



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

**Date:** 02/05/2021  
**Time:** 03:00 PM  
**Location:** 229  
**Committee:** Senate Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB 0703

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires two hours of annual in-service training in suicide prevention for all teachers, principals, and school counselors.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of SB 703 as it aligns to its vision that ensures all of Hawaii's children are provided with opportunities that foster health, safety, education, school readiness, and success. The Department recognizes the critical role of educators in addressing suicide prevention and respectfully offers comments.

Currently, the Department continues to diligently work to provide Suicide Awareness and Prevention training as required in §302A-856, Hawaii Revised Statutes, which requires a Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training and a Risk Referral Protocol for all Administrators, Teachers, Teacher Assistants, and Counselors.

As of January 1, 2020, the Department, in collaboration with the Hawaii State Department of Health and the Prevent Suicide Hawaii Task Force, is able to provide the following approved array of training opportunities to schools at no cost:

Curriculum	Description
Suicide Prevention 101	A very basic presentation to introduce audiences to foundational information around suicide prevention such as core principles, local data, warning signs, and resources. Approximately 60-90 minutes.
Question, Persuade, Refer Online Suicide Prevention Training	A very basic presentation taught online covering: How to Question, Persuade, Refer someone who may be suicidal; how to get help for yourself or learn more about preventing suicide, common causes of suicidal behavior, warnings signs of suicide; and how to get help for someone in crisis. Approximately 1 hour.

Youth Suicide and Bullying Prevention	Mental Health America of Hawaii's Youth Suicide and Bullying Prevention training offers strategies to recognize and intervene in suicide and bullying. In these workshops, participants learn to: 1) Define bullying and understand the roles we play in bullying; 2) Identify symptoms of depression and recognize signs of suicide; and 3) Listen, ask, support, and empower the youth to get help. Approximately 2-3 hours.
SafeTALK	"SafeTALK" (TALK = tell, ask, listen, keep safe) was brought to Hawaii via the "Hawaii Gatekeeper Training Initiative." It is a three-hour gatekeeper training intended for everyone in the community. It is an evidence-based training program which teaches individuals to be "alert helpers." Participants learn to recognize warning signs for suicide, approach someone at risk and ask if they are thinking about suicide, and then connect them to a caregiver or professional that can then work with the individual to keep safe.
Youth Mental Health First Aid	Youth Mental Health First Aid is a full-day education program which introduces participants to unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health issues in adolescents, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and teaches individuals how to help an adolescent who may be in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge. This training was coordinated and sponsored through a federal grant awarded to the Hawaii State Department of Education. Approximately 6-8 hours.

The Department remains committed to supporting students' academic, social, physical and emotional health and providing a safe and protective learning environment. The Department continues to collaborate with the Department of Health and other community agencies around suicide awareness and prevention.

Given the Department's ongoing work and commitment to provide suicide awareness and prevention training, the Department respectfully suggests that this measure is not necessary at this time.

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).

**SB-703**

Submitted on: 2/2/2021 4:15:14 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/5/2021 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	No

Comments:

We support this bill.

**SB-703**

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 9:17:55 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/5/2021 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Renee Dieperink	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a public school teacher and wholeheartedly **SUPPORT this bill**. I do not feel very well-equipped to help students who I know are having issues in this area. Two hours of training a year is even very little, but at least this will be a good start.

**SB-703**

Submitted on: 2/2/2021 4:12:21 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/5/2021 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
John Bickel	Individual	Support	No

## Comments:

As a teacher of students who have attempted suicide and one who succeeded, I deeply feel the importance of this bill. All teachers need to know how to deter attempts and deal with suicidal teens, Please support this bill.

February 3, 2021

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

State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

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

I am a community member from the island of 'Oahu and I'm proud to support SB703.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need to provide more solutions to help our school-aged community with feeling supported while going through experiences of isolation, loneliness, and trauma.

The profound impact on families due to the attempt of suicide is unprecedented statewide. Stigma that surrounds seeking medical services for school-aged citizens prevents them from finding the support and help they need. In addition, with the increase of individual and independent learning due to the pandemic increases more attempts of suicide.

SB703 promotes mandating at least 2 hours of annual in service training for all teachers, counselors and administration on suicide prevention.

Increasing awareness for suicide prevention will assist in finding support services and medical advice in the early onset of attempted suicide. Students whom spend majority of their day in school will be better monitored for triggers and signs of loneliness and trauma by the school staff. SB703 will provide proper and up to date training to help school staff to recognize early onset as well as providing additional support for all students while going through the pandemic.

Mahalo,

Elizabeth Mahoe

February 4, 2021

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Education  
Hawai'i State Legislature, Hawai'i State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: COMMENTS for SB 703**

*Relating to Suicide Prevention Training  
(Hearing on February 5, 2021, at 3:00 p.m. in Conference Room 229 and via Zoom)*

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado Kim, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda. My professional training is in public health and community-based research, with the majority of my experience in mental/behavioral health and suicide prevention. I am also on the Steering (Leadership) Committee of the Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce (PSHTF), which is Hawai'i's longest-standing community-based collaborative which voluntarily comes together to promote suicide prevention in our communities. I am also a Board Member for the Hawai'i Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), and am a certified trainer in the SafeTALK, Connect, and Suicide Prevention Foundations ("SP 101") curricula.

Please first allow me to convey a heartfelt THANK YOU for continuing to serve as champions for suicide prevention in Hawai'i. *As you know, one person dies by suicide every two days in Hawai'i.* As I often say in trainings, "This is an issue that does not discriminate" – suicide unfortunately affects all groups, communities, and disciplines. In addition, the immense stigma around mental health and suicidality increases the challenge that faces us when encouraging people to seek help when needed.

*I would like to provide comments and context with respect to SB 703.* Obviously, training is imperative to the State's suicide prevention movement, especially for our educators who have direct interaction with our youth. This is a key component of the Hawai'i Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, authored by the Taskforce (requested by the Legislature, and filed in December 2017 – <https://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/files/2019/02/Prevent-Suicide-Hawaii-Taskforce-Strategic-Plan-by-2025.pdf>).

Relating to suicide prevention training for educators, *I wanted to call your attention to Act 270 from the 2019 Legislative Session* (introduced by Senator Donovan Dela Cruz and signed into law by Governor Ige in July 2019). I thought the following comparison would be useful:

	SB 703 (2021 Session)	Act 270 (SB 383 SD2 HD1 CD1 from 2019 Session)
Training requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual (at least two hours)</li><li>• For teachers, principals, and school counselors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual</li><li>• For teachers, teacher assistants, administrators, and counselors</li></ul>
Protocol requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not discussed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk referral protocol must be put in place</li></ul>
Purview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not clearly described, though refers to "the department"</li><li>• No charter or private schools mentioned</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DOE complex areas and charter schools</li><li>• No private schools mentioned</li></ul>

*The Prevent Suicide Hawai'i Taskforce is actively partnering with the Department of Education and Department of Health to implement the requirements already set forth by Act 270.* This has included certification of DOE staff and partners to administer trainings within their own schools and complex areas (as of today, 135 have been certified to deliver trainings). Therefore, while we whole-heartedly support the need for suicide prevention training for our educators, we would ***recommend additional resources and supports for the implementation of the existing Act 270.*** In addition, perhaps the Legislature may ***consider future amendments or new legislation to ensure that private schools are included*** in this larger statewide movement.

I am more than happy to discuss further, and address any questions or comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me ([junesugi88@gmail.com](mailto:junesugi88@gmail.com), or 808-291-9930) if I can be of service around suicide prevention or related public health topics.

Although you must hear the words THANK YOU many times a day, please do know how genuine our gratitude really is. Many of us working in this field do so because of personal experiences with mental illness and/or suicide, and so our passion to “pass life forward” is real and true. We feel immensely honored by your leadership and commitment.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JM' with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeanelle Sugimoto-Matsuda, DrPH  
(808) 291-9930  
[junesugi88@gmail.com](mailto:junesugi88@gmail.com)



**SB-703**

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 2:31:30 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/5/2021 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Danielle Bergan	Testifying for E Ola Hou Prevent Suicide Maui County Task Force	Support	No

Comments:

Chair Kidani, Vice-Chair Kim, and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am Danielle Bergan, Co-Chair of the Prevent Suicide Maui County Task Force (PSMCTF). I am a trained and certified suicide prevention and mental health trainer professionally for Mental Health America of Hawaii. These trainings include as Suicide Prevention Foundations (S.P. 101.), Mental Health and Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA or YMHA) and Youth Suicide and Bullying Prevention YSBP). I am also a member of the Steering Committee of the Prevent Suicide Hawaii State task Force.

I want to thank you all for your continued support of suicide prevention in Hawaii and for our Hawaii youth. As you know, one person dies by suicide in the state of Hawaii every 2 days. This does not discriminate as it affects adults and youth of all our counties.

In regard to SB 703 I want to comment on your intent and I applaud you for adding in 2 hours of annual suicide prevention training for educators. They closely work with our youth and additional knowledge of suicide prevention is so key.

Please note the Act 270 passed in 2019 with similar notations to SB 703. You may want to build on that by adding in the risk protocol plan for each school and expand the purview to not just all public schools but make it a requirement of all Hawaii schools public and private.

Our PSMCTF assists the DOE in the delivery of the S.P. 101 training for the Maui Complexes as well as invites any DOE staff to our YMHA trainings which are 8 hours in length.

Please utilize this information to expand upon our suicide prevention efforts state wide.

You can always contact me at at 808-268-7470 or e-mail [psmctf@gmail.com](mailto:psmctf@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Danielle Bergan

Co-chair E Ola Hou Prevent Suicide Maui County Task Force.