

**Kūpuna for the Mo'opuna**  
*committed to the well-being of Hawai'i for the next generations to come*  
**kupuna4moopuna@gmail.com**



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024  
Time: 10am  
Place: Room 016

**SB 2937 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING: STRONG SUPPORT**

Aloha,

Kūpuna for the Mo'opuna, a hui of Hawaiian Homes Commission Act beneficiary kūpuna farmers from Pana'ewa, Hawai'i, submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 2937**.

We strongly support repealing the sunset date for the exemption of the laboratory school programs of the Hawaiian language college at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo from the state English-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements.

Repealing the sunset date will allow the laboratory school programs to continue to flourish under the guidance and authority of Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani, the world-renowned college of Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani is recognized worldwide as being the leader in Indigenous education and is highly regarded in the area of education standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements. The standard of high quality Indigenous education exemplified by the Hawaiian language college is the entity relied upon for inspiration and guidance to ensure academic excellence through living Indigenous languages worldwide

We are confident that repealing this unnecessary sunset date will allow the Hawaiian language college to focus more intently on providing excellent guidance and authority over its laboratory schools. Mahalo nui for this bill!

**Please support and pass SB 2937. Mahalo!**



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 ahapunanaleo.org

Committee on Judiciary  
 Senator Karl Rhoads  
 Senator Mike Gabbard  
 Wednesday, February 27, 2024  
 TIME: 10:00 a.m.  
 Conference Room 016

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and members of the Committee on Judiciary,

The 'Aha Pūnana Leo strongly supports SB 2937 relating to access to learning.

**Ka Papa Alaka'i**  
**Board of Directors**

- Kauano'e Kama'nā  
Pelekikena
- Larry Kimura
- William H. Wilson
- Ki'ope Raymond
- Huilau Wilson
- Keawe Lopes

**Ka Luna Ho'okele**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

Ka'iulani J.K.N. Laehā

**Ka Luna Ho'okō**  
**Chief Operating Officer**

K. Sean Kekina

**Nā Papahana**  
**Pūnana Leo**  
**Pūnana Leo Programs**

**Aukukui**

**Ne'epapa**

**Kula Kamali'i**

- Pūnana Leo o Hilo
- Pūnana Leo o Kaua'i
- Pūnana Leo o Maui
- Pūnana Leo o Moloka'i
- Pūnana Leo o Wai'anāe
- Pūnana Leo o Kona
- Pūnana Leo o Waimea
- Pūnana Leo o Mānoa
- Pūnana Leo o Ko'olau Pōko
- Pūnana Leo o Lahaina
- Pūnana Leo o Hāna
- Pūnana Leo o Nu'uānuu
- Pūnana Leo o Waiāluā

SB 2937 addresses standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications and staff training for the UHH Hawaiian language college laboratory program in which little keiki in Hawaiian language medium environments will thrive. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo, a laboratory school of the Hawaiian language college, was founded on the desire to save our 'ōlelo Hawai'i and opened its early learning child care centers 40 years ago staffed by uncertified proficient Hawaiian speakers trained by us and the Hawaiian speaking faculty of UH Hilo. Pūnana Leo keiki became fluent in Hawaiian and families engaged in their children's education. The Pūnana Leo is internationally renowned and is the base from which the state DOE and Charter Hawaiian medium and immersion programs have grown.

When we began there were less than 50 children who spoke the Hawaiian language. It was through our own traditional beliefs, knowledge and practices and dedicated non-certified kupuna and kumu, UH Hilo linguist designed curriculum, federally supported assessments and linguistically aligned training designed by UH Hilo professors that the Pūnana Leo movement continues. Today we have 12 licensed child care centers, 2 licensed infant toddler programs, and a recently established Lahaina family engagement program to support our keiki that were displaced from the Pūnana Leo o Lahaina that was lost to the fire. We serve over 300 Hawaiian language speaking families each year in various communities throughout the state.

Our Pūnana Leo graduates are successfully serving our communities in various roles as entrepreneurs, kumu/teachers, physicians, police and fire rescue, EMTs, lawyers, licensed contractors, musicians, composers, Grammy artists, professors including at prestigious colleges like Oxford in England.

The 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Ke Kula 'o Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u and the Hawaiian language college demonstrate a successful P-25 education system, leading the nation in the indigenous language revitalization movement. Although we have made progress towards a living Hawaiian language, SB2937 and similar legislation is needed to support the growth and expansion of the model being demonstrated.

This bill is critical for the existence of 'Aha Pūnana Leo Hawaiian language medium early learning and child care. Without protections and considerations like these, well-intentioned government legislation applying mainstream English language medium program requirements will terminate our current programs and decimate our endangered language. The research base of the standardized qualifications and assessments imposed on our programs is primarily from large English medium universities outside Hawai'i. That research base of mainstream English medium early education includes no knowledge of what it truly takes to revitalize an endangered indigenous language. To our successful 'Aha Pūnana Leo program to follow the mainstream English research base is at a minimum irresponsible.

SB 2937 will provide an opportunity to continue to grow the body of research and development with the premiere US university program for language revitalization for an equitable Hawaiian medium early learning system. We urge you to pass this bill.

It is also worth noting that the state Early Learning Board's Report containing a Road Map for the implementation of Act 46, SLH 2020 (pursuant to SCR 217 in 2022), specifically calls for the permanent exemption of the College of Hawaiian Language's laboratory programs and all Hawaiian Medium learning environments in two of it's four action items, which is in alignment with SB 2937.

Mahalo nui,

Ka'iulani Laehā  
 Luna Ho'okele (CEO)  
 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Inc.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**Executive Office on Early Learning**  
2759 South King Street  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

February 24, 2024

**TO:** Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

**FROM:** Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director  
Executive Office on Early Learning

**SUBJECT: Measure:** H.B. No. 2937 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) supports S.B. No. 2937 and defers to the University of Hawai'i.

EOEL is guided by the principles of diversity and multilingualism, recognizing that a strong Hawai'i weaves families' home language and culture into our collective work on behalf of children. Our Office is committed to providing high-quality early learning programs and services to all keiki across the State, including in the Hawaiian language and supports the sustenance and expansion of Hawaiian medium early learning programs.

This measure would ensure the continuation of a laboratory school program, which is currently a Hawaiian medium program, at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. It is also in alignment with the recommendations put forth from our governing board, the Early Learning Board, through the "Road Map, Including Proposed Legislation, for Implementation of Act 046, Session Laws of Hawaii 2020" pursuant to Senate Concurrent Resolution 217 (2022).

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



## *Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u*

*"No 'Ane'i Ko Kākou Ola"*

25 February 2024

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Date of Hearing: 02-27-2024

Time: 10:00am

Location: Conference Room 016

Testimony of Dr. Kauanoe Kamanā, Director, Principal  
Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u

SB2937,

### **STRONGLY SUPPORT**

E ka Luna Ho'omalū Rhoads, ka Hope Luna Ho'omalū Gabbard a me nā lālā Kōmike Ho'okolokolo,  
Aloha pumehana kākou,

My name is Dr. Kauanoe Kamanā, Director and Principal of Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u (Nāwahī), a P-12 laboratory school of the Hawaiian Language College, Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elīkōlani (KH'UOK) at UH-Hilo. Nāwahī's current enrollment is 670 and is the largest of any school taught entirely through Hawaiian in the state. Nāwahī's main campus is located in Kea'au, Hawai'i and has two satellite sites, one in Wai'anae, O'ahu and the other in Waimea, Hawai'i.

Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u **strongly supports HB2683**. If this bill does not pass, we will not be able to respond and effectively grow our current nationally recognized program. We will not be able to respond and expand our current Hawaiian medium preK program to serve more families on our long waiting list.

As a PreK laboratory school, Nāwahī fulfills the requirements of the Hawaiian Language College. Some of which are: aligning with the College's required rigorous total Hawaiian medium curriculum, required parent program, rigorous scientifically developed assessments and Fall-Spring-and Summer live-in trainings. We and others in the College's PreK laboratory school program commit to having our teachers access the College's electronically delivered courses in Hawaiian medium early education taught through Hawaiian and the College's progression of Hawaiian language and culture courses taught through Hawaiian. The College also has a progression of courses that move individuals in our program from being an unlicensed PreK-teacher in a laboratory school to a fully licensed teacher for early elementary education. The program is, therefore, also a teacher development incubator. It helps address the shortage of Hawaiian proficient certified teachers for state and charter elementary Hawaiian language programs, and helps deliver a nationally recognized quality Indigenous language medium early education program.

Our PreK program is fully integrated in a seamless system with our four kindergarten classrooms and indeed with our full system through elementary, middle school and high school. Parents choose Nāwahī for its integrity, research history and a nearly 30-year reputation of providing quality education rooted in the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola philosophy and in the full use and study of the Hawaiian language.

We draw students on our three campuses primarily from what are considered “high risk” populations – Hawaiian Homes populations in Wai‘anae, Waimea, Pana‘ewa, Maku‘u and from the Native Hawaiian population in the district of Puna. These are populations where the mainstream state education system has had major challenges. Yet, having worked over time with this population of students and families, Nāwahī has maintained a high graduation rate as well as a high college-going rate. Our data show averages to be higher than the state public school average for Native Hawaiians. Indeed, our outcomes exceed the state average for public school students.

Nāwahī is proud to be at the forefront of Hawaiian language medium education. Nāwahī is the most developed and largest program taught through an Indigenous language of the United States. We are recognized by the US government and national foundations funding tribal schools as the gold standard model for Native America. Our program including its preK component have hosted numerous tribal educational leaders, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, the head of the Office of Indian Education of the US Department of Education and other national and international education experts. As of October 2023, we were named as a core component of the new National Native American Language Resource Center of the US Department of Education to serve Indigenous language-based education in the fifty states, including the Indigenous peoples of the three US Pacific Island Territories, and the three US compact countries of the former US Trust Territories of the Pacific. The focus of this new National Center is to address education through the medium of Indigenous languages—those formerly banned and/or suppressed under US federally imposed and operated educational laws, policies and programs. HB2683 is integral in assuring Nāwahī’s ability to carry out that federally assigned responsibility.

Nāwahī is not opposed to the Governor’s Office of Early Education developing a means for the state to provide early education through Hawaiian following the law and its provisions that are based in years of research by the national English medium preschool research establishment in major universities. We support that as a choice for families.

The legislature itself established the UHH Hawaiian Language College and its laboratory school program. The legislature itself initiated the current exemption. Both have been highly successful. HB2683 builds upon that proven success. Again, I urge passage.

Me ka mahalo ‘oia‘i‘o,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kauanoe Kamanā". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Kauanoe Kamanā  
Director, Principal



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

By

Bonnie Irwin, Chancellor  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

#### SB 2937 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on SB 2937. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) supports passage of SB 2937, which seeks to repeal the sunset date for the exemption of laboratory school programs of the Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani (also known as the College of Hawaiian Language) (CoHL) at UH Hilo from state English-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements that were established by Act 46, SLH 2020. The intent is to ensure that the CoHL's Hawaiian-medium laboratory schools are not subject to non-applicable English-medium standards, assessments, ratings, and requirements but instead are able to use rigorous Hawaiian-medium measures and guidelines.

The legislature established the CoHL under HRS §§ 304A-1301-1302 in 1997, providing for the incorporation of laboratory schools that now include four K-12 charter schools as well as all of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo's ('APL) Hawaiian Medium preschools (13 Pūnana Leo) throughout the state. These Hawaiian Medium Pūnana Leo laboratory preschools are directly impacted by Act 46.

The purpose of Act 46 was to increase access to child care and early learning opportunities for children in Hawai'i while ensuring "that the implementation of new and expanded programs pursuant to this Act aligns with other statutory provisions that provide distinctive support for education through the medium of the Hawaiian language." Some of these statutory provisions include Act 47, SLH 1986, that affirmed the DOE's power and duties to include programs in the Hawaiian language; Act 79 of the same year that exempted teachers in Hawaiian language early childhood programs from academic certification; as well as Act 178, SLH 2012, that established the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and affirmed that the state's public pre-kindergarten program shall prepare children for school and active participation in society through the use of either of Hawai'i's two official languages.

This statutory support for public education through the Hawaiian language has allowed for the development of Hawaiian-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements. The CoHL has worked in partnership with the 'APL for over 40 years to develop performance standards and tools

to assess progress across domains, including Cognitive Development, Leadership and Team Building Skills, Literacy Development, and Hawaiian Language Proficiency. Testing instruments include Hawaiian-medium Curriculum-Based Measures that are being used at various sites for kindergarten entry assessments as required by §302A-1165. The CoHL and 'AHL partnership also provides preservice and inservice teacher training via coursework in the CoHL's Kahuawaiola teacher education program as well as ongoing professional development training to cultivate highly competent educators, addressing Hawaiian language proficiency, pedagogy, assessment, family engagement, and curriculum.

Furthermore, in October 2023, the CoHL was designated as the inaugural National Native American Language Resource Center that, in partnership with the 'AHL, will continue this work of developing standards, curriculum, teacher training and assessments not only for Hawaiian medium programs, but for Native American Language communities nationwide.

It is also worth noting that the Early Learning Board's Road Map for the implementation of Act 46, SLH 2020 (as required by SCR 217 in 2022), specifically calls for the permanent exemption of the CoHL's laboratory programs and all Hawaiian Medium learning environments from non-applicable standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements in two of its four action items, which is what SB 2937 seeks to accomplish.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:34:41 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kawailele Aki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kāko‘o SB2937



**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:36:17 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Moiwai Victor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kāko‘o SB2937

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 10:10:44 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Andrea Kekipi-Aurio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of the passage of SB2937. This will strongly support the continued growth and forward movement of the immersion programs and the growth of 'Olelo Hawai'i in our communities. I believe that the state should do all that it can to develop normalcy of the Hawaiian language, one of the official state languages, in the community and the world.

Humbly submitted,

Andrea Kekipi-Aurio, MSN, RN

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 10:34:45 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kehaulani Medeiros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Date of Hearing: Monday, February 27, 2024

Time: 10:00am

Location: CR 016 &

Video conference

Testimony of Kēhaulani Medeiros

SB2937, RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING. Repeals the sunset date for the exemption of laboratory school programs of the Hawaiian language college at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo from state English-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements.

KĀKO‘O, STRONGLY SUPPORT

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 11:02:19 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Kāko‘o piha au i kēia pila. I support this bill.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 11:09:56 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Diane Mokuhalii	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 11:19:58 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cherilee K. Spencer-Jardine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**In support to pass bill 2937, appealing standard assessment to Hawaiian Language Medium Institutions.**

**I am in support of Hawaiian Language Medium Schools in Hawai'i, in addition, an active mākuā within Hawaiian Language Medium Schools, Pūnana Leo o Waimea & 'Alo Kēhau o Ka 'Āina Mauna.**

**These schools should be required to meet standard assessments specific to their criteria and not a criteria that is not taught. Our native language is an official language of this state, the State of Hawai'i, with this, the standard assessments should reflect as such to the Hawaiian Language objective.**

**Please consider this appeal. Me ka mahalo nui.**

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 1:39:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ahia Dye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support the goals and opportunities of families who are choosing to grow and progress in an alternative educational medium that is able to capture and enrich our children in ways that an education system constrained by english-medium school can not achieve. Keep the educational diversity alive, having both options for school types serves us all. Vote YES and support your people's choice to the access of our learning needs! Mahalo nui loa.

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 4:51:54 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shannon Matson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair, Vice Chair, a me Committee Members,

As a makua with 2 keiki in Hawaiian Language Immersion Kula I am in strong support of this bill.

Mahalo,

Shannon M.

Ola'a Resident



**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 4:54:04 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nikiya White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of SB2937. Mahalo!

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 6:50:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Haley Agbayani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou!

Kāko‘o au i kēia pila!!

I support this bill which will allow continued support to provide continued growth and progress of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i laboratory schools connected to the Hawaiian language college at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. In doing so, this bill will continue to provide access to learning free from state English-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements.

Mahalo nunui,

Haley Ku'uipo Agbayani

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 1:56:14 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cheyves Fernandez Kekahu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 4:13:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. William H. Wilson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoades and Vice Chair Gabbard of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Mahalo for this hearing. My name is Dr. William H. Wilson. I strongly urge passage of SB 2937.

I am the longest serving faculty member of the Hawaiian language college here at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I began here when there were only a few classes on Hawaiian language in the Foreign Language Department. I have witnessed over the past forty plus years the growth of the Hawaiian language and the contribution of that growth to the overall well-being of our state, not only for Native Hawaiians, but for all of us, including my own extended family consisting of various mixtures of Caucasian and Filipino backgrounds including some Native Hawaiians as well. Much of that growth has been due to direct attention to our program from state legislators as called for in HB 2683.

UH Hilo’s program in Hawaiian language began as a response to a grass roots community effort that began with kūpuna who wished to see the survival of the Hawaiian language and culture that they grew up with and shared with family and community members of diverse backgrounds. We have stayed committed to the wishes of those kūpuna community members and have grown to our present level of development through special attention to that mission from the legislature. The legislature has provided us with distinct structures that have allowed the growth of our program based on local knowledge and expertise, as a choice and alternative to following what is considered best practice in other states with histories and populations quite different from Hawai‘i’s.

Specific to this bill and our laboratory school program, I want to emphasize that the legislature itself established our P-12 laboratory school program through. A legislative mandate allowed us to move forward with a curriculum based in local knowledge and our research as a College regarding education through languages and cultures that differ greatly from English and Euro-American culture. The laboratory school status has allowed us to develop such things as teaching initial reading in Hawaiian through a syllabic method that has many parallels with beginning reading instruction in Japan. We continue to research and develop distinctive ways to move education through Hawaiian forward and include innovative ways to master English and other languages including Latin and Japanese at the elementary school and high school levels.

We see our laboratory school, especially at the early education level, as a means to develop more Hawaiian speaking teachers for the growing number of schools taught through Hawaiian and other schools in the state that want to include fluent Hawaiian speakers into their programs. Under an existing power granted by the legislature, we take in individuals who lack certification and integrate them into our laboratory early education program. We do not simply leave them in the classroom. We include them in a week live-in summer program, fall and spring live-in weekend programs, on-line courses and faculty visits and consultations. This programming then leads up a certification ladder that eventually produces fully certified teachers. These teachers have unique preparation to teach through Hawaiian. It is a preparation that ties the teachers to local communities and to students, not only at the early education level but through to high school graduation and beyond.

Data from our laboratory school program including high school graduation and college attending rates higher than the state average attest to the benefits of earlier legislative action taken to empower our efforts. SB 2937 is an extension on an existing action of the legislature which has shown very positive results. I strongly urge passage of SB 2937.

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 6:21:36 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anuheia St. Laurent	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Native Hawaiian, and mother of two children who attend Hawaiian Immersion Public Charter Schools I am in strong support of the continued growth and progress of our laboratory schools so as not to be constrained by the English-medium state system. As the original people of this land, we should be able to learn and teach our children in the ways of our people, not forced to assimilate to the Western way. It is the least the State of Hawaii can do given all that the United States has illegally taken from our people. As a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice, who works primarily with other Native Hawaiians, I see how disconnect from land due to colonization has caused a negative snowball effect of problems for my people. When our access to our land was cutoff we also loss access to healthy food, community and support. When our language was banned we lost self-identity, self-worth, traditional knowledge, practices, and spiritual beliefs and rituals that once allowed us to be healthy and well. Today, our people continue to struggle- with poverty, obesity, heart disease, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, anxiety, depression, trauma, suicide, self-harm, incarceration, etc. However, the data shows, and I have witnessed in my practice, when individuals, couples, and families are able to reconnect to cultural knowledge, values, and practices, we are empowered, restore self-worth and self-identity, gain hope, and are able to overcome physical and mental health issues and contribute positively to the community. Hawaiian Immersion, especially Public Charter Schools allow us to do that. Not only do they help us to restore our langugage, but it is through the freedom to teach the language from the Native Hawaiian cultural perspective that truly enables our people to restore health and wellbeing. I strongly support SB2937. It is the least the State of Hawaii can do to help our people after all the trauma and harm that has and continues to be done since the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy.

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 5:32:21 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Laura Rehmert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill as I support the repealing the sunset date of Act 46, Section V. I support the importance and continued growth and progress of the State's laboratory schools that focus on Hawaiian Medium education.

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 7:55:52 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Erin ODonnell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2937!



**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 8:18:19 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brandy De Lima-Suganuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kāko‘o au i kēia pila.

I support this bill!

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 8:37:37 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kaipolani Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kākou,

Kāko‘o au i ke kāpae ‘ana i ka lā palena pau o ka pila, Kānāwai 46 Māhele V. He kōkua kēia ma ke kāko‘o i ka holomua a me ka ulu hou a‘e o nā kula ho‘okolohua i ‘ole kāohi ‘ia i loko o ka ‘ōnaehana kaia‘ōlelo Pelekānia o ka moku‘āina. I mua kākou e loa‘a ka lei o ka lanakila.

Mahalo, Na Kaipolani Kim

**SB-2937**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 9:43:08 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/27/2024 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Melissa Schafer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My son attends a Hawaiian language medium school. I support this bill which repeals the sunset date for the exemption of laboratory school programs of the Hawaiian language college at the University of Hawaii at Hilo from state English-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements.

The laboratory schools should be able to decide which assessments and performance ratings are appropriate for their schools and staff because the whole purpose of a laboratory school is to test and develop new educational models so give them to freedom to do this.

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary

**Re: SB 2937 – in strong support**

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 016

February 27, 2024; 10:00AM

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of Senate Bill 2937 relating to Access to Learning.**

Investing in early childhood education is crucial to fostering a more equitable future. Early learning experiences shape a child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Research consistently underscores the long-term benefits of quality early education, including improved academic performance, enhanced social skills, and a reduced likelihood of future challenges.

By passing this bill, we are investing in the well-being of individual children and laying the foundation for a more equitable and thriving society in Hawai'i and beyond. This bill addresses a fundamental need by providing increased access to early learning opportunities, ensuring that every child, regardless of socioeconomic status, can reach their full potential.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. **Please pass SB 2937.**

Mahalo,

Chevelle Davis, MPH

Director of Early Childhood and Health Policy