

HB-1291

Submitted on: 2/8/2021 8:53:29 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
cheryl B.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SUPPORT.

HB-1291

Submitted on: 2/8/2021 7:39:41 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sean Witwer	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Sean Witwer. I'm a special education math teacher and have taught at Farrington High School for 22 years. I support HB1291.

There's a massive achievement gap between students with and without disabilities in the DOE, as evidenced by their on-time graduation and college going rates.

According to the Special Education Take Force Summative Report, the on-time graduation rate for students with disabilities is 59% versus 86% for students without disabilities. The college going rate is only 31% for students with disabilities versus 57% for students without disabilities.

This is why I worked with my student, Nicole Dolor-Bala, and Representative Ohno to create HB1291.

HB1291 will help to close the achievement gap by providing hope and equitable opportunities for scholarships at UH and the community colleges through the Hawaii Community College Promise Program and I ask you to support it.

Thank you.

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Submitted on: 2/8/2021 11:09:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Wyomie Pilor	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha my name is Wyomie Pilor, a parent of a student with learning disabilities who attends Farrington High School.

I fully support the HB1291 bill because, I truly believe that every student deserves a chance to earn a scholarship. Especially students with learning disabilities. I've seen my daughter's self confidence grow so much. Today as a sophomore she is currently maintaining above a 3.0 G.P.A. She is very determined to work hard to keep up with her peers with no disabilities. Her goal is to attend college as a Radiologic Tech. For her to earn a scholarship to help her attain her dreams and goals would be a tremendous feeling of accomplishment.

Ultimately, all students with or without learning disabilities, should be given the same opportunities and benefits, and with that said. I can only hope and pray that this bill, HB1291 is passed!

Mahalo for hearing my testimony!

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Submitted on: 2/9/2021 1:11:40 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Julie Ledgerwood	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Julie Ledgerwood and I am the proud Vice Principal for Special Education at Farrington High School.

Unfortunately, the statistics around students with disabilities can be discouraging; our students with special needs often represent the population with the largest achievement gap and the lowest on time graduation rate. Both of these factors greatly impact the college going rate for students with disabilities which is roughly 31% as compared to 55% for Hawaii graduates as a whole.

However, all is not lost. At the school level, we are working diligently to close the achievement GAP and increase on-time graduation rates through innovative programs and inclusive practices. However, we can and should do more. We can actively change the trajectory for students with disabilities in part, by enacting positive legislation such as HB1291 that recognizes the hard work and achievement of students with special needs. I respectfully urge your support of this important legislation.

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Submitted on: 2/9/2021 1:25:52 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Hartwell Lee Loy	Farrington High School	Support	No

Comments:

I, Hartwell Lee Loy Jr., a proud Vice Principal at Farrington High School supports HB1291

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Submitted on: 2/9/2021 1:30:51 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Laura Chandler	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a former special education high school teacher in the HDOE, I just want to share a thought. These students need every opportunity possible to pursue higher education. Please support HB1291! Make a difference for those who need your support.

Thank you!

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Submitted on: 2/9/2021 2:01:38 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Deborah Ward	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

Aloha,

There are many students, particularly now with COVID restrictions, that have chosen to home-school and complete a GED. These students should also have the opportunity for scholarships, and the benefits should be shared with those students as well as those who graduate from high school with a diploma.

Thank you!

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Submitted on: 2/9/2021 3:12:36 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Aileen Soma	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Legislators,

I'm Aileen Soma and have been in the field of Special Education in Hawaii for the past 23 years, initially as a special education teacher, and now as a faculty in the special education department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

I am in full support of this bill for the following reasons:

1. There is a huge discrepancy in the college going rate between students with disabilities (31%) and their non-disabled peers (57%).
2. This bill will leverage the playing field for students with disabilities who do well in high school and achieve a minimum 3.0 GPA. If we are truly an inclusive society, providing this scholarship will go far in providing equitable access for students with disabilities to attend college; and
3. Current laws do not provide dedicated funds for students with disabilities to access scholarships.

As a lifelong advocate for equity in our society, I humbly ask for your support for HB 1291. This request comes with gratitude and appreciation on behalf of all students with disabilities in Hawaii. Aloha and Mahalo nui loa!

Aileen Soma, MSW, MEd

Testimony for HB1291

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Janet Kim and I serve as the Special Education Recruitment Specialist at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Previous to this position I was a special education teacher for six years at Pearl Harbor Elementary School. My passion lies in uplifting and advocating for our profession and our students.

In SY 2019-2020, there were over 17,000 students qualified for special education services in Hawaii public schools. This means at least one out of every ten students are qualified as having a disability and needing specially designed instruction. Unfortunately, in the end, only 31% of students in special education go on to pursue a college degree. I believe longstanding notions of stigma and misconceptions around individuals with disabilities have contributed to this bleak statistic. Almost three-fourths of all students qualifying for special education services fall under three eligibility categories: specific learning disability (44%), other health impairment (17%), and autism (10%). Therefore, the low rates of college-going students with disabilities is especially tragic, knowing they often have average to superior intelligence and encompass a wealth of skills, knowledge, and admirable character traits not recognized through standardized measures of educational achievement.

The role of a special education teacher is to understand, and then build upon, a student's strengths, while providing interventions and support in the areas of need. What many people do not realize is when a child gets referred for special education, it's often accompanied by years and years of struggling in school. As special education teachers, sometimes our first mission is just to revive a student's level of confidence and self-worth so they begin to believe and understand that they are worthy and capable of academic success. Ironically, the goal of a special education teacher is to make themselves dispensable. When a student develops the skills needed to be successful and independent in their learning, they are then rescinded from special education services. This is an amazing accomplishment and yet there are no award assemblies, certificates of achievement, or any form of recognition given to students who were able to overcome whatever it was that qualified them for special education services in the first place. I believe this bill serves as an opportunity to acknowledge and recognize students who demonstrated persistence through their challenges and have since achieved academic success.

To me, the Hawaii State Scholars and Promise Programs recognize the value in providing financial assistance to students from our local communities into pursuing higher education. I believe students with disabilities deserve the opportunity to be empowered, uplifted, and rewarded for their success through these programs. I thank the committee for taking the time to consider such an important initiative.

Respectfully,
Janet Kim

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

RE: HB 1291 - RELATING TO SCHOLARSHIPS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021

LEON SEBASTIAN AJOSTE, STUDENT
MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Chair Justin Woodson and Members of the Education Committee
Chair Gregg Takayama and Members of the Higher Education & Technology Committee

"I, Leon Sebastian Ajoste, support HB1291 relating to Scholarships, This amendment provides scholarship for students who received special education services for two or more years during enrollment in grades kindergarten through twelve. This will give expand opportunities and enhance the lives of Hawaii special education students. This support makes higher education possible for so many students (including myself) and with that comes the key to all other successes.

I ask your Committee to support this bill on behalf of the special education students in Hawaii.

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Submitted on: 2/10/2021 9:38:46 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Gabrielle Mar	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill because it provides students with disabilities the ability to continue their education at the college level. As a parent of a child with disabilities this bill supports and would allow my child a chance at fulfilling his highest potential.

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Submitted on: 2/10/2021 9:48:17 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Natalia Sandoval	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Natalia Sandoval and I am a HiDOE Special Education Teacher. I am submitting testimony in support of HB1291 because I believe it will provide students who have received special education supports and services, the opportunity to pursue higher education.

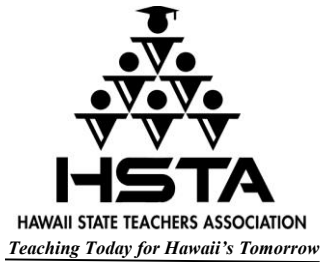
Currently, many of our students with special needs do not qualify or have access to scholarships to continue their educational journey, and HB1291 will ensure they have an equitable chance at obtaining the necessary funds they need to pursue higher education.

This bill also provides parents which hope that their children have a chance at becoming successful community contributors, despite their learning challenges and/or needs.

Let us continue to elevate the special education community and listen to their voices, as they are the ones who truly know what they need, and HB1291 is fulfilling a long overdue need in the special education community.

Mahalo,

Natalia Sandoval, MA SpED, NBCT



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION and THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION &
TECHNOLOGY

RE: HB 1291 - RELATING TO SCHOLARSHIPS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson, Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports** HB 1291, relating to scholarships.

This bill allows applicants who graduated from a public high school in the State with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 and qualified for and received special education services for two or more years during enrollment in grades kindergarten through twelve to be eligible for the Hawaii state scholars program. Allows students enrolled at a community college campus who graduated from a public high school in the State with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 and qualified for and received special education services for two or more years during enrollment in grades kindergarten through twelve to be eligible for the Hawaii community college promise program and requires ten percent of available funds for the program to be dedicated for those students; provided that if there are no such students who meet the qualifications prior to the beginning of the school year, all funds for the program shall be made available to students who meet the other requirements of the program.

This bill expands the opportunities available to enhance the lives of our students with special needs. This support makes higher education possible for so many students, and with that comes the key to all other successes.

To support all of our students with future opportunities, The Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committees to **support** this bill.

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Submitted on: 2/10/2021 11:20:39 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melanie Sullivan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill because it provides students with disabilities the ability to continue their education at the college level. As a parent of a child with a disability, this bill supports and would allow my child a chance at fulfilling his highest potential.

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Submitted on: 2/10/2021 11:39:07 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Derek Govin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Derek Govin. I am a special education teacher at Roosevelt High School

I am in support of HB 1291 which would support allocating funding for UH scholarships towards high-achieving students with special needs. Students with special needs face barriers that students without a disability do not experience. within the Hawaii Department of Education, students with disabilities make up 11% of the total student population. To drive excellence and prepare our students to be college, career, and world ready, allocating scholarship funds to targetted students would ensure students with special needs have access to post high school eduaction, and the possibility of a better personal and profession life in Hawaii. As the cost of living continues to increase, systematic changes such as reallocating these funds would help young adults with special needs to live fuller lives.

How do we define success and excellence in general education? Within special education? It is important for us to realize that the two look different between general and special education, and that being said, we should be supportive of students who display success and excellence in their education as they overcome barriers presented by their disability.

Thank you for reading my written testimony and considering this to ensure students with special needs have post high school opportunities to college, as well as opportunities to a better life in Hawaii.

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Submitted on: 2/10/2021 1:12:56 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nicole Dolor-Bala	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chairman,

My name is Nicole Dolor-Bala, a senior at Farrington High School. In elementary, I felt like a failure for years because of my learning disabilities. At the age of 10, I was diagnosed with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and anxiety disorder. I have been in the special education program since I was 12.

Although I once struggled with my reading comprehension, scoring in the first percentile, I will now be graduating Summa Cum Laude at Farrington High School. Although I am graduating with honors, I will be the only one in my entire class in special education to reach this goal. In fact, only 51% of students in special education at my school will graduate on time.

There is a massive achievement gap between students in regular education and special education in our public schools. Not only will HB1291 provide hope and financial assistance, it will also provide equal opportunity for special education students to access scholarships.

I worked with my teacher and Representative Ohno to create HB129. It's important to me and I hope it is to you too.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committees on Education and Higher Education & Technology
Thursday, February 11, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.

by
Hae Okimoto, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Hawai'i System

HB 1291 – RELATING TO SCHOLARSHIPS

Chairs Woodson and Takayama, Vice Chairs Kapela and DeCoite, and members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1291. The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of the bill which encourages students who previously received special education services to pursue postsecondary education and training by providing access to scholarships at the University of Hawai'i.

The UH encourages all of Hawai'i's residents, including students with disabilities, to pursue education and training beyond high school. Financial assistance is available for students who have disabilities and who enroll in one of the ten UH campuses. Students who have disabilities have access to need and merit-based scholarships at UH as well.

HB 1291 calls for a ten percent set aside in the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship for students with disabilities. Currently, the Hawai'i Promise program supports all UH Community College students, including students with disabilities, who meet the need-based eligibility criteria. In 2019-20, UH Community Colleges awarded Hawai'i Promise Scholarships to 1,797 students who had financial need. The average award was \$1,337. Hawai'i Promise Scholarship recipients had less student loan debt, earned more credits, earned better grades, were more likely to continue in college and more likely to earn a degree than their peers.

Also, UH Foundation scholarships, established by donors, specifically support students with disabilities:

- Walter Serikawa Memorial Scholarships for part-time students attending any UH Community College who have a disability and for UH Mānoa students, graduate or undergraduate, who are legally blind and/or deaf or hard of hearing,
- Kal Warrington Silvert Scholarship for UH Mānoa undergraduate students who are wheelchair users because of a permanent disability, and
- Masao and Michiko Okasako Scholarships for UH Mānoa undergraduate students and for UH Maui College students who have a documented disability.

For the next fiscal biennium, the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents approved a budget request for the UH that was flat and did not seek any increased funding to the UH out of recognition that State revenues and funding are likely reduced. The UH

supports the intent of the bill and welcomes the opportunity to champion additional scholarships to increase financial support available to students with disabilities; however, we are unable to do so at the expense of current funding to UH and would need the Legislature to provide additional funds for implementation.

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Submitted on: 2/10/2021 2:02:29 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Patricia Pascual	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Patricia Pascual, a resident of Hawaii since 1968. I retired from teaching in 2006 after having enjoyed 41 years in both public and private schools, grades 1 to 6. My husband and I adopted our granddaughter when she was 5. I retired early because she was having emotional issues and struggling in school. That's when I learned about difficulties caused by ADHD, dysgraphia, and dyslexia. With counseling, tutoring, and resources available in the community, our granddaughter improved and graduated with honors from Waipahu High School. She even received a Presidential scholarship from Chaminade University. It's impossible to predict a student's future success, but we must give them consistent help in their early years. This bill HB1291 is very important and should be passed. The perseverance of special education students should be rewarded. Let's offer them financial assistance and scholarships so they can further their achievements.

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Submitted on: 2/10/2021 3:17:07 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jerome Crisostomo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I'm Jerome Crisostomo. I'm a first year Special Education teacher at Farrington High School and I support HB1291.

I believe the special education students do not have the same opportunities to pursue higher education.

I believe HB1291 will help change that and make a huge impact for the students I teach.

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Submitted on: 2/11/2021 12:29:04 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Robyn Chun	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill. HB1291 will benefit students whose families may have been hit hard economically by the COVID-19 permit in being able to pursue their educational aspirations.

A positive feature of this bill is that it is structured so as to also include part-time students. Many community college students must work while pursuing a degree. This allows for lower and middle income students to be able to balance work with also pursuing a degree that will improve their long term earnings.