incredible event for our students! The Fair was designed to inspire our keiki to dream big and explore a wide range of career paths. From meeting professionals in healthcare and engineering to interacting with experts in business, public safety, and hospitality, the students had a great time exploring their potential future careers.

In a broader effort to align early education with workforce opportunities, Waikele Elementary School aligned its curriculum with Waipahu High School's Academy Pathways, giving students an early start in thinking about their futures. It was awesome to see students enthusiastic and curious about different professions, highlighting the value of exposing them to these possibilities at a young age.

I am proud to support efforts such as Waikele Elementary's Career & College Fair, which are crucial in setting our students on the right path for their futures. These events introduce our students to the professional world at an early age and allow them to engage with experts from various fields, helping them understand what different careers involve. This early exposure broadens their horizons, sparks ambition, and fuels the curiosity needed for both academic and personal growth.



Above (L-R), Waikele Community Association's (WCA) Community Safety Director Duane Samson, Principal Oshio, and I with a WCA patrol bike.



Above left (L-R): Principal Oshio and I; above right (L-R): Honolulu Zoo staff showcasing model of elephant tooth to myself and Waikele Student Ambassador Mariah.



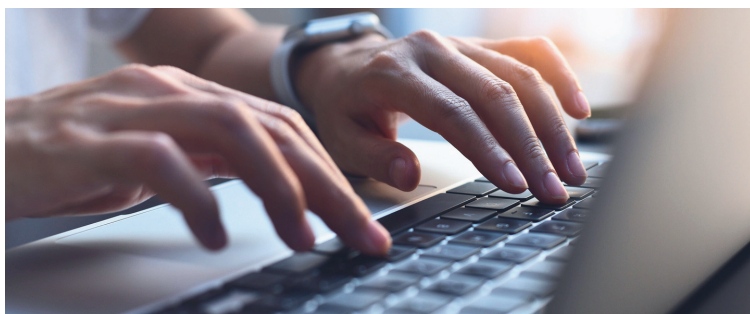
Above left: U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent Maresca and her agricultural inspection dog; above right (L-R): Waipahu High School Natural Resources teacher Sherry Tenn, myself and the talented students of WHS' Academy of Natural Resources.



## Unlock Digital Literacy Skills: Join Free Classes at Hawai'i Public Libraries!

The Hawai'i State Public Library System is offering **FREE** basic computer classes at libraries throughout the state. The classes are designed to help anyone in our community feel more confident using technology. If you or someone you know needs computer assistance, our Mililani Public Library is hosting classes in October. Topics include computer basics, internet fundamentals, how to set up and use your own email address, and online safety tips. No computer? No problem! There is no fee to participate, and you can choose classes that best fit your needs.

Mahalo nui to the Hawai'i State Public Library System for providing access to resources that community members can gain digital literacy skills. I encourage everyone to build their digital confidence and take advantage of the resources available at our local libraries. By joining these classes, you can ensure you have the tools needed to thrive in today's connected world. Visit <https://mapunawai.com/hspls-classes/> for more information.



### SAVE THE DATE



- WHAT:** Free Digital Literacy Classes
- WHERE:** Mililani Public Library
- WHEN:** October 3rd, 10th, 17th, & 24th at 9:30 AM
- REGISTER:** <https://mapunawai.com/mililani-registration/>



# Mililani High School Homecoming Parade

Participating in Mililani High School's (MHS) Homecoming parade was truly memorable! The energy along the parade route was electric. Students, families, and community members came together to honor this beloved tradition. Seeing the vibrant spirit and unwavering support from the community during the parade is always inspiring.



Above: Myself and Sen. Dela Cruz with MHS Homecoming Court;  
 Above, right: Waving aloha to our neighbors with Sen. Dela Cruz and Corvette Club of Hawai'i member William Youtsey;  
 Below, right: Sen. Dela Cruz and I with Mililani High School's Trojan mascot.



## “Grow Our Own” Teachers Initiative

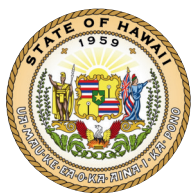
I'm excited to share that the Grow Our Own Teachers Initiative, which I have proudly supported, is now accepting applications for its eighth cohort. This program offers valuable scholarships to aspiring local educators through the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's College of Education (COE). If you'd like to make a lasting impact in Hawai'i's classrooms, **apply now before the October 1 deadline** at <https://coe.hawaii.edu/goo/>.



Photo Credit: UH Mānoa COE

## Board of Education and Charter School Commission Newly Elected Officers

In my role overseeing educational matters in the Senate, I collaborate with various stakeholders to ensure our keiki receive high-quality education. I am delighted to share the news about newly elected officers, committee leadership, and committee members of the Hawai'i State Board of Education and the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission.



### Hawai'i State Board of Education

Board Chair: Roy M. Takumi  
 Board Vice Chair: Bill Arakaki

### Student Achievement Committee

Chair: Bill Arakaki Vice Chair: Kahele Dukelow  
 Members: Kaimana Barcarse, Elynn Chung, Ken Kuraya

### Finance and Instructure Committee

Chair: Ken Kuraya Vice Chair: Elynn Chung  
 Members: Kahele Dukelow, Mary Hattori, Wesley Lo

### Human Resources Committee

Chair: Wesley Lo Vice Chair: Kaimana Barcarse  
 Members: Elynn Chung, Mary Hattori, Makana McClellan



### Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission

Commission Chair: Makalapua Alencastre  
 Commission Vice Chair: Alex Harris

### Administration and Operations Committee

Chair: Carl Takamura Vice Chair: Matthew Kodama  
 Members: Brandon Bunag, Donna Camvel, Lehua Veincent

### Applications Committee

Chair: Cathy K. Ikeda Vice Chair: Alex Harris  
 Members: Donna Camvel, Brandon K. Bunag, Kama Hopkins, Matthew Kodama

### Performance and Accountability Committee

Chair: Lehua Veincent Vice Chair: Kama Hopkins  
 Members: Makalapua Alencastre, Alex Harris, Cathy Ikeda, Carl Takamura