



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

**Date:** 02/03/2020  
**Time:** 03:15 PM  
**Location:** 229  
**Committee:** Senate Education  
Senate Higher Education

**Department:** Education

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

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

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes 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. Appropriates funds.

**Department's Position:**

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

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 and continues efforts to improve successful FAFSA completion rates.

The Department has established a 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, with a goal of providing a statewide approach to increase awareness of FAFSA to, in turn, increase completion rates. This working group conducted a media campaign, created resources, and built data dashboards to provide schools with the tools they need to support this effort.

The Department has also established the College & Career Counselor Professional Learning Community (PLC) comprised of 96 counselors from schools across the state. The purpose of the PLC is to share resources, tools, and data to best support students as they prepare for post-secondary options. This includes providing students with support in completing the FAFSA.

Efforts of these two groups as well as at the school level have resulted in Hawai'i's FAFSA completion rate being above the national average the last two years. Hawai'i's FAFSA

completion rate was 59.1% for the Class of 2018 (18th in the nation) and 59.2% for the Class of 2019 (17th in the nation). Both the working group and the PLC monitor Hawai'i's FAFSA completion data as well as the completion data of other states through the National College Access Network to determine if FAFSA completion has the intended impact on college enrollment.

Given the Department's ongoing work and commitment to supporting students and their families in completing applications for post-secondary education and the existence of the working group focused on this issue, the Department respectfully suggests the budgetary appropriation included in this measure be appropriated to support the existing Department working group in these continued FAFSA efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2296

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).

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>  
1111 Bishop Street, Suite 516, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

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FOR: SB 2296 Relating to Education  
DATE: February 3, 2020  
TIME: 3:15 P.M.  
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education and Committee on Higher Education  
ROOM: Conference Room 229  
FROM: Sione Thompson, Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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Chair Kidani, Chair Kim, and members of the Committees:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 2296 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.

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.

# 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 Committees on Education and on Higher Education

From: Cheryl Kakazu Park, Director

Date: February 3, 2020, 3:15 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

Re: Testimony on S.B. No. 2296  
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.

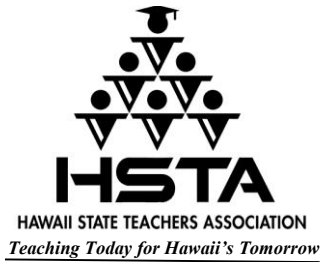
OIP notes that the proposed working group includes many government officials and employees who may need to discuss college financial aid issues with one another as part of their usual jobs. If there is a concern that the Sunshine Law's requirements would constrain their ability to talk with one another 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 5, lines 17-21, 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.



**LATE**

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

Corey Rosenlee  
President  
Osa Tui, Jr.  
Vice President  
Logan Okita  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON  
EDUCATION and HIGHER EDUCATION

RE: SB 2296 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani, Chair Kim, and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 2296** which 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.

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.



david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org  
hawaiikidscan.org

David Miyashiro  
Executive Director

February 3, 2019

Committee on Education  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Committee on Higher Education  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha Chairs Kidani and Kim, and Members of the Committees,

**HawaiiKidsCAN supports SB 2296**, which establishes a working group to create a state plan to make the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion a statewide requirement with an opt-out waiver for parents by the 2022-2023 school year, and appropriate funds to support this working group.

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 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>1</sup> Students in the lowest economic quintile who completed the FAFSA were 127% more likely to enter college than students who did not.<sup>2</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>3</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.

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 is an important step forward for our students and broader community.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro  
Founding Executive Director  
HawaiiKidsCAN

<sup>1</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>2</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>3</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/>



**LATE**

Chamber of Commerce HAWAII  
*The Voice of Business*

**Testimony to the Senate Committees on Education and Higher Education  
Monday, February 3, 2020 at 3:15 P.M.  
Conference Room 229, State Capitol**

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

Chairs Kidani and Kim and Members of the Committees:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **supports** to SB 2296, which would 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 and appropriate funds.

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.

By creating 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.



2112 Hillhaven Dr., Brea, CA 92821 [execjimenez@aol.com](mailto:execjimenez@aol.com)

## **IN SUPPORT SB 2296**

My name is Elizabeth Jiménez Salinas and I am an educational consultant working with teachers in schools and school districts throughout the United States, including Hawai'i. Hawai'i needs more teachers. So, more local students need to go to University in order to fulfill that need. For most students to afford to do that, they need financial aid. The first step towards receiving financial aid is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**I ask you to support SB2296** to initiate the formation of a working group to examine any current barriers and determine ways to increase the FAFSA completion rate amongst high school graduates.

The FAFSA has a longstanding reputation for being complex and confusing so families need assistance, students need a clear understanding of the timeline for completion, and all high school faculty need a clear understanding and the tools to incentivize students in this process. The idea of this legislation is to study ways to eliminate a potential barrier for our students to qualify for aid to attend college.

Not only would the requirement that ALL students complete and submit the FAFSA, eliminate a barrier to potential student college participation, it would create a shared urgency amongst high school faculty to reach out to ALL students.

I also recommend that the bill specify that the working group membership include a member with English Learner expertise to help the group consider ways to provide much broader language access, and that as the working group examines ways to increase FAFSA completion that they research the areas of the state that currently have lower/higher completion rates, percentages of language groups that may have greater/lesser completion rates, and review the policies developed and adopted in other states to look for elements that might be useful here. Mahalo.

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 1:02:00 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha. Dean Cevallos, Principal Kea'au High. We currently require our students to create their FAFSA account per our Personal Transition Plan (PTP). We ran into families that did not want have our students taking tax info and other confidential info to school. We did offer after school assistance but even that was felt as an un secure arena. I believe at least mandating they acquire the account and allow families completion on their own would be a step forward. Opt out should be established if the requirement is to complete the application.

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 10:13:23 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Kidani and Kim, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dyson Chee and I am a 17 year old high schooler living in Ala Moana who supports SB2296. As a senior in high school, I have completed my FAFSA which will be critical for me when the time comes for me to pay for my college classes soon. Unfortunately, not everyone takes advantage of FAFSA, which means that students in the lowest economic quintile who did not complete the FAFSA are 127% less likely to enter college than students who did. I believe that making FAFSA completion a graduation requirement will help to increase the number of students who do take advantage of FAFSA. For this reason, I urge you to pass SB2296.

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 9:41:47 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nancy Barry	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**I am in strong support of SB 2296** which establishes a working group to create a state plan to make the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion a statewide requirement with an opt-out waiver for parents by the 2022-2023 school year and appropriates funds to support this working group.

As a member of the Advisory Board of HawaiiKidsCAN, a local nonprofit organization, we believe that all students deserve access to quality educational opportunities. We are committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities.

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.

Hawaii has the opportunity to be part of an early wave of states that have adopted similar legislation, 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.

I urge your support of SB 2296.

Nancy Barry

February 1, 2020

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 10:39:50 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
C. Kai Lucas	Individual	Support	No

Comments:



**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 3:56:58 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

How can we leave \$10,000,000 in unclaimed federal Pell Grants untaken? Was it lack of guidance? Personnel? That's a huge number. PERHAPS this bill ties to the one about the AUDIT of the DOE?

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 2/2/2020 12:46:34 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

To the honorable chair,

As a high school senior and resident of Hawaii, I believe that everyone should have the knowledge needed to fill out the FAFSA. I'm lucky to go to a private school and have a college coach that guides me through the FAFSA process, but I can't say the same for many public school students. Thanks to the FAFSA, I got the opportunity to claim money for college. Therefore, I really believe students should learn how to do it in class. I strongly believe that once we have a FAFSA workshop in classrooms, seniors in Hawaii would be more likely to fill it out.

Thankful for your time,

Stephanie Albaña

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 2/2/2020 9:47:30 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I like the intent of this bill, and think that this lesson could be incorporated into Personal Transition Plan (PTP), a course that seniors have to take in order to graduate. My concern is the students having the ability to fill out the FAFSA potentially without their parents' help. I myself had to complete the FAFSA without my parents help; as the first to attend college my parents didn't know what to do and weren't comfortable with giving me their tax information, so I had to figure it out on my own. I know of students right now who are in a similar situation. Hopefully mandating the FAFSA will help parents to see that this is something good and important for them to complete, and with it being required they might get more support to do so.

February 3, 2019

Committee on Education  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Committee on Higher Education  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

I am a supporter of the SB2296 FAFSA bill. College affordability is one of the biggest issues affecting youth today, especially in the state of Hawaii. I just graduated from a charter school in Hawaii and I can already see the effects of having financial aid, or the lack thereof, on my peers and I. I believe making it a requirement to complete the FAFSA will increase the number of students who go on to higher education. It will also be beneficial to balance out the high cost of living in Hawaii. It has been proven that a student completing the FAFSA will more likely get into college and attend than those who do not. This is an important and necessary change for the youth and future of Hawaii.

Sincerely,  
Aleta Hammerich

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 2/2/2020 1:41:19 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Kidani and Kim and esteemed committee members,

I am a former educator that has worked with college-bound high schoolers in Title 1 schools. I'm proud to support SB2296 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 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**

Submitted on: 2/2/2020 1:52:03 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support SB2296. When I was applying for college, the problem was not whether I could get into college or whether I had the drive to go to college. Those messages were all around me. In school, we talked about how going to college would open up opportunities like internships, mentorships, and community partnerships. At home, my parents told me about how college would allow me to focus on my career and academic interests to prepare for my future. I was also ranked #13 in my entire senior class. The problem for me was funding.

Unfortunately, financial aid resources are not as prevalent as the "apply for college" messages students receive. I had to go digging for scholarships and federal aid. I knew that the real hurdle was not acceptance but payment. Acceptance into a college without the means to maintain attendance is just a nice dream.

As a high school senior, some days I had to make tough choices: Do I complete my homework and risk a lower grade or do I look for and apply for financial aid? Financial aid always won out. My grades during senior year took a dip, because I was betting on colleges prioritizing my junior year grades over my senior year grades. At the end, I found FAFSA (which led me to the Pell grant) and some obscure local scholarships. By doing all the research on my own and putting in countless hours, I was then able to piece together a "full ride" at a private college, which I am very proud of. But I had to do this on my own. I had no idea that my family's financial situation and my competitive grades made me automatically eligible for so many sources of financial aid.

With so much technology and information available nowadays, no one should have to go through that. If we really want college to be accessible, why are we making students opt IN to federal student aid? FAFSA should be an automatic given. A student's job should be to do well in school academically and be involved in their community in order to showcase their talents to potential colleges. Period. Full stop. It should not be the student's job to ALSO locate and apply for federal aid that is actually already earmarked for them. This easy-to-fix clerical problem is an equity issue for our best and brightest students who are systematically robbed of the futures they have worked so hard for.

I support SB2296. We should offer the choice for students to opt OUT of FAFSA rather than the current system where they must opt IN to FAFSA. This only creates more hoops for our students to jump through on their road to college and higher education.



Pepeluali 3, 2020

Committee on Education

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Committee on Higher Education

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha e nā Honorable Chairs Kidani a me Mercado Kim, a me respective Committee Members,

Na'ū nō, Phoenix Maimiti Valentine. Noho au ma ke awāwā o Mākaha, kahi kaulana, he mau pīkake. O Ka'ala ku'ū mauna. He 'umikūmā'ono o'ū makahiki. He haumana au. Welina. I'm Phoenix Maimiti Valentine. I live in Mākaha Valley, famous for a plentitude of peacocks. My mountain is Ka'ala. I am 16 years old & a student. Greetings!

Today, I write to you in support of SB2296.

Seemingly, the lifestyle in Hawai'i is enriching with the magnificence of nature from verdant valleys ornamented with vibrant hulu (feathers), to sacred, majestic guardians like Mt. Ka'ala for instance, however, it may not reflect one's financial status. In 2018, "Hawaii left \$10,000,000 in unclaimed federal Pell Grants on the table," as noted by legislature. "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." SB2296 would introduce more citizens in Hawai'i to the financial assistance available from the government through FAFSA, and require students to complete this application before graduating. Inevitably, SB2296 would raise the level of education statewide by providing the means to attend college. Soon I will complete the FAFSA application in pursuit of higher education.



I believe the general public is unaware of the potential waiting for them. Having money to go to college, would be an incentive to learn more. This bill would ensure that all eligible students in need of financial aid could have it. If completing FAFSA became a requirement as proposed, students would feel empowered to pursue a higher education knowing they have the means to do so. Understanding and enlightenment would be heightened in more kanaka. Communities would be transformed with education. Perhaps more 'ōiwi would be less stressed with debt and more energized with ideas.

Venerable Senators & Committee Chairs, and Members of the Committee of Education, and the Committee of Higher Education, I am certain that you already perceive the benefits of SB2296, because the field of Education is your forté. I urge you to continue the momentum of SB2296 so that the future of learning in the state of Hawai'i may prosper. Let's utilize the millions of dollars waiting to help educate life long learners in Hawai'i. Please vote in favor for SB2296.

Mahalo 'ia 'ōukou, Phoenix Maimiti Valentine

February 3, 2020

Committee on Education  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Committee on Higher Education  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha e Chairs Kidani & Kim, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of SB2296.

As a single parent with a disability, I cannot afford to send my kaikamahine, to college. I am seeking scholarships to help pay for my haumāna to pursue her college bound dreams. Her counselors have told her of FAFSA.

As a parent, sometimes I don't know what is available for my student. I rely on others like yourself in a position of authority to make choices that benefit my student and other students with opportunities. FAFSA is an opportunity our Government offers. Let's make use of it! The effects of SB2296 will increase learning and create a more mindful, productive community of learners. I look forward to seeing the benefits of education in every person. I want to congratulate whoever came up with SB2296!

It's easy to project the benefits it will bring. It's sensible to utilize the resources our US Government has set aside for US citizens. Thank you for your commitment to education. Please support SB2296.

Me ka o'ia'i'o (Sincerely), Ac'Lynne Uesugi

**LATE**

**SB-2296**

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 9:53:52 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/3/2020 3:15:00 PM

<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

EDU

Michelle N. Kidani: Chair

Donna Mercado Kim: Vice Chair

HRE

Donna Mercado Kim: Chair

Michelle N. Kidani: Vice Chair

Monday, February 3rd 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. 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. This is why I believe this bill should be passed.

I am Angelina Betie Dulay, the student body recording secretary. I am very passionate about enacting and supporting SB2296 because I believe in unlocking more opportunities that will benefit students. This act urges prospective college student take advantage of completing FAFSA, allowing students with the guidance to finishing the first step of the financial aid process. For me, I am a first generation to attend an American college so I can't rely on my parents to apply for college, this bill will provide more guidance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, with accuracy it means the student being eligible to receive the max amount. This overall will eliminate financial barriers suppressing the 10 million dollars of money that was unused that would allow 2500 students to attend a college tuition free would be use in benefit for the better of student life and supporting students academic endeavor.

I am Riley Brown from James Campbell High School, and I am talking against Senate Bill 2296. Senate Bill 2296 is a redundant bill that will just create more work for lots of people. The fact that students can opt-out of the requirement, those who didn't want to complete the FAFSA will just opt-out and the rest would already plan to do the FAFSA. All this does is provide students with more work to worry about, less choice, and create more paperwork for the admin of schools. I know that many students will choose to opt-out, thus making the overall plan for the bill being reduced to little more than just a requirement that would have been completed anyways. This is why I am against Senate Bill 2296.

My name is Rhona Lei Batacan and I am Waimea High School's HSSC representative. I oppose the Senate Bill 2296, relating to educating. I do not think that FAFSA should be made a graduation requirement. It will make it more difficult for students to earn their credits to graduate. Some students may encounter obstacles preventing from getting their FAFSA application completed. Those who take the time to complete the application and the ones who actually intend on using it. Personally, it was difficult to get my FAFSA done because my parents are divorced and it was hard to get them to give me information and sign. This is why I do not think FAFSA should be made a graduation requirement, thank you.

FAFSA is a Federal Application For Student Aid that gives students grants and loans based on family household income and which college you choose to attend. Many students receive up to thousands of dollars that will bring down to student loans. However, students have no clue they are able to receive a substantial amount of money. This new requirement of completing the FAFSA will give students the opportunity to go to college.

I am a junior at Radford High School. I take classes that help me understand what colleges look for, how to write a personal essay, and how to receive financial aid for college. Myself and a few others out of my grade level know what the FAFSA is. Because of an elective I joined, I know about a college research center where counselors are there to help me on campus. Without this class, I would not be where I am today.

As stated in this bill, millions of dollars were unused for student aid. Financial aid is one of the main issues that many students, especially those from Hawaii, have to look for. Senate Bill 2966 is a major step to a student's journey to college. This bill will get people to see that they are able to go to college because of the amount of money. Of course, not everyone will go to college, which is why there is an opt out form. This bill will boost statistics of people earning degrees, lower student loans, and allow more opportunities for those in need.

As a student of Hawaii's public school system, I am in a strong favor for this bill. This bill will be the pin point of getting students to get college degrees without worrying about financial aid.

My name is Caitlin Palacio, I am a Junior at Mililani High School. I am speaking in support of Senate Bill 2296. In 2018, there was \$10,000,000 worth of unclaimed Federal Pell Grants, enough to send 2,500 Hawaii students to community college tuition-free. By making FAFSA a graduation requirement it increases student awareness of the opportunities available to them and provides students with the guidance to understand how to fill out FAFSA, so they will be better prepared to fill it out in the future to re-apply every year of college.

FAFSA should be a graduation requirement because it will only benefit students who fill out a FAFSA and expand their opportunities as they prepare for college and their future ahead.



My name is Meki Tuvaifale-Sheck and I am a 10th Grader at Radford High School. I am supporting the bill where FAFSA should become a law because FAFSA provides opportunities for students who don't know how to apply a chance to know what they're writing about and how to write it. Making it a requirement also helps students get the most amount of money that they CAN get despite their families financial statement. If a student doesn't know what they are writing about, they might be getting little to no money, which isn't fair to them, especially if they are depending on that money.

My name is Kyla Musso and as a student at Radford High School I support the idea of making the FASFA process a graduation requirement for secondary education. There is roughly over \$4.6 billion of student debt in the state of Hawaii. Using FASFA would make students more aware of this opportunity. Some colleges require their applicants to apply for FASFA to be considered for their scholarship program. This way if FASFA was a graduation requirement we would know how to fill out one correctly and have the guidance of our teachers and staff. This bill would not hurt students but allow them to go to college and reach their full potential.

As a junior from Aiea High School that's going to be a senior next year, I feel strong support for this bill especially because FAFSA essentially gives free money to graduates. A lot of the time, people say they can't go to college simply because they don't have enough funds. With this bill, there's no excuse for not wanting to go to college. It gives families and students the financial support they need to get at least some of the burden off of their shoulders. It's important that students don't miss out on their chance at receiving free money. In the class of 2017 alone, seniors missed out on \$2.3 B. In addition to that, in the class of 2017, 38% filled out their FAFSA incompletely. This bill would ensure that the soon-to-be graduates complete their FAFSA completely and accurately.

I see this bill as a good opportunity for everyone to take upon themselves, and would benefit them in the future. This bill would also reduce the amount of student debt that graduates have, further easing the worries of many seniors. SB2296 has endless benefits that it will provide to young adults statewide. This is why I strongly support the enacting of SB2296.

I am Gabriel Marrero from Radford high school I am for the SB2296. I think that this bill would be very beneficial, and extremely helpful for those who struggle financially. And those who still want to attend college or career school but cannot afford it. Fafsa has provided more than 120 million dollars in grants, work-study, and student funds each year to help pay for college or career school. At the office of Federal Student Aid, They help make a college education possible for more than 13 million students each year. Just applying for fafsa does not hurt you in anyway. Although you may not be allegeable for fafsa it will not hurt you, but if you do you will be able to get scholarships, grants, and more. The SB2296, is extremely helpful for many students and I think it should be a requirement for all students to fill the fafsa form.

My name is Anastasia Gatlin and I am against Senate Bill 2296. The bill states that it should be a graduation requirement for seniors to apply to FAFSA scholarships. I am opposed to this because I do not think FAFSA is the most reliable source for scholarship money, especially when every single senior in the state of Hawaii is required to apply. This leaves both the students and FAFSA themselves worse-off. The pool of potential scholarship students is ever growing, which means either more students will get less money or less students will get more money. Neither of these things are ideal. In the bill it is also stated that there is an opt-out form for those who would not like to apply. (If students choose to opt-out it is the same as applying) Because of this opt-out form, the entire law is pointless in the first place. What if every single person opts out? Pointless. This directly affects me because the bill hopes to be in effect by 2022 which is the year I plan to graduate.

My name is Abigail Sheehan and I'm a junior at Roosevelt high school. The bill that we introduced, which was SB2296, is a bill that I strongly believe in. This bill introduced that the FAFSA form should be a graduation requirement for high schoolers. One fact that really supported this bill was that filling out the FAFSA is an easy and free form to apply for financial aid. Also, applying for the FAFSA, you will never lose something. With the opt out option, it will really help many families who are not comfortable with giving out private information.

Although there were many arguments saying that why make the FAFSA a graduation requirement when students are able to opt out. But as I said, what's there to lose for filling out the FAFSA? Again, I strongly support this bill in making the FAFSA a graduation requirement.

I believe that if students don't even think they have a chance to receive money from the FAFSA then they won't even try. But, if we make it a mandatory form that students and parents have to fill out then there is so much free money that can be given away. There are so much missed opportunities from students and that can change with this bill.

It causes no harm to do the FAFSA or fill out an opt-out form and you and your schools can get the financial aid to help pay for college whether you do or not attend, it's always is a backup plan.



Hi, my name is Levey Tuvaifale-Sheck. I support the FAFSA bill. It's because I feel that it can give people more of an opportunity to go to college, extra school, etc. Also, I support FAFSA because my older sister that graduated many years ago had said that it would give students more of an option. Especially when thinking about going to college and getting more years of education. I personally would like this to become a bill because when I become a senior and am ready to prepare for college. I would be so happy if this bill was to become official and announced as official from the government here.