



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

**Date:** 03/16/2022

**Time:** 03:10 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** Senate Education

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Interim Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB 1834, HD2 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the DOE to establish and administer the strong students grant pilot program to provide grants for eligible education expenses to eligible students. Requires the DOE to submit progress reports to the legislature prior to the 2023 and 2024 regular sessions. Appropriates funds for the pilot program. Effective 7/1/2051. (HD2)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of HB 1834, HD 2 to establish a Strong Students Grant Pilot Program and respectfully provides comments.

The amount of funds needed for this program will be large. As a preliminary look, for School Year 2021-2022, approximately 79,000 students enrolled in Department schools have family incomes that qualify them to receive free or reduced-price meals. Given these numbers, the Strong Student Grant Program would require a grant award budget of at least \$79 million to provide grants of \$1,000 to eligible students in the same year. This would be larger than some of the Department EDN budget categories.

The adjusted gross income criteria of \$50,000 and \$75,000 do not take into account the number of children in the family. To be equitable, families that have higher adjusted gross incomes but more children should be prioritized and not placed in the third award group of a first-come-first-served.

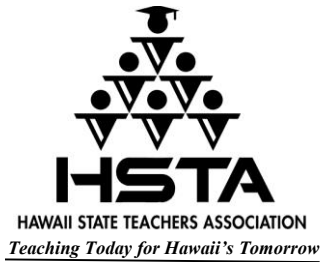
The eligible education expenses defined are duplicative of expenses already covered by the Department through federal education grants such as the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act; the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Additionally, the requirement to select a third party to build and administer a grant distribution platform will require additional Department fiscal resources in addition to the grant award budget and additional staff to oversee the procurement, development and ongoing administration of the platform. The development of the platform will be challenging given the need to meet the requirements set out by this measure that include verifying tax information of parents with eligible children.

The Strong Student Grant Program would divert a significant amount of resources that could otherwise be equitably allocated by the Department for all students.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1834, HD2.



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

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 1834, SD2 –RELATING TO EDUCATION GRANTS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022

OSA TUI, JR., PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **respectfully opposes HB1834, HD2,** relating to education grants. This bill requires the Department of Education (HIDOE) to establish and administer the strong students grant pilot program to provide grants for eligible education expenses to eligible students. Requires the DOE to submit progress reports to the legislature prior to the 2023 and 2024 regular sessions. Appropriates funds for the pilot program

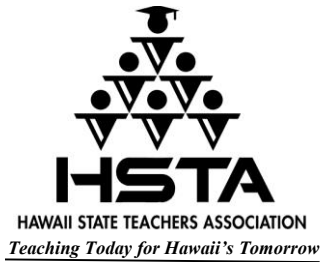
HSTA very much appreciates the intent of this bill and fully recognizes the need to provide this support to many of our public and charter school students and their families.

Reliable technology such as internet access and laptops have become common and important educational tools necessary for our students. Given Hawaii's high cost of living and comparatively low wages, the Strong Students Grant Pilot Program could go a long way to helping struggling families provide these necessary tools for their children.

**But this bill, in our view, funnels necessary and much needed general funds that could be sent to the HIDOE, and instead sends these general funds to private contractors, thus potentially diluting the efficiency of the appropriation. In the hearing before the Senate Committee on Education, the HIDOE testified that to fully fund this program would cost an estimated \$79 million for just one school year.**

**We believe those funds would be put to better use if provided directly to the HIDOE to provide these technology tools directly to students, rather than establishing a potentially complicated and administratively burdensome grant program implemented by a private 3<sup>rd</sup> party.**

As the HIDOE noted in their previous testimony, this program and the associated costs are “duplicative of expenses already covered by the Department through federal education grants....” We also note, as does the



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

**HIDOE, that this program would likely divert a significant amount of resources that could otherwise be used to the benefit of all students.**

**Looked at from another perspective, the funds appropriate in this bill could also potentially be used to support teachers directly by providing them funds to purchase classroom supplies, rather than our teachers buying them with money from their own pockets, as they currently do.**

**The Hawaii State Teachers Association very much appreciates the intent of this bill, but ultimately believes it is not the best way to support our financially struggling students or their families. As such, we request you oppose this bill.**

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: HB 1834 HD2 Relating to Education  
DATE: March 16, 2022 3:10 PM  
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education  
ROOM: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
FROM: Yvonne Lau, Interim Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT on HB1834 HB2** which requires the DOE to establish and administer the strong students grant pilot program to provide grants for eligible education expenses to eligible students. Requires the DOE to submit progress reports to the legislature prior to the 2023 and 2024 regular sessions. Appropriates funds for the pilot program.

The Commission appreciates the inclusion of public charter school students in this measure as it allows public charter school students an equal opportunity to the benefits this program can provide.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org  
hawaiikidscan.org

David Miyashiro  
Executive Director

March 16, 2022

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

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee,

**HawaiiKidsCAN strongly supports HB1834 HD2**, which requires the DOE to establish and administer the strong students grant pilot program to provide grants for eligible education expenses to eligible students; requires the DOE to submit progress reports to the legislature prior to the 2023 and 2024 regular sessions; and appropriates funds for the pilot program.

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.

### **Amendment request**

In order to better clarify the bill's intent and scope, we humbly request the Committee consider making the following simple amendment:

*Amend "(5) Supplemental education services" to read "Supplemental education services, as permitted under the Constitution of the State of Hawaii."*

### **The need for this bill**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been incredibly disruptive to student learning, and schools have a difficult task to address student learning loss, social emotional and mental health challenges, and re-socialization for kids who have experienced trauma and been disconnected from their friends and teachers. Families have also had to bear a heavy burden during the pandemic to support kids, as studies have shown that Hawaii was

among the slowest states to return students back for in-person learning.<sup>12</sup> With a significant number of students still at home due to quarantine and isolation protocols, families continue to be called upon to serve as caretakers and educators during the school day.

Unfortunately, this is a perfect storm for families, as the pandemic has had a devastating impact on family stability. The Bank of Hawaii finds that 63% of residents living with at least one child under age 18 have seen their combined household income decline.<sup>3</sup> Families are facing an impossible task and are desperate for any support.

That is why HB1834 HD2 is so important. The bill is roughly based on a pilot HawaiiKidsCAN has been running on Lanai called Ohana Pods, where parents have received microgrants to help with their children's learning, funded through local and national foundations. The program has distributed \$11,000 in microgrants to parents, with funds being used for critical needs such as learning materials and tutoring services. Overall, our pilot has served 140 participants, including 86 students (ages ranging from 16 months to 17 years) and 54 parents. The program has supported local partners to coordinate and convene families and community leaders to establish learning pods that connect students with needed educational tools and services. As part of the program, a local church on-island set up an afterschool and summer tutoring program that served more than 50 kids from ages 5-17 years old, using their microgrant to hire educators from the local public school.

The program has used the platform ClassWallet to simplify the administration of grants. Families have access to digital wallet credits within the system that can only be spent on approved educational vendors and service providers, and every purchase must be reviewed and approved before made official. This has meant that it is impossible to commit fraud, and families have the flexibility to select the supports that are most helpful to their kids. We selected this platform for our program due to ClassWallet's extensive vendor list and experience administering large grant programs for states.

Here are a few testimonials from parent participants:

- “Aloha! My family and I were so thankful for the opportunity to participate in the ‘Ohana Pods program in 2021! It granted us resources and supplies that we desperately needed but were not able to get for our kids. These resources allowed

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mercurynews.com/2021/02/23/covid-data-show-california-far-behind-in-reopening-schools/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cai.burbio.com/school-opening-tracker/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.boh.com/siteassets/files/boh/covid-19-study-vol2-executive-summary-121720.pdf>

our children to learn new life skills and even share their new skills and the products thereof with those around them. We are so thankful for this program and pray that it will continue for us and other families on Lanai as well! Thank you so very much, ‘Ohana Pods Program!!!” - Abby

- “The ‘Ohana Pods have been such an amazing program and have been super beneficial for me and my ‘Ohana. I’m grateful to the ‘Ohana Pods for providing opportunities for me and my children to socialize with other pods, providing funds for essential learning tools that I wouldn’t be able to afford myself and for supporting the growth and development of my children. This whole experience has been so positive, and if this program was offered again in the future I would, without hesitation, join again!” - Makana

For more information on the Ohana Pods program, please visit [bit.ly/ohanapods](https://bit.ly/ohanapods).

Of course, the pandemic has been a shared challenge across the nation, which is why other states are stepping up to create their own family support programs, including Oklahoma, Nebraska, and North Carolina. This isn’t a Democrat or a Republican thing to do: it is the right thing to do.

### **Why this makes sense now**

Respectfully, arguments that families should be able to get their educational needs taken care of exclusively through their schools simply don’t match reality. Parents have long had to pay for school supplies and supplemental learning materials, and schools have many of their own critical needs to prioritize. By definition, this funding would not be duplicative, as families would use the funding to address any needs they can’t already receive from their schools or existing partners.

We’ve also heard from high school counselors that the grant program would be helpful for kids who can’t afford SAT, ACT, and AP exam costs and retakes. There are many kids and families who deserve and need support.

As a pilot, we do not believe the cost for the program at this time needs to match the \$79 million in the DOE’s testimony, as suggested in prior testimony by the Hawaii DOE. An additional allocation of up to \$5 million should be more than sufficient to stand this program up, help real kids and families, and establish a scalable foundation that can be expanded in response to demand.

The DOE could also use its federal ESSER stimulus funds for this purpose to address learning loss.



Now is the time for bold action. We respectfully urge the legislature to provide much-needed relief to our kids and families.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro  
Founding Executive Director  
HawaiiKidsCAN

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND  
MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
ON  
HOUSE BILL NO. 1834, H.D. 2

**March 16, 2022**  
**3:10 p.m.**  
**Room 229 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO EDUCATION

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1834, H.D. 2, requires the Department of Education to:

1) establish and administer the Strong Students Grant Pilot Program (Program) to provide grants for eligible education expenses to eligible students; and 2) submit progress reports to the Legislature prior to the 2023 and 2024 Regular Sessions. Lastly, the measure appropriates an unspecified sum of general funds for FY 23 to establish and administer the Program.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and

- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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**Benjamin Duke**

Kailua-Kona

March 13, 2022

Re: HB1834

Committee on Education

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee,

I am a teacher from Kailua-Kona and I would like to express my support for HB1834 HD2.

Families continue to struggle financially because of the pandemic and inflation. At the same time, many families continue to suffer financially because of the ongoing impact of the pandemic

Families deserve some help, and HB1834 HD2 would make a huge difference for kids and families. Through platforms like ClassWallet, the Strong Students Grant pilot program would help families afford and access vital supports such as learning materials and tutoring services. This program would empower families to help address student learning loss.

Pilot programs have been successful in places like Lanai, and a number of states have launched programs to provide direct funding relief to families. In Hawaii, we look out for each other, and passing HB1834 HD2 would do just that.

Parents have long had to pay for school supplies and supplemental learning materials, and schools have many of their own critical needs to prioritize. By definition, this funding would not be duplicative, as families would use the funding to address any needs they can't already receive from their schools or existing partners. COVID-19 community spread has also impacted staff and afterschool program capacity at schools, leaving parents to fend for themselves in order to adapt and survive. There are many potential needs the program could address, including providing help to kids who can't afford SAT, ACT, and AP exam costs and retakes.

Mahalo,

Benjamin Duke

**HB-1834-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/13/2022 10:04:50 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2022 3:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Erica Yamauchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Members of the Committee:

I am a mother of two children in public schools and am writing today in strong support of HB1834 HD2.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been incredibly difficult for families, with parents and guardians needing to step in over and over again as both caretakers and educators during the school day/week, due to distance learning and student time in quarantine and isolation. At the same time, many families continue to suffer financially because of the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

Families deserve some help, and HB1834 HD2 would make a huge difference for kids and families. Through platforms like ClassWallet, the Strong Students Grant pilot program would help families afford and access vital supports for their children, such as learning materials and tutoring services. This program would empower families to help address student learning loss.

Pilot programs have been successful in places like Lana‘i, and a number of states have launched programs to provide direct funding relief to families. In Hawai‘i, we look out for each other, and passing HB1834 HD2 would do just that.

By definition, this funding would not be duplicative, as families would use the funding to address any needs they can’t already receive from schools or schools' existing partners. COVID-19 community spread has also impacted staff and afterschool program capacity at schools, leaving parents to fend for themselves in terms of supporting their children's educational needs, as well as child care.

I urge you to pass HB1834 to provide keiki and their families the support they need.

Very sincerely,

Erica Yamauchi, Kaimukī/Wilhelmina Rise

**HB-1834-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2022 3:01:01 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/16/2022 3:10:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amy Sun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1834, because so many studies have shown that financial assistance really does help families in need. Families that receive funding for their educational needs will not only feel less financial strain but the assistance will create a domino effect on other areas of their lives, such as their emotional and physical well-beings. When families' finances are not created equally, assistance really can go a long way. Some families lack generational wealth and privileges such as enriched networks from Mom and Dad to land them a good internship and the right zip code to provide a nicer neighborhood, but these advantages can add up when we look at a child's whole experience. The pandemic has only exacerbated those differences, and I think HB1834 is a step in the right direction.