

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



**LATE**

KEITH T. HAYASHI  
SUPERINTENDENT

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

**Date:** 02/02/2023

**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 0603 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.

**Purpose of Bill:** Appropriates moneys to hire school-based youth mental health specialists for Hawaii Department of Education schools.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports and appreciates HB0603. The appropriation of funds to increase the school-based youth mental health workforce would strengthen the Department's efforts to meet the needs of students in Hawaii experiencing trauma, grief, family separation, depression, and other crises.

Additionally, recognizing that mental health support should be prioritized, the Department has requested, in the current biennium budget, funding to establish educational psychologists equipped with the expertise and specialized training to address acute student mental health concerns. This would ensure long-term, stable funding for these important student supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 0603.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



CATHY K. IKEDA  
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  
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FOR: HB 603 Relating to Mental Health  
DATE: February 2, 2023  
TIME: 2:00 P.M.  
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education  
ROOM: Conference Room 309 & Videoconference  
FROM: Yvonne Lau, Interim Executive Director  
State Public Charter School Commission

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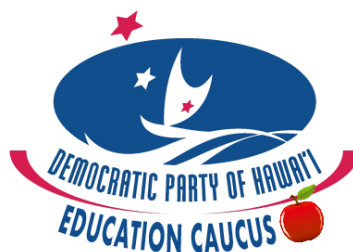
Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer **SUPPORT with comments on HB 603** which appropriates moneys to hire school-based youth mental health specialists for the State’s public schools.

The Commission respectfully requests that the Committee consider including language to explicitly include public charter schools as charter schools are also public schools and we must ensure that all public school students have access to the same mental health services that would be available through this measure.

The Commission is available to work with this committee, the DOE, and our public charter schools in moving this legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



## **HOUSE BILL 603, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

FEBRUARY 2, 2023 · HOUSE EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JUSTIN H. WOODSON

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 603, relating to mental health, which appropriates moneys to hire school-based youth mental health specialists for Hawai'i Department of Education schools.

Children are facing a mental health crisis in Hawai'i. According to the 2022 Kids Count Data Book, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, approximately 2,200 more children in Hawai'i struggled with anxiety and depression in 2020, a 23 percent increase compared with 2016. Similarly, according to the State Department of Health, from 2016 to 2020, suicide was the fourth leading cause of fatal injury for children aged fifteen-years-old and under.

Out keiki mental health crisis is especially acute in rural communities, which face severe challenges in meeting mental health care needs because of a lack of access to critical mental health facilities. To rectify this problem, we should invest in the community schools model of education, a core part of which involves funding strong wraparound services—including mental wellness programs and personnel—for vulnerable students.

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



**To: Committee on Education**

**Hearing Date/Time: Thursday February 2, 2023 2:00 pm**

**Re: Testimony in Support of HB 603**

**From: Heather Lusk, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center**

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten and Members of the Committee

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) supports HB 603 which would appropriate monies for the Dept. of Education to hire youth mental health specialists.

HHRC's mission is to *reduce harm, promote health, create wellness and fight stigma in Hawaii and the Pacific*. We focus our efforts on those disproportionately affected by social determinants of health, including but not limited to: people living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the transgender, LGBTQ and the Native Hawaiian communities.

I am a social worker and understand the increase in mental health support that our school-age youth need in order to thrive. Thank you for supporting this effort to invest in the mental health and wellbeing of our youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Heather Lusk, Executive Director, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center

Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists supports HB603. The intent of this bill is to appropriate moneys to enable the Hawai'i Department of Education to hire school-based youth mental health specialists for its schools. Death by suicide was the leading cause of death in youth ages 10-19 even before the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated what is now designated as a mental health crisis.

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists additionally encourages that these moneys are utilized to recruit additional School Psychologists. School Psychologists have extensive training and are well-equipped to work directly with school teams to implement crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, including suicide.

Respectfully Submitted:

Alec Marentic, NCSP

*HASP President*



## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Thursday, Feb. 2nd, 2023, Conference Room 309

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Marten and members of the committee,

HAPA strongly supports HB603 which appropriates moneys to hire school-based youth mental health specialists for Hawai'i Department of Education schools.

Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and other people of color have disproportionately high rates of suicide. Suicide rates and suicide attempts are also disproportionately high among the State's youth. According to the department of health, between 2005 and 2013, up to twenty per cent of high school-aged children in Hawaii had suicidal ideation. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for children between the ages of ten and fourteen and the leading cause of death for young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. The State's hospitals also see hundreds of patients per year having self-inflicted injuries, and more than twenty percent of these are under the age of eighteen.

These numbers illustrate the need for additional specialists to provide mental health services in the State's schools. Students in Hawaii may be experiencing trauma, grief, family separation, depression, and other crises, and many school counseling offices are short-staffed. Other school counseling offices are staffed by social workers, who may lack the expertise and specialized training to address mental health concerns.

On a personal note, having grown up with a sibling struggling with mental health, I am aware of the toll that mental health challenges have on the entire family if not recognized and diagnosed early in life. Most parents struggle to find resources to help their children and seek appropriate assistance. This can be challenging for even the most well resourced and equipped families, yet so many children fall through the cracks. Additional assistance in our schools can help provide youth and their families with access to vital resources and treatment.

Please prioritize the mental health of our youth and support HB603.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is placed below the 'Warm Regards,' text.

Anne Frederick,  
Executive Director

**LATE**

**HB-603**

Submitted on: 2/2/2023 12:07:28 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Avahry McGuirk	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

**Date: Feb 2, 2023**

**To: Education, Health and Homelessness, and Finance Committee**

**From: Avahry McGuirk**

**Subject: Mental Health**

**Aloha and thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. Hi my name is Avahry McGuirk and I am a freshman at Kalaheo High School. While an active member in Student Council I was researching and found the bill HB603. I fully support this bill and the needs to allow mental health services in the State's schools.**

**According to the bill HB603, it states there are high rates of suicide based on the color of people. Between the years 2005 and 2013, up to twenty percent of children in high school had an idea to kill themselves.**

**With Mental health services this improve access to care, and allow treatment for mental health issues. With this in mind they are able to reduce the risk of stress, and substance abuse. This can help allow many children to be able to feel safe and involved.**

**Many children are struggling with suicide prevention. I know what people are thinking because recently, a student in my school had killed themselves. This was due to stress and issues going on at home. Kids are the new generation and we need to protect them.**

**With passing this bill this will not only help students and kids with their issues. It allow them to feel apart of something they can cherish and help nourish themselves so they do not make a decision which can impact everyone involved in their lives. Thank you for reading my testimony, and I hope you pass this bill I fully support.**

**Avahry McGuirk**

**HB-603**

Submitted on: 2/2/2023 4:42:22 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Arlan Redoble	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chair and committee,

My name is Arlan Redoble and I show full support for House bill 603. I'm a current Junior from Farrington High School from the Honolulu school District and I'm also the Co-Curricular Concerns Committee Secretary in the Hawai'i State Student Council. As a high school student I see firsthand how important mental health really is for students. When I was at the secondary students I heard the voices of all of my fellow students from the Hawaii public school system. We had to debate on bills and choose which bill we felt were so urgent and important for our current student life. Out of the 9 bills introduced in our conference this along with two others were the ones voted most important, and urgent. This speaks volumes. The student leaders of our state have used their student voice to show how important getting this bill passed is to them. Mental health is not just a problem in Hawaii, it is an epidemic in the country especially after the pandemic which we now know as COVID 19 which has drastically affected the lives of students. When not given the necessary help they need, students can start developing unhealthy coping habits. Having these resources will influence everything we do. Our mental health affects us and everyone around us. It can affect your physical, and emotional well-being. It can also distract us in class, cause us to lose focus, or even end up spiraling into many other disorders like anxiety, depression, etc. in the bill itself it states "The legislature finds that Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and other people of color have disproportionately high rates of suicide. Suicide rates and suicide attempts are also disproportionately high among the State's youth." With our diverse population with many minorities this statistic makes it clear that the need for these resources are growing dramatically and that this bill will help address it. Having allocated money to have these resources and officials on campus is crucial to a thriving and successful student environment on campus. So with this testimony I urge you as a student to please think of the mental health of current students and all the future generations of students in the Hawaii public schools system that'll be affected by the passing of this bill. Mahalo for your time and consideration.



**HB-603**

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 2:21:08 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Evan Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Representatives;

As a public school parent and lifelong educator, I support the spirit of this bill to provide mental health professionals to children in our public schools. Mental health support is vital for children's development and well-being, especially as we emerge from a global pandemic, and having access to mental health professionals in schools can make a significant difference in the lives of many students.

However, I would like to urge the legislature to consider providing equal funding to public charter schools to support the hiring of mental health professionals. All children, regardless of the type of school they attend, deserve equal access to resources that support their mental health and well-being.

Public charter schools serve a significant portion of the student population and it is important that they receive the same support as DOE schools in providing mental health services to their students. This can help ensure that all children have access to the resources they need to thrive and succeed in school and in life.

In conclusion, I strongly support the bill's goal of providing mental health professionals to children in public schools, but I urge the legislature to take steps to provide equal funding to public charter schools to support the hiring of such staff. All children deserve access to resources that support their mental health and well-being.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

**HB-603**

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 8:40:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I'm born and raised in the Hawaiian Kingdom a Kanaka Maoli.

I'm writing in STRONG SUPPORT of HB603.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo

**HB-603**

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 10:30:32 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mar Heinrich Ruiz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, my name is Mar Heinrich Ruiz, a student from the island of Kaua`i and I would like to speak in support of HB603. This past weekend I participated in the Secondary Student Conference held in the capitol building and saw firsthand all of the support garnered for this bill. Students across the state agree that specialists on campus must deal with youth mental health is needed. There needs to be an outlet for young people as these are the most critical years of their lives. We are still developing mentally and having someone nearby to be able to speak to can really help.

Entrusting mental health specialists on campus would be an essential tool that would create a better student environment. Personally, getting access to therapy and a specialist was a turning point in my life. I had someone that would console me and listen to me as I did not know how to handle stress and anxiety yet. My therapist was very helpful in shaping me into the mentally well person I am today. If this was accessible to all students around Hawaii we could expect a lower chance of suicide.

Depression in youths in Hawaii is a devastating statistic that is exponentially growing just showing how dire it is to have this bill passed. Please for the commonwealth of our schools and the generations that will come after you, invest in this bill that will invest in the minds of Hawaii.

**HB-603**

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 12:25:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shauna Springer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kāko‘o wau! I support!

**HB-603**

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 5:58:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brynn Grace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Martin, and other EDN committee members. My name is Brynn Grace and I am a sophomore at Mililani High School. I am testifying in strong support of HB603.

As a highschool student, I have seen the effects bad mental health can have on a students daily life. They are usually more withdrawn from both social and academic aspects of school. These students are constantly struggling, and most suffering in silence because they have no one to talk to and no one to listen to them. For most students, it is hard to just get a therapist or other mental health help, either because of parents or financial reasons, having specialists in school will make this help more accessible and allow more students to get the help they need / deserve.

This past weekend (Jan 26, 2023 - Jan 28, 2023) I was an attendee at the Secondary Student Conference. During our debate sessions I heard first hand accounts of how people suffered with their mental health and didn't have anyone to talk to. I also heard stories from students about how some of their friends committed suicide because they were unable to get help. I believe it is exceedingly important that we don't lose anymore Hawai'i youth from something that can be implemented in schools.

I urge you legislators to deeply consider this bill. I have seen too many students deteriorate mentally because of their inability to get this kind of help. I hope with this testimony you can see the effects of mental health on a students education from a student's perspective, from someone who has to walk on campus everyday and see people who could potentially be struggling.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Brynn Grace

**LATE**

**HB-603**

Submitted on: 2/2/2023 11:53:02 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/2/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chloe Ishigo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

2/2/23

**To: Chairperson Justin Woodson**

**Vice Chairperson Lisa Marten**

**Chairperson Woodson and Vice Chairperson Marten on behalf of the Windward District Student Council, which consists of Kailua High School, Kalaheo High School, Castle High School, Kahuku High School and Intermediate, Kailua Intermediate, and Waimanalo Intermediate, we would like to voice our support for HB 603. The increasing mental health issues of minors our age is a concerning issue, that has to be addressed. Through House Bill, 603 students will be able to get professional help that could help improve their academics. Stanford School of Medicine did a study in which they concluded that a steady mindset increases student mental health. This study proves that after students lower their stress, they can better focus on their studies. Overall this will be beneficial for the community's future because they will have more potential in life and a steady mindset for their future careers. In this day and age, the mental health of students has become a more open topic and concerning issue. Having the support of a trained professional could be a chance that many students never thought would come because they do not have the money or support from their guardians to have access to a mental health professional.**

Date: 2/2/23

**LATE**

Addressed to: Chairperson Justin H. Woodson and Vice Chairperson Lisa Martin,

Subject: Mental Health (Providing psychologist in public schools)

I'm Gabrielle Mae Chiefe, a senior at Castle High School. As a student in the public education system, I am writing in support of HB603 regarding mental health services provided to schools. This testimony provides evidence in support of providing mental health services in the form of professional therapy to all public school students. Stanford school of medicine states that "Having a steady mindset increases student academics" (Stanford School of Medicine). Many articles dedicated to the benefits of therapy say that therapy improves stress management and mindset, therefore therapy is correlated to increased student academics. Often Times students develop some sort of mental health issues due to stress at home or at school. Also, school is a large time of learning and transition which can be mentally straining for students. School years, formative years, and learning coping methods and stress management at an early age can benefit students as adults. Lastly, giving students the option and comfort of knowing that they have a resource right at school without financial strain or stigma is a service that should be provided to students. Whether short or long-term care, professional therapy is a security measure to ensure students come out with an education obtained through their best potential; which their best academic potential can possibly be obtained through therapy. Overall students should be able to come out of the public education system not only with basic education and a diploma but real-life skills such as stress management in mental introspection. Although there are financial limitations to providing such services, students need more front the public education system. Students deserve real-life skills such as career readiness, interpersonal skills and also healthy coping methods, and a great mindset.