

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair Marten, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Danson Honda, and I am testifying in support for SCR56 which requests the BOE to review various programs and subject matters for implementation in public schools, most notably **financial literacy**.

Since day one, students are taught in school to believe that working hard, getting good grades, and going to college is the key to success. As a former student body Treasurer at UH Manoa, I witnessed firsthand the many financial struggles college students are facing. I realized that not everyone should go to college after high school, and for many it is a bad financial decision. Yet our education system focuses much more on sending students to college than it does teaching essential real-life skills.

I previously shared with you my story of how I overcame financial struggles to eventually become a homeowner during the Covid-19 pandemic. Without a doubt, financial literacy was the key ingredient that allowed this to happen. Since school doesn't teach real-life skills, I had to learn about managing finances on YouTube. Despite being deemed a failure by our education system and not walking at high school graduation, I was able to achieve in two years what many people spend a lifetime trying to achieve: homeownership.

While my interest in financial literacy began due to personal experiences, I also learned that the lack of financial literacy in Hawai'i stems from a much broader issue. Upon doing research, I discovered that the topic of financial literacy in Hawai'i has been ongoing for the past twenty years. [Since 2003, sixty pieces of financial literacy legislation have been introduced in the Legislature](#). Ten pieces of legislation passed, establishing April as Financial Literacy Month, created two financial literacy task forces, and repeatedly urged the BOE/DOE to implement a financial literacy graduation requirement.

Notably:

In 2008, the State Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 92 and Senate Resolution 52, which created a Financial Education and Asset Building Task Force. The Task Force noted the issue that schools are not required to offer financial literacy courses, and students are not required to take financial literacy courses. **This remains true today**. One of their recommendations included making financial literacy a graduation requirement in high school.

In 2015, the State Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 97; S.D.1, establishing the financial literacy task force. This task force submitted a report to the Legislature recommending the implementation of a financial literacy program in schools.

In 2021, Senate Concurrent Resolution 152 passed, urging the Department of Education to coordinate with the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to implement a graduation requirement of at least a half credit in financial literacy. **I contacted DCCA and found that DCCA initiated a conversation to the DOE, but without any response.**

As a former student member of the Hawai'i State Board of Education, I understand the Board's desire to have complete oversight of setting graduation requirements. However, history has shown a blatant disregard for this essential subject. We had an incredible opportunity to lead the nation in financially educating our youth, yet here we are now, two decades and two recessions later, consistently ranked as the state with the [lowest level of high school financial literacy in the nation](#). Thus, if the BOE does not take action that this resolution is requesting, I strongly urge the Legislature to take more action.

I am deeply concerned about the prior history of these efforts; however, I remain hopeful that one day Hawai'i will join the seventeen states that have implemented a standalone financial literacy class graduation requirement. Please vote in support of this resolution and help urge the BOE to act. By investing in the financial education of our youth, we can create a brighter future for our community and our economy.

"We would not allow a young person to get in the driver's seat of a car without requiring driver's education, and yet we allow our youth to enter the complex financial world without any related education. An uneducated individual armed with a credit card, a student loan, and access to a mortgage can be nearly as dangerous to themselves and their community as a person with no training behind the wheel of a car."

- Champlain College, Center for Financial Literacy

With Aloha,

Danson Honda