

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 24 2023

RE: H.B. No. 1204
H.D. 1
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2023
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Higher Education and Education, to which was referred H.B. No. 1204, H.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC EDUCATION,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to establish and appropriate funds for the Public Education Scholarship Program within the University of Hawaii to pay for a participant's University tuition in return for the participant's commitment to teach in a public school or public charter school classroom in the State.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Education, State Public Charter School Commission, University of Hawai'i System, Hawaii State Teachers Association, University of Hawaii Professional Assembly, Education Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, and one individual.

Your Committees find that the Department of Education struggles to attract and retain teachers in the State's public schools. Teachers in Hawaii receive some of the lowest salaries in the nation once adjusted for the State's high cost of living. Additionally, teachers often use personal funds to pay for teaching and classroom supplies. These financial hardships disincentive individuals from pursuing teaching careers,



especially since many students graduate from university in debt. This measure offers individuals a debt-free university education in exchange for a postgraduate teaching commitment to help increase the recruitment and retention of teachers in the State.

Your Committees recognize that many factors beyond the cost of higher education contribute to the State's teacher shortage. While the tuition waiver proposed by this measure is not a panacea, your Committees believe it is imperative that every possible avenue be pursued to support the recruitment and retention of teachers in the State. To understand the efficacy of the tuition waiver proposed by this measure in increasing recruitment and retention, systems must be developed to monitor recipient outcomes. Your Committees note, per discussion with the Department of Education, that the Department does not have an automated system in place to track the number of years an individual completing a service commitment has taught in a Department classroom. Without an efficient method of monitoring service completion, the Department of Education would be unable to collect tuition repayments from Public Education Scholarship Program recipients who fail to fulfill their service commitment. Given that the University of Hawaii has historically struggled to collect tuition monies from its students, your Committees stress the importance of the Department of Education and the University of Hawaii developing systems to monitor Public Education Scholarship Program recipients as they complete their baccalaureate degrees and fulfill their service commitments.

Your Committees have amended this measure by:

- (1) Specifying that a student must be a state resident to qualify for the Public Education Scholarship Program;
- (2) Prohibiting a recipient from receiving more than an unspecified amount of funds from the Public Education Scholarship Program;
- (3) Specifying that the service commitment to teach in certain classrooms required by the Public Education Scholarship Program shall not exceed seven years within the ten years following graduation and licensure; and



- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Higher Education and Education that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 1204, H.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommend that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 1204, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committees on Higher Education
and Education,


MICHELLE N. KIDANI, Chair


DONNA MERCADO KIM, Chair



