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Executive Director

## TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB2514 HD1 - Relating to teacher housing**  
Position: **Support**  
Hearing: **February 15, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309**  
Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** HB2514 HD1 which establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers and appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

The stories are not uncommon anymore – teachers accept jobs with high hopes, only to have to turn them down before the first day of school or shortly after the school year begins because there is no affordable housing available. More importantly, locals who wish to remain in Hawai'i to pursue a lifetime career in education have to move away because they are not able to afford any of the available housing.

Recruitment and retention of qualified educators in our public school classrooms are always top of mind as try to provide keiki the schools they deserve while the housing situation here in Hawai'i continues to hurt our keiki and hurt our schools. What little teacher housing there is across the state is woefully inadequate in availability and those structures have been mentioned by the deputy superintendent as being in dire need of repair. This bill will help to address the critical housing need for our teachers that has to be addressed sooner rather than later.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 02/15/2024

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** HB 2514, HD1 RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers. Appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) would like to provide comments on HB 2514 HD 1, which establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to be administered by the Department to provide housing vouchers to certain teachers who are employed by the Department of Education and commit to teaching at hard-to-fill schools and charter schools for no less than five years.

Housing affordability is the most significant recruitment and retention barrier that the Department experiences. It would be beneficial to provide teachers, regardless of their work location, with a voucher to offset their housing expenses. Limiting vouchers to teachers in hard-to-staff areas overlooks the fact that some of the highest housing costs are in areas not considered hard-to-staff. This results in long commutes for teachers who are unable to afford to live in the communities they serve.

The Department already provides between \$3,000 - \$8,000 in annual pay differentials to licensed teachers in hard-to-staff areas as an incentive and retention tool.

Considering the voucher eligibility requirements outlined in the current draft, the Department feels that the original version of HB 2514 that places the program under the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation is more appropriate given their

expertise in affordable housing finance and development.

Currently, the Department does not have access to some information in Subsection F, 1-7 to be able to verify all of the eligibility parameters. If the bill passes in its current form, the Department may need to rely upon a teacher's self-declaration to verify their household income level and to ensure that the teacher does not own, operate, rent, or control any residential real property in addition to their primary residence.

Finally, should this bill pass, the Department will require additional positions and resources to be able to effectively implement and monitor continued eligibility for this new program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2514 HD 1.



**HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**  
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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

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

Testimony by  
The Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 15, 2024

H.B. 2514, H.D. 1 — Relating To Teacher Housing

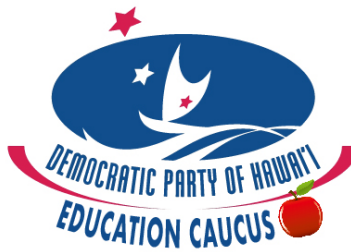
The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on H.B. 2514, H.D. 1, which proposes to establish a Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers.

The HGEA represents thousands of employees who work for the DOE and make less than a starting Hawaii teacher's salary. Some of these employees also work in hard-to-staff locations. They, too, should benefit from a housing assistance program being administered by the department for which they work. They, too, deserve to be eligible for a housing voucher to assist with their rent, mortgage, and down payments. If this program is available for teachers, then the legislature should consider providing a "workforce home assistance program" for other government employees regardless of jurisdiction.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 2514, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira  
Executive Director



**LATE**

## **HOUSE BILL 2514, HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING**

FEBRUARY 15, 2024 · EDN HEARING

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 2514, HD1, relating to teacher housing, which establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers and appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education found that when compared with other high-cost geographic locations, Hawai'i teachers are paid \$7,700 to \$26,000 less than their peers in school districts with similar costs of living, depending on length of service.

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the State Legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. **Providing financial assistance to support teachers in obtaining housing or paying rent would help stem this problem, though this is not a substitute for paying educators professional salaries.**

**While Gov. Josh Green recently said in his State of the State address that the teacher shortage had been cut by 50 percent, this figure is not entirely accurate.** In fact, by other measures, the teacher shortage is getting worse. According to a presentation provided to the Hawai'i Board of Education by DOE officials on January 13, 2024, **the number of licensed teachers employed by our state's public school system has fallen from 95.5 percent of total positions in 2019 to 93.8 percent in 2023.** As of October 1, 2023, the department had over 800 teaching positions that were filled by educators who fell into the categories of unlicensed newly hired (emergency hires), unlicensed but in the process of completing a state approved teacher education program, or eligible for a teaching license that has not yet been acquired.

We note that Hawai'i residents face the second-highest housing costs in the nation, at more than twice the national average. Researchers who authored the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach 2023* report found that a full-time worker would need to earn \$41.83/hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market value in our state, with Honolulu experiencing a 67 percent increase in fair market rent between 2005 and 2015. Average rent for a two-bedroom unit surpassed \$2,000 in recent years.

One out of every four households in Hawai'i report that they are "doubling up" or are three paychecks or less away from being homeless, per the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. Additionally, over 60 percent of households are severely cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, a number that rises to over 80 percent of extremely low-income households. Notably, housing costs increased during the pandemic. In Honolulu, median single-family home prices reached a record of \$1.15 million in April of 2022, driven largely by sales to residential property investors. Unsurprisingly, our state is experiencing population decline. Hawai'i saw domestic out-migration increase for a seventh consecutive year in 2023, as our high cost of living continued to push people to the mainland.

To deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we must pay teachers what they're worth. It is the least we can do for the hardworking educators on whom our children's and our society's future depends.

**Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · [kriscoffield@gmail.com](mailto:kriscoffield@gmail.com)**