



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

**Date:** 02/16/2021

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 309 Via Videoconference

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** HB 1078 RELATING TO THE HAWAII SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the department of education to develop a plan to transition the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind to a conversion charter school.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) understands the intent of HB 1078, has concerns, and respectfully provides comments. HB 1078 requires the Department to submit a letter of intent to an authorizer to convert the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind to a charter school, assist with the establishment of an applicant governing board for the charter school, and develop a detailed implementation plan to transition the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind to a conversion charter school.

The Department provides all of the special education funding and services for students enrolled in the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind. Charter school status would not alter the level of special education funding or services provided to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind. However, as a charter school, the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind would no longer be a placement option for public school students across the state.

Currently, all students at the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind are programmatically placed pursuant to an Individualized Education Program team's decision that the student requires an American Sign Language immersion environment in order to receive educational benefit. The Department does not place students in charter schools. Therefore, if the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind became a charter school, that particular placement option would not be available for any

Individualized Education Program team's consideration when addressing the needs of our public school students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind.

Section 302D-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes, defines the requirements and procedures to establish a start-up or conversion charter school. Any interested community, department school, school community council, group of teachers and administrators or nonprofit organization may submit a letter of intent to form a charter school and establish an applicant governing board through the established procedures in Section 302D-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes. With a process to establish a conversion charter school already codified in statute, the Department respectfully submits that this legislation is not needed at this time.

The Department is committed to supporting our students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind and will work with and engage community stakeholders and the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind to improve the support and services for our students.

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

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).

**HB-1078**

Submitted on: 2/15/2021 2:11:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/16/2021 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Ed Chevy	Aloha State Association of the Deaf	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Ed Chevy. As a Honolulu resident who is Deaf. I am submitting this testimony to urge your vigorous support of HB 1078, relating a plan to convert Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind to a charter school.

In my formative years, rearing from a Deaf family, I had 100% access to communication. Not one in my family was left behind. Not one! Both my Deaf parents raised my sister, brother and I to a well-meaning cognitively challenged.

My education was at the California School for the Deaf and Blind in Berkeley. The school received funding from the state.

I strongly believe that Deaf and Deaf-Blind-children are best served by a specialized school where their special communication, language and development needs will be understood.

I asked the legislators to consider HSDB remains on the property, uses the same facilities and has access to the same level of funding it has received before conversion. The establishment of the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Deaf-Blind as charter school would enable the school to focus on the needs of Deaf and Deaf-Blind children from early childhood through transition to employment and adult life. It would bring parents into equation as active participants, with staff who know and understand the needs of these children.

As our elected representatives, we ask that you give full support to passage of this legislation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ed Chevy, Deaf parent



**HB-1078**

Submitted on: 2/15/2021 11:10:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/16/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Vesta Morris	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

February 15, 2021

The Honorable Justin H. Woodson Chair

House Committee on Education

415 South Beretania Street, Room 329

Honolulu, Hi 96813

Re: Support for House Bill 1078 - Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind

Dear Chair Woodson and members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Vesta Morris, president of Maui Deaf Friends and I am Deaf. I attended the Hawaii

School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) for 15 years, and I support HB 1078 Relating to the Hawaii

School for the Deaf and Blind.

When I attended HSDB, I had friends and teachers who can communicate with me using American

Sign Language (ASL). They understand what it was like to be a deaf student trying to learn. I think

would have been a much better school if there had been deaf educators planning and running

HSDB.

There have been many advances in teaching deaf children since I graduated, and it is important

that HSDB keep up with those advances. We can only do that by including Deaf people in the

planning and development for the future of HSDB.

I encourage you to pass this bill, because it will create a school that will meet the needs of Deaf

and Deaf-Blind students. Hearing schools are guided by a Board of Education with professionals

who understand how to educate hearing students. We are asking for the same consideration in

planning and development of education for Deaf students who attend and graduate from HSDB.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Vesta Morris, President

Maui Deaf  
Friends



**HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-First Legislature, State of Hawaii  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Education

Testimony by  
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 16, 2020

H.B. 1078 — Relating To The Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO opposes H.B. 1078, which will require the department of education to develop a plan to transition the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind to a conversion charter school. The HGEA is concerned that converting the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind to a public charter school will result in less accountability and oversight, less monitoring and compliance, and less funding and support. The school is in dire need of these things. Less is not more under these circumstances.

As the exclusive representative of the school administrators and staff of all of Hawaii's public charter schools, the HGEA has witnessed firsthand some of the problems that come with a semi-autonomous school setting. Employees have sought our representation on several matters, including grievances that may have been avoided if the employer was the department of education and not an independent governing board. We do not see a benefit for the deaf and hard of hearing community and the conversion to a charter school will be of disservice to this underrepresented community.

The public charter school system has seen some success in Hawaii but has also been plagued with challenges. The mistakes made in the past should not be repeated as the victims of those errors are the very individuals we should be helping: the children, our workers, and the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition of H.B. 1078.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director

**HB-1078**

Submitted on: 2/16/2021 12:18:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/16/2021 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jonathan Reynolds	Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, thank you for giving me opportunity to write my testimony.

My name is Jonathan Reynolds. I am a full time teacher at Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

It is my second year here and I have almost ten years of teaching experience in K-12 and college level. I am here to share my testimony and have big heart for deaf/ hard of hearing children who needs a better education. I support this bill: HB 1078.

In our signing community of educators have been planning, talking about it, committee meeting, and networks from all over mainland; they all are ready to work together. We are ready to move on to next level and able to build this charter school sepearte from DOE. There are one amazing deaf charter school has been running since 1993 until now. This school is emerging and growing with an excellent deaf education teachers and students are now becoming getting achievements, awards, and going to college. I believe and I know it will happen to here because we are ready for next step. All of the standardized tests is not compitable for deaf students and we have better way to teach/ support our students. So, therefore we need our own standardized and education developed by us. We have many qualifed deaf/ hard of hearing teachers and qualified to create a better quality learning experience. We the deaf/ hard of hearing educators are able to develop a better curriculum for students here. Additional, sharing one of my favorite charter public deaf school; that I have visted there and almost wanted to work there. The school name the Rocky Mountain Deaf School: Jeffco Public School. They truly have excellent curriculum and we have people from there are working with us currently. I was in awe to see their school with highest bilingual education and students were emerging from themselves with full sign language access. I am so proud of our deaf/ hard of hearing communities taking the stand and want this bill to be passed. I believe and I know we can do this. We are ready.

Thank you for letting me share my testimony again. Mahalo





Testimony of Roderick J. Macdonald  
Submitted to the Hawaii House of Representatives  
Committee on Education (EDN)  
Honorable Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Honorable Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 16, 2021, 2:00 pm

Re: HB 1078 - RELATING TO The Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind

Mr. Chairman, Members:

My name is Rod Macdonald. As a Honolulu resident who happens to be both deaf and blind, I am submitting this testimony to urge your vigorous support of HB 1078, Relating to The Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind.

In my formative years - from kindergarten through transition to employment - I have experienced programs for the Blind, programs for the Deaf, mainstream programs with and without supports, and even one misplacement at a program for the cognitively challenged. I was even sent to a psychiatrist for six years in a well-meaning attempt to find out why I could not hear.

I am originally from the Boston area. My education, from third grade until a post-graduate year of high school, was at a private school for the blind, a setting very similar to that of a contemporary charter school since the school still received State funding.

As an individual who is both deaf and blind, I strongly believe that Deaf and Deaf-Blind children are best served by a specialized school where their special communication, language and developmental needs will be understood and effectively addressed. I believe that this can be most effectively done at a private/charter school, where highly focused educational needs can be addressed by an expertise-driven staff and administration.

This legislation before us seeks to do this by converting the existing Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind into a charter school.

I am aware that State revenues are an issue, but my understanding is that the net result of this legislation would be:

1. HSDB remains on the same property
2. HSDB uses the same facilities; and
3. HSDB has access to the same level of funding it has received before conversion.

Very importantly, the Department of Education is taxed with developing a workable timeline for the HSDB's transition to a conversion charter school, including identifying any additional funding necessary to transition the HSDB to a conversion charter school that may be as yet unknown. In other words, identifying possible additional resource requirements will come before a final commitment to this conversion is made.

Establishment of the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind as a charter school would enable the "Diamond Head School" to focus on the needs of Deaf and Deaf-Blind children from early childhood through transition to employment and adult life. It would bring parents into the equation as active participants, with staff who know and understand the needs of these children. There would be no involvement of well-meaning-but-clueless mainstream politics.

As our elected representatives, we ask that you give your full support to passage of this legislation.

Thank you - stay safe!

Sincerely,

Roderick J. Macdonald, MA, LHD

Committee on Education (EDN)  
Honorable Justin H. Woodson, Chair  
Honorable Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 16, 2021, 2:00 PM

Honorable Chairman, Vice-Chairwoman and Members,

During my 40+ years of professional responsibilities in the field of vocational rehabilitation in California, Maryland and Hawaii, I have worked with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind individuals of all ages in providing a variety of training, including post-secondary education, focused summer camps, and vocational training designed to eventually lead to employment.

Without exception, individuals with well-developed English language skills and the ability to think critically were the best candidates to obtain the best-paying jobs. This meant that they were exposed to language at an early age and were academically challenged to excel in all areas, but especially in areas of their interests and aptitudes.

In my opinion the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) will only become an "Ivy League" school for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind by having the autonomy to employ qualified staff and administrators and allocate its budgeted resources to appropriately meet students' needs.

Under this legislation the current budget for the HSDB would be transferred to this charter school, stipulating that all staff and other employees having tenure shall suffer no loss of salary, seniority, or vacation and sick leave benefits.

I humbly request your enthusiastic support for this important bill to enable all Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind children in the State of Hawaii receive academic training to compete and live in our society of the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Eleanor E. Macdonald, M.Ed. CRC (ret.)

P.O. Box 4777  
Kaneohe, HI 96744

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Justin H. Woodson  
Chair  
House Committee on Education  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street, Room 329  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Support for House Bill 1078 - Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind

Dear Chair Woodson and members of the House Committee on Education,

I support House Bill 1078 - Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind which requires the Department of Education to develop a plan to transition the Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind to a conversion charter school.

As a member of the Deaf and Blind Task Force, person with a disability, and disability advocate who has worked with the Deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind population since 1979, this bill will create a plan which that covers four important points to: 1. comply with requirements for the establishment of a conversion charter school, under section 302D-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes; 2. ensure that the school remains on the same property, uses the same facilities, and has access to the same level of funding it has before conversion; 3. include a timeline for the school's transition to a conversion charter school; and 4. list any additional funding necessary to transition the school to a conversion charter school.

The crucial part of this bill is that the planning include representatives who are members of the Hawaii Deaf community (including students and graduates of the school, parents of students attending the school, and other professionals knowledgeable about deaf education). There are only a few professionals in Hawaii who are knowledgeable about deaf education to make the plan feasible, so I request that the group developing the plan also contact Deaf professionals on the Mainland to include their input into the planning process. With virtual platforms such as Zoom, there would be minimal cost to accomplish that. Providing quality education to Deaf and Deaf-blind children is a vast endeavor, and without appropriate input a solid plan cannot be achieved without input from all available Deaf educators. And an important part of maintaining the process is financial viability and the creation of a board that includes professionals knowledgeable in Deaf education and what it means to be Deaf.

The national mantra of people with disabilities which assisted us in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is "Nothing about us without us!" Education of Deaf children must include and be lead by qualified professional Deaf educators!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Debra L. Jackson, M.S.  
Member  
Deaf and Blind Task Force

**HB-1078**

Submitted on: 2/14/2021 10:14:05 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/16/2021 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Eva Silva-Ewan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Representative Woodson and the committees,

My name is Eva Silva-Ewan. I am 13 years old and attends Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind. My family have been attending to the school since 1914. I am the 10th child in my family. My brother and I are the last hope of my family in succeeding and bringing legacy by making things right for the school.

Growing up, I did not receive adequate education from the school for one reason. Almost all of my administrators were not familiar with Deaf Education. I continue to struggle with my OWN education because Department of Education did not know what to do with the school or even to make things right for students like myself.

Making the right school comes with right leadership from the top level. I have travelled across America meeting many Deaf students like myself. The only thing that saddened me was that Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind is not run by appropriate employees therefore I fully support the transition of the school from DOE to Charter so I can be in an environment that is run by knowledgeable leaders in Deaf Education using Bilingual Education.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

Aloha Pumehana,

Eva Silva-Ewan

Student at HSDB

**HB-1078**

Submitted on: 2/15/2021 7:08:45 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/16/2021 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha:

My name is David Simmons and I am an advocate for students at HSDB. I am very interested in SB 535 Relating to Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind and testifying on it at the Legislature. It was referred to your committee, and is a very important bill. Please put it on an agenda for a hearing before February 19, 2021.

Deaf students needs visual education via their natural language American Sign Language.

Mahalo

:DS

**HB-1078**

Submitted on: 2/15/2021 6:21:19 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/16/2021 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Cheryl Mizusawa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Justin H. Woodson

Chair

House Committee on Education

Hawaii State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street, Room 329

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Support for House Bill 1078 - Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind

Dear Chair Woodson and members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Cheryl (Mizusawa) Shimizu and I am Deaf. I attended the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB) for 12 yrs, and I support HB 1078 Relating to the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind.

When I attended HSDB, I had friends and teachers who could communicate with me using American Sign Language (ASL). They understood what it was like to be a deaf student trying to learn. I think it would have been a much better school if there had been deaf educators planning and running HSDB.



There have been many advances in teaching deaf children since I graduated, and it is important that HSDB keep up with those advances. We can only do that by including Deaf people in the planning and development for the future of HSDB.

I encourage you to pass this bill, because it will create a school that will meet the needs of Deaf and Deaf-Blind students. Hearing schools are guided by a Board of Education with professionals who understand how to educate hearing students. We are asking for the same consideration in planning and development of education for Deaf students who attend and graduate from HSDB.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Cheryl (Mizusawa) Shimizu

Deaf Advocate