



LATE

1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: www.hsta.org

Corey Rosenlee  
President

Justin Hughey  
Vice President

Amy Perruso  
Secretary-Treasurer

Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION

RE: SB 2624 - RELATING TO TAXATION

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2016

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 2624**, relating to taxation. If passed, this bill will allow teachers to deduct a state income tax credit for classroom expenses paid by a teacher during a taxable year. In short, this will offset the cost of supplies purchased by teachers using personal funds, expenses that are beyond what is allocated in academic and financial plans.

With the nation's lowest cost of living adjusted salaries, increased healthcare costs, and the elimination of \$1,690 in special education supply funds, teachers have to dig deep into their pockets to prepare their lessons. In the case of classroom supplies, it's true that teachers "do it for the kids," purchasing materials out of their own paychecks. Waiting for departmental or purchase order approval would often disrupt planned curricula and, in turn, student learning. Teachers won't abide that.

In the past, HSTA conducted a survey asking teachers how much they were spending on additional supplies. A jarring 47 percent of teachers said that they were spending between \$250 and \$500 per year on materials, with many spending \$1,000 or more. That's \$250 to \$1,000 that would be spent on family needs, food, bills, recreation, and other personal expenses in a fully-funded school system.

Jennifer Evans, a first year teacher at Moanalua Elementary, like many new teachers walked into an empty room at the beginning of the year. She spent close to \$2000 to setup her classroom out of her own pocket, and she is not done yet. Buying books, containers, manipulatives, binders, and has gone of her way to buy special

seats in order to meet students' needs. All of this has come out of her own pocket, and causing her to defer student loans and having to live with her parents.

Teachers should be repaid for personally purchasing school supplies. Accordingly, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

LATE



46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Executive Director

---

## TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 2624, RELATING TO TAXATION

**Senate Committee on Education**  
**Hon. Michelle N. Kidani, Chair**  
**Hon. Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair**

**Friday, February 5, 2015, 1:25 PM**  
**State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing IMU Alliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that boasts over 350 members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony **in strong support** of Senate Bill 2624, relating to taxation.

In 2013, the National School Supply and Equipment Association released a report stating that public school teachers annually spend \$1.6 billion of their discretionary income on supplementary school supplies and instructional materials. On average, teachers surveyed spent a total of \$268 on school supplies in the 2012-2013 school year, \$491 on instructional materials, and \$186 on miscellaneous items, for an average total of \$945 on classroom materials not subsidized by federal or state education departments. Moreover, NSSEA attributes the drop not to increased classroom funding, but the lingering impact of the recent recession upon educators' discretionary income levels.

The trend is, if anything, worse in Hawaii, which has consistently ranked at the bottom in national cost-of-living studies and was recently ranked second-worst in a Center for Budget and Policy Priorities ranking of per-pupil spending cuts, with Hawaii cutting \$1,175 in per-pupil spending between FY 2008 and FY 2012, adjusted for inflation. Similarly, local cities have the highest ACCRA values in the country, typically hovering between 160 and 165, leading to our state being ranked last, year after year, in teacher salaries adjusted for cost-of-living. Today, the average Hawai'i teacher makes a COL-adjusted median income of \$32,312 per year, according to the National Center for Policy Analysis. Pay cuts, rising health care costs, adjusted insurance co-pays, and the loss of the state's \$1,690-per-special-education-teacher classroom supply fund have all aggravated the financial burden borne by teachers' pocketbooks. In a recent survey conducted by HSTA, 47 percent of respondents cited personal expenditures between \$250 and \$500 each year on classroom supplies, with many claiming expenditures in excess of \$1,000. Not

surprisingly, these same teachers have called upon HSTA—and lawmakers—to take action to lighten their financial load.

In the past, opponents of this bill have argued that a tax credit for teachers amounts to a *de facto* pay increase for a selected class of citizens, one that would not rectify the structural barriers hindering the DOE's appropriation of funds for supplies. We agree with our opponents that it should not take months for funding requests to be approved and facilitated. At the same time, though, we understand that structural inefficiencies result, in part, from a lack of adequate funding. Mandatory budget cuts have crippled the DOE, in recent years, leading to reconsideration of whether or not to continue successful learning programs. Unfortunately, when budget cuts pose an existential threat to successful learning centers and categorical programming, the DOE's priorities shift from classroom support to programmatic savings. Put simply, in times of economic austerity, the DOE must spend more time accounting for basic, overarching programmatic needs, crowding out concerns about the efficient allocation of funds for individual teachers.

Additionally, it must be said that the “pay increase” contention cuts both ways. Granted, tax credits do lessen the individual tax burden of educators. Ensuring that educators have more money in their pocketbooks, however, effectively increases their purchasing power. Therefore, providing a tax credit for teachers incentivizes the teaching profession at a time when our state's high cost-of-living and low adjusted-average income compel many would-be teachers to choose more highly compensated professions or, even worse, leave the state altogether—today, approximately 50 percent of teachers leave our state's classrooms every five years, giving Hawaii the distinction of having the highest turnover rate in the nation. If policymakers are truly interested in enhancing the DOE's ability to recruit highly effective teachers into our schools, providing fiscal incentives that offset cost-of-living problems is a worthy path to take, whose long-term benefits are extremely likely to outweigh its immediate costs.

Again, we urge your committee to increase state educators' purchasing power by instituting tax credits for supplies, computer equipment, and supplementary materials, which will assist in the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers who might otherwise leave the profession, or even the state, because of financial hurdles. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify **in strong support** of this bill.

Sincerely,  
Kris Coffield  
*Executive Director*  
IMUAlliance

LATE

**From:** [Malia Aguilar](#)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony in support of SB2624  
**Date:** Friday, February 05, 2016 12:00:36 PM

---

Testimony for Committee on Education

Friday, February 5, 2016

1:25pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Tearney Malia Aguilar. This is my third year as a public school teacher in Hawaii. I teach math at Ewa Makai Middle school.

I am writing testimony to urge you to support SB2624.

NEA stated it best recently when explaining why tax credits are needed for teachers.

"Educators often reach into their own pockets to purchase classroom supplies because they want to make sure students have what they need to succeed. Studies show that educators are spending more of their own funds each year to supply their classrooms and purchase essential items such as pencils, glue, scissors, and facial tissues. According to NEA's most recent survey, 97 percent of educators surveyed indicated that, in 2006, they had spent some of their own money to meet the needs of their students. These educators spent an average of \$477 a year out of their own pockets to purchase classroom supplies such as books, pencils, paper, and art supplies.

According to a 2010 report by Office Max, seven in ten teachers report their schools are not able to provide them with all the necessary tools to effectively teach their students, and 79% of educators say their classrooms are in need of more items that they currently lack such as essential classroom supplies, paper products, and arts and crafts supplies. The majority (82%) of teachers think it is their responsibility to ensure students have the best learning experience possible – no matter the price tag – spending their own money on supplies for their students each year. Everyday classroom supplies such as pencils and pens (78%), prizes and incentives (72%), and arts and crafts supplies (72%) top the list of purchases teachers make using their own cash.

(<http://www.nea.org/home/52154.htm>)

Many educators are finding the need to reach into their own pocket has increased in these difficult economic times, as funding cuts lead to shortages in essential supplies and more students come to school without basic learning tools. A large majority of educators also spend an average of \$15 a month out of their own pockets to feed students." (*Status of the American Public School Teacher 2005–2006*, March 2010.).

I hope we can count on you for your support for these tax credits for teachers by supporting SB2624.

Tearney Malia Aguilar  
Ewa Makai Middle School  
[malia.aguilar3@gmail.com](mailto:malia.aguilar3@gmail.com)

