

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



JOHN S.S. KIM  
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII  
**STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**  
**(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)**

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>  
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Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

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FOR: SB 2296 SD1 Relating to Education  
DATE: February 19, 2020  
TIME: 10:00 A.M.  
COMMITTEE: Committee on Ways and Means  
ROOM: Conference Room 211  
FROM: Sione Thompson, Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 2296 SD1 with amendments**. This measure provides funds to establish a working group to create a state plan to make FAFSA completion or an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion a graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year.

The Commission requests that this **measure be amended to include a representative of the public charter school system** to ensure that public charter schools have the opportunity to provide input and perspective on this proposed change to graduation requirements. Public charter schools are required to follow the graduation requirements as determined by the Board of Education (BOE), unless a waiver from these requirements is granted by the BOE.

The Commission looks forward to collaborating with the committee, the DOE, other interested stakeholders, and public charter schools in moving this legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/19/2020  
**Time:** 10:00 AM  
**Location:** 211  
**Committee:** Senate Ways and Means

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** SB 2296, SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) working group created by the Department of Education to develop a state plan to make completion of the FAFSA or an opt-out waiver a statewide graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year. (SD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Department of Education (Department) respectfully offers comments on SB 2296, SD 1.

The purpose of SB 2296 is to establish a working group to create a state plan to make FAFSA completion or an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion a statewide graduation requirement. The Department recognizes the important role of public education in providing support for students and their families in completing applications for post-secondary education but has concerns about hinging a student's graduation on FAFSA completion or an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion.

As acknowledged in the bill, the Department has an established working group, including representatives from the Department's Data Governance and Analysis, Communications, and Student Services Branches and the Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education. However, the goal of this working group is to provide a statewide approach to increase awareness of FAFSA to, in turn, increase completion rates and not to add FAFSA completion as a graduation requirement.

The Department is currently following the progress of Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas, who have made FAFSA completion a graduation requirement and would request more time to monitor the effects of these requirements in these states prior to committing to a mandated FAFSA requirement.

While the measure does provide an option to opt-out of FAFSA completion, the Department is concerned about the effects opting out could have on the emotional safety of students. For example, opting out of FAFSA completion could draw unneeded attention to private issues

which students are grappling with such as legal tax issues, undocumented families, or other family hardships.

Finally, should this measure continue to move forward, the Department is concerned about the lack of financial resources which would be necessary to shoulder the added responsibilities mandated by this bill and to include an additional working group member from the non-profit sector.

Given the Department's ongoing work and commitment supporting students and families in completing applications for post-secondary education and the desire for more evidence that FAFSA completion has the intended positive impact on college enrollment, the Department wishes to defer this bill until more definitive data can be collected from states with a FAFSA requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at [www.hawaiipublicschools.org](http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org).

**LATE**

## OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

STATE OF HAWAII  
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT BUILDING  
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 107  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

TELEPHONE: 808-586-1400 FAX: 808-586-1412  
EMAIL: oip@hawaii.gov

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Cheryl Kakazu Park, Director

Date: February 19, 2020, 10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 211

Re: Testimony on S.B. No. 2296, S.D. 1  
Relating to Education

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would establish a working group to create a state plan to make FAFSA completion, or an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion, a statewide graduation requirement. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) takes no position on the substance of this bill, but has comments and a recommendation regarding the bill's proposed exemption from the Sunshine Law, part I of chapter 92.

This bill proposes to completely exempt the working group from the Sunshine Law, although it would require it to post some form of minutes with no set requirement as to their level of detail or when they must be posted. It is not obvious why the proposed working group would need a complete exemption from the Sunshine Law to be able to effectively consider the proposal to make FAFSA completion a high school graduation requirement, as the issues it is required to consider do not seem to be ones that would involve discussions of individually identifiable student information on any kind of a regular basis. Further, OIP notes that the proposal to require students to complete the FAFSA to graduate from high

school is likely to be of high interest to public high school students and their parents or guardians, particularly since completing the FAFSA requires a student's parents or guardians to provide extensive financial information and tax return information. It is likely that members of the public will be interested in weighing in on this issue, yet this bill would not allow them to provide testimony to the working group or attend its meetings, but only to read minutes posted at some unspecified time after a meeting has taken place.

OIP notes that the proposed working group includes many government officials and employees who may need to discuss college financial aid issues with one another as part of their usual jobs. If there is a concern that the Sunshine Law's requirements would constrain their ability to talk with one another about financial aid issues as needed for their usual jobs, these Committees could address that by adding a permitted interaction allowing less than a quorum of members to talk about board business together, while still allowing for public participation consistent with the purpose and intent of the Sunshine Law.

**Thus, OIP would strongly recommend that these Committees either remove entirely the Sunshine Law exemption at bill page 4, lines 3-7, or replace it with a permitted interaction allowing less than a quorum of members to talk together. If the Committees prefer the option of replacing the exemption with a permitted interaction, OIP would recommend the following language:**

**Two or more members of the working group, but less than the number of members that would constitute a quorum for the working group, may discuss between**

**themselves matters relating to official business of the working group to enable them to faithfully perform their duties to the working group and the organizations they represent, as long as no commitment to vote is made or sought. Such discussions shall be a permitted interaction under section 92-2.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes.**

Thank you for the considering our comments and recommendation.



david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org  
hawaiikidscan.org

David Miyashiro  
Executive Director

February 19, 2019

Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and Members of the Committees,

**HawaiiKidsCAN supports SB 2296 SD1**, which requires the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) working group created by the Department of Education to develop a state plan to make completion of the FAFSA or an opt-out waiver a statewide graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year.

While much great work has happened around the state to support FAFSA completions, the reality is that our data has moved only incrementally in the last four years, and our current path makes it incredibly unlikely Hawaii closes the large gap between last year's 60% completion rate and the DOE's goal for 90% completions by the 2020 school year. In fact, Hawaii is currently on track to have a lower FAFSA completion rate than we had last year. A graduation requirement would be a bold step forward to shake up the status quo and ensure local students don't continue to lose out on millions of dollars in federal financial because of this incremental growth.

Informed by an analysis of state and local policies and practices from across the country, the Education Strategy Group's *Fast Track FAFSA Completion* report provides clear steps that all states and communities can take to ensure that the FAFSA is a springboard, not a barrier, to postsecondary access and success. The report recommends: "Through either legislation or regulation, the state should consider requiring all students to complete the FAFSA to graduate. By tying the FAFSA to graduation, students and families have a strong incentive to complete it."<sup>1</sup>

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our

<sup>1</sup> Education Strategy Group. (2020, January 16). *Fast Track FAFSA Completion*. Retrieved from <http://edstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FAFSA-Report-Final.pdf>

communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

Given Hawaii's low unemployment rate and high cost of living, a post-secondary associate's or bachelor's degree is increasingly important for local students. The Hawaii P-20 Initiative's 55 goal to have 55% of adults earn a college degree by 2025 is making progress, although recent attainment is still at 46.3%.

FAFSA completion is critical component for increasing access and equity in higher education, as it is the form students need to fill out to get any financial aid from the federal government to help pay for college. Each year, over 13 million students who file the FAFSA get more than \$120 billion in grants, work-study, and low-interest loans from the U.S. Department of Education. The FAFSA is also an important pre-requisite for many other need- and merit-based forms of financial aid, including the Hawaii Promise scholarship.

FAFSA completion is also strongly correlated to college access, as 90% of high school seniors nationally who complete FAFSA attend college directly from high school.<sup>2</sup> Students in the lowest economic quintile who completed the FAFSA were 127% more likely to enter college than students who did not.<sup>3</sup> Other benefits include a potential edge in college admissions, as admissions officers know that students hoping for aid who don't submit FAFSAs to the college are less likely to enroll.<sup>4</sup>

HawaiiKidsCAN has spoken directly with leaders in Louisiana, which is a national success story, jumping from 44% in FAFSA completions to nearly 80%. Much of this success is driven by making FAFSA completion a graduation requirement, while providing an opt-out waiver to parents and a hardship waiver to schools to use for sensitive cases where parents may be non-responsive due to immigration status or other extenuating circumstances. Because of Louisiana's success, it is no surprise that a number of other states are looking at implementing a similar approach, and Hawaii has the opportunity to be part of this early wave of states, helping our students compete for successfully for financial aid before the rest of the country also implements such policies and deepens the pool of applicants.

<sup>2</sup> Abigail Hess, CNBC. (2018, October 2). The FAFSA is now open—here's why every student should fill it out. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/28/why-every-student-should-fill-out-the-fafsa.html>

<sup>3</sup> Bill DeBaunm, National College Access Network (2019, December 3). FAFSA Completion by District Poverty Level Across the United States. Retrieved from <https://public.tableau.com/profile/bill.debaun.national.college.access.network#!/vizhome/FAFSACompletionbyDistrictPovertyLevelAcrosstheUnitedStates/Story1>

<sup>4</sup> Staff, National College Planning Solutions. (2016, January 8). 3 Reasons You Should Fill Out the FAFSA—No Matter How Rich You Are. Retrieved from <https://ncps.com/3-reasons-you-should-fill-out-the-fafsa-no-matter-how-rich-you-are/>



We are excited about the many important outreach efforts already happening in Hawaii schools, including the Cash for College challenge and text message-based outreach, and we think a statewide plan to prepare for a FAFSA graduation requirement would greatly boost this work. We believe this plan will be a rallying cry for the community, and a way to increase support for counselors and encourage local tax preparation companies to provide pro bono consultation to local families. HawaiiKidsCAN strongly believes SB 2296 SD1 is an important step forward for our students and broader community.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro  
Founding Executive Director  
HawaiiKidsCAN

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/17/2020 11:36:36 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Dylan	Testifying for Hawaii Kids Can	Support	No

Comments:

In support



HAWAII COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

February 17, 2020

Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Hearing: 10:00 a.m. February 19, 2020  
Hawaii State Capitol Room 211

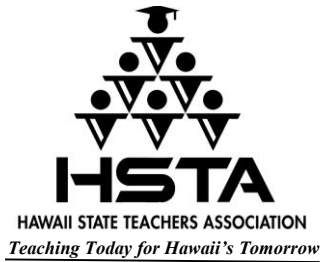
Re: SUPPORT for SB 2296, SD1, Relating to Education

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Keith Agaran and members of the committee:

The Hawaii Community Foundation supports SB 2296, SD1, relating to education. This bill requires the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) working group created by the Department of Education to develop a state plan to make completion of the FAFSA or an opt-out waiver a statewide graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year.

We recognize that problems that are big and complex require people from across all sectors who believe in the power of collective action to work together toward shared goals. Hawaii Community Foundation has identified increasing access to federal funding for Hawaii learners seeking higher education opportunities as an important step toward addressing significant community needs. We believe that the working group will promote higher education and ask that you please advance this measure.

Thank you.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
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Corey Rosenlee  
President  
Osa Tui, Jr.  
Vice President  
Logan Okita  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

RE: SB 2296, SD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2020

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 2296, SD1**, that will establish a working group to create a state plan to make FAFSA completion a statewide graduation requirement and an opt-out waiver for FAFSA completion by the 2022-2023 school year. **We ask that when creating this working group, high school counselors are invited to join this work group, and supported, as they will be the ones directly providing these services to our students, and will have the most valuable input as to what is needed.**

Making FAFSA completion a graduation requirement will help ensure that high school graduates don't miss out on post-secondary educational opportunities merely because they can't pay for it. Multiple financial aid options are available for students who apply, including federal grants, loans, or work-study. Encouraging students to apply by making it a graduation requirement will help dispel the common misconception students have that they won't qualify for available aid. According to an analysis by NerdWallet, high school graduates missed out on \$2.3 billion in federal grants in 2017 simply because they failed to fill out the FAFSA. Among those who didn't apply, most said it was because they didn't think they would qualify.

In addition to matching students with the financial aid they are eligible for, research shows that students who complete a FAFSA are more likely to attend a two- or four-year college or vocational/technical school which is another positive outcome for FAFSA completion. According to the National College Access Network (NCAN), "Ninety percent of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA proceed directly to college, versus only 55 percent who don't complete the FAFSA."

To increase access to higher education among our high school students, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks you to **support** this bill.



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 10:00 A.M.  
Conference Room 211, State Capitol**

**RE: SB 2296 SD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION**

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the Committee:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **supports** SB 2296 SD1, which requires the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) working group created by the Department of Education to develop a state plan to make completion of the FAFSA or an opt-out waiver a statewide graduation requirement by the 2022-2023 school year.

The Chamber is Hawaii's leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing 2,000+ businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the "Voice of Business" in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state's economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

In 2018, Hawaii students left \$10 million in unclaimed federal Pell Grants, while nationally, that total was nearly \$2.6 billion in unclaimed federal financial aid for higher education for high school graduates of the class of 2018 as a result of not filling out FAFSA applications despite being eligible. It is estimated that 90% of students who complete the FAFSA will attend college, as opposed to 55% of those who don't. The Hawaii Department of Education has set a goal to have 90% of high school seniors complete the FAFSA for the 2020 year, but there are some worries that this goal will not be met.

Through this working group, the state can take the first step to guaranteeing that we are able to help our students with completing the FAFSA for those considering post-secondary education. Students who might not have thought they could go to college due to financial situations, may now have an opportunity to do so, because of the access to federal aid. We need to help ensure that our students are offered the best education in order to prepare them for college and their future roles in the workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2296 SD1.



# MAUI

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VOICE OF BUSINESS

**HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL, SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM 211  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2020 AT 10:00 A.M.**

To The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair;  
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair;  
Members of the Committee on Ways and Means;

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2296 RELATING TO EDUCATION**

Aloha, my name is Pamela Tumpap and I am the President of the Maui Chamber of Commerce, with approximately 650 members. I am writing share our support of SB2296.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce supports a working group to look at how students who want to go to college and their parents can be encouraged to and receive more help to complete FAFSA. According to the FAFSA website, it takes an average of 55 minutes to complete the form, plus additional hours to collect the needed information. This can be overwhelming for parents and students alike and support and education on this process would be valuable. This is an important effort to capture federal money to get those students to college with better opportunities and will need special resources, outreach and education to parents and students.

However, we ask that this bill be amended to remove the suggestion of FAFSA completion or an opt-out waiver be a requirement for graduation. Some students do not want to go to college and families should be proud of their children wanting to enter the workforce and not have to sign an opt-out waiver that has no benefit. For students who meet the requirements, there should never be an impediment for graduation. We feel the working group should be empowered to create a plan to get more FAFSA's completed in a positive manner without this restriction.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this matter and provide comments and ask that this bill be passed.

Sincerely,

Pamela Tumpap  
President

To advance and promote a healthy economic environment for business, advocating for a responsive government and quality education, while preserving Maui's unique community characteristics.

**LATE**

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 11:15:11 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Mahina Kamakana-Juario	Testifying for Molokai High School	Oppose	No

Comments:

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/15/2020 11:54:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Aisha Heredia	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a former educator that has worked with college-bound high schoolers in Title 1 schools. I'm proud to support SB2296 SD1 because it will increase opportunities for high school students to access funding for higher education. Every year there are \$10 million dollars in funds that are not used because students do not know how to fill out the FASFA. Some students whom I have helped with the application process feel that it's confusing, and I do think families who are new immigrants, or have language barriers won't know how to navigate the FASFA application.

I am in strong support of SB2296 SD1 because it will establish a state plan to make FAFSA completion a statewide graduation requirement, with a working group on how to attain 90% of high school seniors applying to FASFA by 2022-2023 school year. The support we give to students accessing higher education, comes back to us in an educated, highly talented and skilled workforce.

Mahalo,  
Aisha Heredia

Former STEM Educator



**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/15/2020 6:04:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
April Inouye	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I oppose SB2296 and the creation of a work group to explore adding FAFSA completion as a graduation requirement. Every student does NOT choose to attend college, and for those who choose not to, they should not be asked to complete the FAFSA nor secure an "opt out." Other states have recently added FAFSA completion as a graduation requirement. Where is the data that shows that FAFSA completion increased college going rates? Shouldn't a high school diploma be based on courses, grades and other measurable outcomes that confirms that every student is college and career ready to enter their post-high school option of choice?

It is MISLEADING to report that millions of dollars are not being awarded to students because students don't complete the FAFSA. Let's be clear, PELL grants are only awarded to lower income families. It is NOT distributed equally to all. For those planning to attend college, completing the FAFSA is a part of the college process. For the many students who DO complete the FAFSA because they ARE college bound, this is a given. The FAFSA opens the door to scholarships, grants, loans and work study opportunities and school counselors offer FSA ID and FAFSA completion workshops during and outside of school hours to accommodate parents who can't attend during the workday. We volunteer and partner with colleges and private organizations at community events to support students and families in the FAFSA completion process.

Hawaii P20 has offered incentives to schools to increase FAFSA completion. It has helped to encourage students and parents to complete the FAFSA. The DOE Superintendent has clearly stated that the high school completion target is 90% for the Class of 2020. Counselors in schools are working really hard to achieve this goal. What is lacking is additional support and allocation of positions at the school level not only for FAFSA completion, but for the most important goal for all students, high school graduation.

Yes, completing the FAFSA should be submitted by all college-going students. Yes, high school counselors do everything possible to educate, promote, support and encourage families to complete the FAFSA, yet many families still choose not to. Some parents believe that they make too much money and won't get "free" money...which is essentially true. Some parents don't file taxes and are fearful that they will be "caught" by the IRS. Some students have incarcerated parents, some are students are

undocumented fearing deportation and some students have parents that outright REFUSE to complete the FAFSA. Completing the FAFSA is a personal choice, regardless if we agree or not. Are we really going to withhold issuing a diploma to a student whose parent does NOT complete the FAFSA?

Again, I oppose FAFSA completion as a graduation requirement. Creating a work group to discuss and create an "opt out" is not the solution. Please think carefully about the "gap" group populations who will be affected and the impact of this recommendation. Thank you for your consideration!

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 8:48:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Clara Kathman	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**Rep. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair**

**Rep. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair**

**COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**February 18, 2020**

**Support on Senate bill 2296 relating to education.**

**Hello, I am Clara Kathman a sophomore at Kalaheo High School and I fully support SB2296. This bill requires all students to fill out the FAFSA. The legislature has found that Hawaii left \$10,000,000 in unclaimed federal Pell Grants on the table in 2018. This would have been enough money to send roughly 2,500 of Hawaii's students to community college without having to spend a penny on tuition.**

**One credit at UH Manoa for a resident is a total of \$907. To get a four year bachelor's degree you need roughly 15 credits a semester. This means a student would pay roughly \$13,600 for just one semester. That adds up to \$108,840, not including housing, books, or food. According to studentaid.gov students can receive roughly between \$5,500 and \$12,500. This means a student could have almost half of their tuition paid for. However, some students might never know if they didn't fill out the FAFSA.**

**Thank you for your time and consideration, and I truly hope that you will support Senate Bill 2296.**

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 8:55:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Gabrielle Goodgame	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**18 February 2020**

**To: Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair**

**Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair**

**Members of the Ways and Means Committee**

**From: Gabrielle Goodgame**

**Subject: Support of Senate Bill 2296, Relating to Education**

**Hello, my name is Gabrielle Goodgame and I am currently a Junior at Kalaheo High School. I believe in Senate Bill 2296 and would like to ask for your support. I urge you to vote in favor of this bill as it would increase opportunity for students to receive FAFSA money.**

**According to College Board, from 2001-02 through 2012-13, annual increases in published**

**tuition and fees exceeding 5%. The state of Hawaii should provide opportunities for students to accommodate for this rise in costs for their education. As many as 44.7 million Americans have student loan debt, according to a 2018 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. To prevent students from Hawaii from**

**contributing to this growing debt, the state-wide graduation requirement for FAFSA completion will greatly help.**

**If Senate Bill 2296 is passed, students' opportunity to receive FAFSA money will be greatly increased, and students like me in the future can benefit from this change. Thank you for your time and consideration.**

**LATE**

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 4:22:43 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sheldon Tawata	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a testimony on Senate Bill 2296 SD1. As a professional who works in post-secondary education with colleagues at various high schools across the state, I am concerned with adding another requirement that comes with added expenses (time and money) to an already taxed organization (the Hawai'i State Department of Education). I know counselors who work tirelessly to encourage students to meet high school graduation requirements, which at times could be as critical as attendance. These individuals put in evenings and weekends to make sure students are on track toward a goal (or goals) that are most appropriate and supports personal and academic growth. I feel rather than designing a work group, I feel it would be worth acknowledging these counselors as content experts and provide an arena for them to flush out ideas that work best for students whom they see on a regular basis.

When I read Section 8, items c, e, and f, I can't imagine the extra time and resources that will be allocated toward this proposal versus using that time and resources assisting students. "Members of the working group shall serve without compensation but shall receive reimbursement for expenses, including travel expenses, that are necessary for the performance of their duties." Are we not in a budget crisis?

Majority of the testimonies highlighted the benefit of financial aid, which I can agree 100%. I work with many students who have benefited from FAFSA and other aid such as Scholarships, that helped their college education. But I think SB 2296 SD1 doesn't provide a complete picture and doesn't address the current work of those who meet with students on a DAILY basis. Were any counselors and post-secondary financial aid specialists consulted when this Bill was drafted? Or are we chasing numbers with minimal research on the existing initiatives that are happening at the various schools?

I'm very worried that this bill doesn't give the proper recognition to those who truly help students make that transition into post-secondary education. I hope the State takes a moment to self reflect and think how funds can be used more effectively to assist our youth. Forming a working group doesn't seem to be the best use of funds.

**LATE**

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2020 4:40:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Michelle Kau	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

As a high school counselor, I would like to submit testimony in opposition of SB2296.

1. Some families are in circumstances that don't allow them to fill out the FAFSA (i.e. did not do taxes, are undocumented). This requirement could cause unnecessary stress and anxiety to our families who already have enough to worry about.
2. Some of our students choose to join the military or the workforce. They do not need to complete the FAFSA. Why would we force them to do something that is unnecessary in order to receive their diploma?
3. Information needed to complete the FAFSA is very sensitive financial information that some families do not wish to share. I have experienced great hostility from parents when even mentioning federal tax information is needed to complete the FAFSA.
4. Students are not currently able to opt out of any graduation requirements. Why should we start now? Will this open up the conversation to opt out of other requirements?
5. We are proud of our ability to help individual families and have group information sessions through partnerships with financial aid organizations. By adding this as a graduation requirement, we will be limiting our ability to help those that really want to submit the FAFSA to help fund their college education.

Thank you for your consideration.



**LATE**

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2020 8:42:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Maricaela	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

February 19, 2020

To: Representative Michelle N. Kidani, Chair

Representative Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Committee on Education

Representative Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Representative Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Committee on Higher Education

From: Maricaela Lobaton

Subject: Support of Senate Bill 2296, Relating to Education

Aloha! My name is Maricaela Lobaton and I attend school at Kalaheo High in the Windward district. I would like to speak in support of Bill SB2296 which states that all seniors must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) paperwork to graduate. This bill should be passed because it gives everybody an equal opportunity to receive more money for college as well as because billions of dollars are left unused by high school graduates.

According to the current version of SB2296, "...nearly \$2,600,000,000 in federal financial aid" went unused for the graduates of the 2017-2018 school year. This is because students did not take the opportunity to fill out the paperwork for FAFSA. It is free to apply to FAFSA and those who do apply, nearly all of them receive student aid of some sort. Therefore, applying to FAFSA has no downsides; the only thing one needs to do is fill out the forms. This means that high school graduates who are looking to go to a place for higher education are paying more when they could have filled out a FAFSA form which would have made their experience cheaper. These students having to pay more when there is a free opportunity to pay less is foolish. These same students then apply for private loans which can cost more than federal student loans cost. Because of this, we should make applying for FAFSA a statewide requirement so students do not have to spend as much money on college. Making this a requirement can only benefit students because they then receive more money for college, meaning that they can worry less about finances and focus more on their education.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I truly hope that you will support Senate Bill 2296.

**LATE**

**SB-2296-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2020 9:25:36 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/19/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Chais Droge	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

WAM

Donovan M. Dela Cruz: Chair

Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran: Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 19th 2020

From: Chais Droge

Subject: Support for S.B. 2296

My name is Chais Droge and my take on this bill is that I support it. I think it would be good to have help and to make it a requirement. One major reason I say this is because "Nationally, nearly \$2,600,000,000 in federal financial aid for higher education went unused by high school graduates from the class of 2018 who were eligible for a federal Pell Grant but did not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)." That's a lot of money that isn't used and could be to help out students. We should be using all the money we can that's available to the students. Making it a requirement will only benefit the students. If we make this a requirement then it makes it easier for the students but their families too. No student should have a hard time in their pursuit of knowledge. This bill helps with that. Everything becomes easier for students to receive higher education. "The FAFSA helps determine the awarding of over \$150 billion in federal aid, as well as state aid." Many kids need this kind of help to get ahead in school and this bill will make a difference. This is why I believe this bill should be passed.