



TO: The Honorable Michelle Kidani, Chair
The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Phil Bossert, Executive Director
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

RE: **HB 2248 HD1 – RELATING TO SCHOOLS - In Support**

DATE: Monday, March 14, 2022
3:00 p.m.

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

My name is Philip Bossert and I am the Executive Director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS).

HAIS and its subsidiary, the Hawaii Council of Private Schools (HCPS), supports HB 2248 HD1. HAIS currently serves 94 independent schools and over 33,000 students in Hawai'i. Member schools include several of the largest independent schools in the U.S., as well as some of the smallest. While distinctive with respect to mission and philosophy, HAIS member schools are united in helping children achieve personal and academic excellence.

There are 111 independent (non-public) K-12 schools in Hawaii. Of that total, 89 schools are currently licensed or pending licensure by HCPS in accordance with Act 227 and 21 schools are compliant with Act 227 by virtue of being accredited by one or more national accrediting agencies recognized by HCPS.

All HCPS licensed schools must submit annual verifications of the health and safety information documents required by various State and County agencies in Hawaii (Dept. of Health, Fire Dept., Dept. of Transportation). However, compliant schools are not required to submit these annual verifications; and, as a result, such documentation is only verified during reaccreditation visits once every 5 to 10 years. And often, such verifications are overlooked by accreditation visiting teams. It is possible that some schools may not be in full compliance with Act 227 for several years due to the lack of such verification and, as a result, may pose a danger to their faculty, staff and students.

HCPS became aware of this issue recently when a licensed school was not able to obtain its annual fire safety inspection certificate due to various facility and equipment issues on its campus. To avoid becoming unlicensed, the school decided to rely instead on its accredited status and become compliant, in which case it would not have to verify its fire safety inspection document for perhaps another 3 to 5 years.

HB 2248 HD1 will close this loophole and require both licensed and compliant schools to submit annual verifications of their health and safety documentation.

We respectfully ask for your support on this measure and pass it out of committee. I am available to answer any questions you might have about this issue.