

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI  
SUPERINTENDENT

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

**Date:** 02/08/2023

**Time:** 03:00 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** Senate Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Bill:** SB 1044 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 SB 1044. 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 in support of SB 1044.



## HAWAI`I YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: [info@hysn.org](mailto:info@hysn.org)

Vonnell Ramos, President  
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President  
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer  
Jefferson Gourley, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive  
Director

### Network Membership

#### *Bay Clinic*

*Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawai`i  
Big Island Substance Abuse  
Council*

#### *Bobby Benson Center*

*Child and Family Service  
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawai`i  
Collins Consulting, LLC  
Domestic Violence Action Center*

#### *EPIC `Ohana, Inc.*

*Family Programs Hawai`i  
Family Support Hawai`i  
Friends of the Children's Justice  
Center of Maui*

#### *Get Ready Hawai`i*

*Hale Kipa, Inc.  
Hale `Opio Kaua`i, Inc.  
Hawai`i Children's Action  
Network*

#### *Hawai`i Health & Harm Reduction Center*

*Ho`ola Na Pua  
Ho`okele Coalition of Kaua`i  
Ka Hale Pomaika`i  
Kahi Mohala*

*Kokua Kalihi Valley  
Kaua`i Planning and Action  
Alliance*

*Maui Youth and Family Services  
Na Pu`uwai Molokai Native  
Hawaiian Health Care  
Systems*

*P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.  
Parents and Children Together  
PHOCUSED*

*PFLAG – Kona, Big Island  
Planned Parenthood of the  
Great Northwest, Hawaii  
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana*

*Residential Youth Services  
& Empowerment (RYSE)*

*Salvation Army Family  
Intervention Services*

*Sex Abuse Treatment Center  
Susannah Wesley Community  
Center*

*The Catalyst Group*

February 4, 2023

To: Senator Michelle Kidani  
And members of the Committee on Education

### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1044 RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN) , a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports SB 1044 Related to Mental Health.

In recent years, our children and youth have experienced trauma related to the COVID pandemic and other problems. Virtual learning was not a success. Families have been stressed emotionally and economically.

TeenLink Hawaii, a web-based, statewide information and support resource for adolescents reported 29,560 website visits between April and September 2022. Mental health and suicide were among the five most popular topics.

HYSN conducts evaluation for the AmeriCorps Program in the Northern Mariana Islands, including review of reflection journals by the Members, who are high school seniors.

One Member wrote, *"There's just so many things going on with school and some things outside of school that made me feel so overwhelmed."*

Another shared what helped. *"From time to time I would also talk to some people about my mental health and I am really glad that I have people to talk about it while feeling comfortable."*

This is why we need mental health workers in our schools.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director

**Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair**  
**Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair**

**Date:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023

**Time:** 3:00 PM

**Location:** Conference Room 229 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

**Testimony In Support of SB1044, Relating to Mental Health**

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and all the members of the committee,

My name is Deizhanna, and I am in favor of SB1044. The reason I am in support of SB1044 is because it promotes the well-being of children around the state while supporting them through and /or protecting them from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, suicide, and more.

Children can face a variety of trauma that can impact their mental health. Trauma can include involvement in the child welfare system, a passing of a loved one, bullying, and more. Trauma can then result in mental health issues. According to the State of Hawaii's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division, about 39,520 and 60,800 young people experience mental health disorders annually. This highlights the need and urgency to provide more services and access to mental health support for minors.

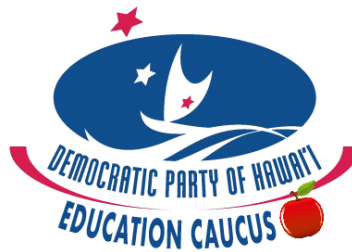
SB1044 aims to meet that need by inserting mental health specialists in schools around Hawaii.

By supporting SB1044, we can do the following:

- Start providing a safe space for children to open up about issues that may be causing them to engage in behaviors that could threaten their safety.
- Lower the rates of suicide or self-inflicted injuries committed by young people.
- Break down the stigma of mental health and normalize seeking help and support amongst youth.

Please support SB1044 and ensure the safety of the children in the State of Hawaii.

Mahalo nui loa,  
Deizhanna Kaya-Abad



## **SENATE BILL 1044, RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

FEBRUARY 8, 2023 · SENATE EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE · CHAIR SEN. MICHELLE N. KIDANI

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SB 1044, 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)**

# Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i

February 08, 2023

## Senate Committee on Education

Hearing Time: 03:00 p.m.

Location: State Capitol

Re: SB 1044, Relating to Mental Health

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, and members of the Committee:

We are writing in **strong support** of SB 1044, Relating to Mental Health.

This bill will appropriate moneys to hire school-based youth mental health specialists for Hawai'i Department of Education schools.

As explained by the California Department of Education, providing mental health services in a school based setting helps address barriers to learning and provide supports so that all students can achieve in school and ultimately in life. Schools are places where prevention and early intervention activities can occur in a non-stigmatizing environment. Students will be able to maximize their benefit from mental health support services when they directly work with certified mental health specialists.

Our collective, Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i (OYAH), works to support young people under the age of 25 who are disconnected from school and work, referred to as "opportunity youth." This developmental time period is extremely consequential to the individual growth and overall life chances of our children. **We support this measure.**

Opportunity Youth Action Hawai'i is a collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to reducing the harmful effects of a punitive incarceration system for youth; promoting equity in the justice system; and improving and increasing resources to address adolescent and young adult mental health needs. We seek to improve the continuity of programs and services for youth and young adults transitioning from minor to adult status; eliminate youth houselessness and housing market discrimination against young adults; and promote and fund more holistic and culturally-informed approaches among public/private agencies serving youth.

**Please support SB 1044.**

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

Wednesday, February 08, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

From:  
Richard Kanagusuku  
Community Resident

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**RE: Testimony in Support of SB1044, Relating to Mental Health**

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

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in **support** of SB1044. I am born and raised in the Honolulu region with three children currently enrolled in grade-school. Nearly 20 percent of youth in the United States experience a mental, emotional or behavioral health condition every year. Yet according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly half of those kids do not receive any kind of mental health services. The reasons are varied: Social stigma, high costs, lack of insurance, and school staff and parents who may lack recognition and awareness of symptoms. Without diagnosis and treatment, mental health conditions can affect a student's performance and ability to learn and grow. Schools can play a major role in early childhood intervention.

Providing mental health services in a school-based setting helps address barriers to learning and provide support so that all students can achieve in school and ultimately in life. Schools are also places where prevention and early intervention activities can occur in a non-stigmatizing environment. Bringing on a mental health professional in school can help destigmatize mental health. Parents and families can greatly benefit from the convenience, ease of access and targeted care that would be available equally for all children. Additionally, it would provide existing school staff with the much-needed support and in-house expertise to learn from to properly assess and treat children and adolescents through early intervention and increased awareness of mental health concerns. By prioritizing the emotional and behavioral well-being of youth and providing on-site services and resources, schools can play a major role in destigmatizing and normalizing mental health care and access in our communities.

In conclusion, the prevalence of emotional and behavioral health disorders and unmet mental health needs among children and adolescents highlight the need for effective interventions by trained mental health specialists. I urge you to pass SB1044 as a solution to the problem of undiagnosed mental and behavioral health issues among our keiki. Thank you for allowing me to give testimony on this matter.

Sincerely,  
Richard Kanagusuku

To: Senate Chair Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair Donna Mercado Kim, and Committee Members

From: Erica-Skyler Holokai  
[ericaskylerholokai@gmail.com](mailto:ericaskylerholokai@gmail.com)

2/05/2023

Subject: Mental Health  
Support SB1044; 2/08/2023

I am a former student of Henry Perinne Baldwin High School, currently enrolled at Hawaii Pacific University as a Social Work student. I was researching mental health services in the State's schools. I am in support of SB1044.

This bill supports easy access to mental health for youth on campus who may not be able to drive. Some student's parents may not be available or willing to take them to seek mental health care. Being that students spend a lot of time on campus, this provides another point of access during their schooling.

While staff are very supportive at HP Baldwin High School, teachers and administrators do not have the professional background to provide clinical support. They are able to identify youth at risk, but what about the support needed once they are identified? SB1044 provides them with a resource to support these students.

In transitioning from being a high school student to becoming an adult, having access to mental health services in the school setting can help to teach highschoolers how to seek out resources, become empowered, and normalize the act of receiving help rather than it being a negative stigma.

Sincerely,  
Erica-Skyler Holokai