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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU  
State of Hawaii  
State Capitol, Room 446  
415 S. Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

## Written Comments

### **SB749**

### **RELATING TO ADVANCING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.**

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi, Director  
Legislative Reference Bureau

Presented to the Senate Committee on Government Operations

Thursday, February 2, 2023, 3:15 p.m.  
Room 225 and Via Videoconference

Chair Angus L.K. McKelvey and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon, Chair McKelvey and members of the Committee, my name is Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi and I am the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB). Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written comments on S.B. No. 749, Relating to Advancing Civic Engagement.

The purpose of this measure is to:

- (1) Amend section 21G-2(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes, to require the Public Access Room at the State Capitol (PAR) to establish and maintain an outreach and engagement program for primary, secondary, post-secondary, and community education; and
- (2) Establish a full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position for PAR and to appropriate funds for the position.

The Bureau takes no position on this measure but submits the following comments for your consideration.

PAR was established in 1994 to help enhance the public's ability to participate in the legislative process; it became part of LRB in 1996. PAR's office and services are utilized year-

round, offering equipment, services, and facilities to enhance the public's ability to participate in the legislative process. We note that PAR already provides, as part of its services, *universal* community outreach and civic engagement seminars, workshops, and information that are not limited to one specific target audience. Accordingly, students can and do already benefit from these pre-existing educational sessions and information. However, this measure provides funds for a permanent full-time equivalent position, to be placed within PAR, to enable PAR staff to undertake a more targeted educational outreach and engagement program with Hawaii educational institutions.

Should the Committee decide that it would like PAR to explicitly provide educational outreach to Hawaii educational institutions, and authorize PAR to have an additional full-time equivalent position to assist with this augmented purpose, the Bureau would be supportive of that intent. We recommend that in order to truly facilitate the implementation of an effective civic engagement educational program as envisioned in this measure, providing dedicated, complementary counterparts within the Department of Education (DOE) and the University of Hawaii (UH) system, or at least a statutory requirement that each entity coordinate with the Public Access Room to assist with this effort should be strongly considered to ensure cooperation between entities. For the Committee's reference, we have provided a proposed Senate Draft 1, which is attached to this testimony. The new language within the draft:

- (1) Inserts new statutory language to require the Department of Education and University of Hawaii to assign appropriate staff to coordinate with PAR with respect to the new outreach and engagement program;
- (2) Amends the purpose section to reflect the new scope of the bill; and
- (3) Makes technical amendments.

Thank you again for your consideration.

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ADVANCING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that civic engagement  
2 provides an opportunity for residents to become involved with  
3 improving their local communities and neighborhoods. In 2021,  
4 the supreme court enacted Rule 23 to establish the commission to  
5 promote and advance civic education (PACE commission). One of  
6 the main functions of the PACE commission is to provide  
7 leadership, oversight, and initiatives to increase civic  
8 education in the community and at schools, increase citizens'  
9 knowledge about government, and promote informed participation  
10 in government and democracy in the State.

11           The legislature further finds that the public access room,  
12 an office under the legislative reference bureau, provides the  
13 public with information, equipment, facilities, and services to  
14 assist in research activities, educational outreach, and public  
15 engagement related to work with the legislature. The  
16 legislature additionally finds that the public access room is  
17 well-positioned to further civic engagement between the



1 legislature and students in the State through educational  
2 partnerships such as the Hawaii P-20 partnerships for education.  
3 However, the public access room currently lacks resources to  
4 provide outreach services beyond its current efforts.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 6 (1) Require the public access room to establish and  
7 maintain an outreach and engagement program for  
8 primary, secondary, post-secondary, and community  
9 education and provide funding for one full-time  
10 equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to assist in  
11 effectuating this requirement; and
- 12 (2) Requires the department of education and university of  
13 Hawaii to assign appropriate staff to coordinate with  
14 the public access room with respect to the outreach  
15 and engagement program.

16 SECTION 2. Section 21G-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
17 amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

18 "(a) There is established in the state capitol a public  
19 access room in which members of the public shall be allowed to  
20 utilize various equipment, services, and facilities to enhance  
21 their ability to participate in the legislative process. As



1 part of its duties, the public access room shall establish and  
2 maintain an outreach and engagement program for primary,  
3 secondary, post-secondary, and community education."

4 SECTION 3. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
5 amended by adding a new section part II, subpart C to be  
6 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

7 "§302A- Coordination with public access room; outreach  
8 and engagement. The department shall assign appropriate staff  
9 to coordinate with the public access room with respect to the  
10 outreach and engagement program described in section 21G-2(a)."

11 SECTION 4. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
12 amended by adding a new section part II, subpart G to be  
13 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

14 "§304A- Coordination with public access room; outreach  
15 and engagement. The university shall assign appropriate staff  
16 to coordinate with the public access room with respect to the  
17 outreach and engagement program described in section 21G-2(a)."

18 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general  
19 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
20 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and  
21 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal



1 year 2024-2025 to establish one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE)  
2 position within the public access room.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the legislative  
4 reference bureau for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

6 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.



**Report Title:**

Legislative Reference Bureau; Public Access Room; DOE; UH  
Educational Outreach and Engagement Program; Appropriation

**Description:**

Requires the Public Access Room to establish and maintain an outreach and engagement program for primary, secondary, post-secondary, and community education and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to assist in effectuating this requirement. Requires the Department of Education and University of Hawaii to assign appropriate staff to coordinate with the Public Access Room with respect to the outreach and engagement program.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*



Chief Judge Lisa M. Ginoza  
*Chair*

Representative Amy A. Perruso  
*Vice-Chair*

Prof. Troy J.H. Andrade

Philip J. Bossert, Ph.D.

Rosanna Fukuda, MAEd

Debora Halbert, Ph.D.

Nathan G. Kam

Senator Dru M. Kanuha

OHA Board Chair  
Carmen Hulu Lindsey

Matt M. Mattice

Prof. Colin Moore

Ruth K. Oh, Esq.

Magistrate Judge  
Wes Reber Porter

## Testimony to the Thirty-Second Legislature, 2023 Regular Session

Committee on Government Operations  
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 2, 2023 at 3:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

By

Chief Judge Lisa M. Ginoza, Intermediate Court of Appeals  
Chair, Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education  
(PACE Commission)

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**Bill No. and Title:** Senate Bill No. 749  
Relating to Advancing Civic Engagement

**Purpose:** Requires the Public Access Room to establish and maintain an outreach and engagement program for primary, secondary, post-secondary, and community education and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to assist in effectuating this requirement.

**PACE Commission Position:** Strong support

The PACE Commission strongly supports this bill, which would: (1) revise Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) § 21G-2 to add that “[a]s part of its duties, the public access room shall establish and maintain an outreach and engagement program for primary, secondary, post-secondary, and community education”; and (2) appropriate funds to establish a full-time position within the Public Access Room.

The proposed amendment to HRS § 21G-2 is important to ensure establishment of the outreach and engagement program, which would have a significant impact in reaching and educating students and citizens across the state about the Legislature. It is also crucially important to have a dedicated position to focus on this important effort, and thus it will be highly beneficial to



have funds appropriated to establish the full-time position in the Public Access Room. These crucial steps would create a positive and focused engagement with students, educators and citizens to promote learning about the Legislature, understanding of and participation in the legislative process, and further interaction with Legislators. The more direct contact that students, educators and citizens can have with the Legislature, and the more they can see the process in action, the more they will understand and want to be part of this key part of our democracy. The proposals in Senate Bill 749 clearly advance the purpose of the Public Access Room to “ensure improved public participation in the legislative process” set forth in HRS § 21G-1.

Having a clearly stated focus on outreach and engagement for student and community education, and the resources to support such an effort, will go a long way. Although there are many in our community who are seeking to advance civics in different ways, having a full-time dedicated position within the Legislature will be a tremendous asset. Such an individual could also collaborate with the Judiciary History Center to bring diverse programming on civic education to students and the community. Moreover, in today’s virtual world, having a dedicated position in the Public Access Room would greatly assist students, educators and others with following bills online, watching videoconference hearings, and submitting testimony on issues important to them.

#### **Brief background about the PACE Commission:**

The PACE Commission was created pursuant to Rule 23 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai‘i, issued on January 7, 2021. The purpose of the PACE Commission is to promote and advance civic education for students and citizens throughout Hawai‘i. The commission has fourteen members appointed according to Rule 23 by the following: Chief Justice of the Hawai‘i Supreme Court, Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Superintendent of the Department of Education, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii, President of the University of Hawai‘i, Dean of the William S. Richardson School of Law, Hawaii State Bar Association, Hawai‘i Association of Independent Schools, and two members selected by the other appointed members.

The commission currently has two committees, one focused on civic education in the schools and one focused more generally on civic engagement in the community. The mission statement adopted by the PACE Commission is: "To create, implement and amplify sustainable programs, resources, and practices that improve place-based, constitutionally informed and culturally sensitive civic education and engagement in Hawai‘i schools and communities."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



TO: The Honorable Angus L. K. McKelvey, Chair  
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Government Operations

FROM: Philip Bossert, Executive Director  
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

RE: **SB 749 – Relating to Advancing Civic Engagement  
In Strong Support**

DATE: Thursday, February 2, 2023  
3:15 pm; Conference room 225 & Videoconference

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

The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) and its subsidiary, the Hawaii Council of Private Schools (HCPS), strongly supports SB 749. HAIS currently serves 114 independent schools and over 33,000 students in Hawai'i. Member schools include several of the largest independent schools in the U.S., as well as some of the smallest. While distinctive with respect to mission and philosophy, HAIS member schools are united in helping children achieve personal and academic excellence.

The Public Access Room at the Legislature currently provides excellent services to members of the community who are not familiar with legislative processes and procedures and who wish to interact with the members of the legislature. This is a much-needed service, and it should continue to be supported. Equally important, I think, is the need for an outreach component of the Public Access Room to inform members of the community and especially to students in our schools of the important role that the legislature – as well as the other branches of government – play in the very existence of Hawaii as a state and the civil society that it supports.

Almost every student recognizes our beautiful state capitol building, but very few understand what goes on inside of it or how it affects their own lives as students in our schools or as citizens of this state. As a result, civic awareness and civic engagement is very low. This situation can be alleviated to some extent by having a knowledgeable educator in the Public Access Room whose role is to be available to schools and community organizations to explain how our system of democratic government works and how they, as citizens, can engage with it.

I think our future as a successfully functioning democratic society depends upon this kind of awareness and engagement; and I respectfully ask your support for this measure and pass it out of committee.

Thank you.



# HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

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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 Hawaii*

*Big Island Substance Abuse  
Council*

*Bobby Benson Center*

*Child and Family Service*

*Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii*

*Collins Consulting, LLC*

*Domestic Violence Action Center*

*EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.*

*Family Programs Hawaii*

*Family Support Hawaii*

*Friends of the Children's Justice*

*Center of Maui*

*Get Ready Hawaii*

*Hale Kipa, Inc.*

*Hale 'Opio Kaua'i, Inc.*

*Hawaii Children's Action*

*Network*

*Hawaii 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*

January 30, 2023

To: Senator Angus McKelvey, Chair,  
And members of the Committee on Government Operations

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF**  
**SB 749 RELATING TO ADVANCING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Hawaii Youth Services Network supports SB 749 Relating to Advancing Civic Engagement.

“Youth civic engagement leads to reduced risky behavior, increased success in school and leads to greater civic participation later in life. . . . Civic engagement provides young people with opportunities to gain work experience, acquire new skills, and to learn responsibility and accountability—all while contributing to the good of their communities. “<sup>1</sup>

Introducing youth to civic involvement at an early age is important because Hawaii voter turnout has declined in recent years. In the past 5 out of the past 6 presidential elections, Hawaii had the lowest voter turnout of all the states. In 2020, Hawaii was one of the 10 lowest states in voter turnout. Voter participation is at the core of active citizenship and a healthy democracy.

Hawaii Youth Services Network coordinates the annual Hawaii Children and Youth Summit, in which youth are provide recommendations to legislators about what Hawaii needs to be a better place to live, learn, and work. In 2023, youth recommendations about vaping prevention and intervention and sexual abuse and exploitation training for teachers have been incorporated into the Keiki Caucus package of bills.

If the program is funded, HYSN would work in partnership with the Department of Education to engage youth in civic affairs. The young people who have participated in the Children and Youth Summit find the experience empowering, and their involvement leads to continued engagement as adults.

I will close with some quotes from Hawaii's youth that have participated in the Hawaii Children and Youth Summit,

*"This was my first experience in attending a meeting with other youths where our voices matter. . . . I want to make a difference and attending the Summit gave me the courage to step out and share everything I've learned with my fellow students. I know I will never stop speaking up for what is right."*

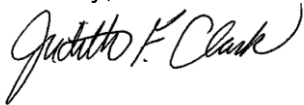
--Alisha Estoy, Junior at Konawaena High School

*I have always been passionate about the environment . . . but I never thought I could make a difference now. . . . Thank you for providing that chance to speak out and give me someone to listen. . . . This has been one of the few times that I felt like people listened to me.*

--Makena Anderson

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith F. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Judith F. Clark, MPH  
Executive Director

# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158

Phone/E-Mail: (808) 927-1214 / [kat.caphi@gmail.com](mailto:kat.caphi@gmail.com)



## COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Senator Angus McKelvey, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 3, 2023

Room 225

3:15 PM

## STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB 749 - CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Aloha Chair McKelvey, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai`i for more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 4,074 Hawai`i individuals living behind bars<sup>1</sup> and under the “care and custody” of the Department of Public Safety/Corrections and Rehabilitation on any given day. We are always mindful that 964 of Hawai`i’s imprisoned people are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates this opportunity to testify in strong support of civic engagement and our amazing Public Access Room. SB 749 requires the Public Access Room to establish and maintain an outreach and engagement program for primary, secondary, post-secondary, and community education and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to assist in effectuating this requirement.

To our knowledge, Hawai`i is the only place that has a room at the capitol for the community to write testimony, ask questions about the legislative process, and to encourage citizen participation. This is such a wonderful service, especially to students who are interested in how their government operates, kupuna who want to share their voices and experience, and advocates, who spend lots of time there between hearings!

We can speak with experience as each session (and even in between sessions) the amazing staff, Virginia Beck and Keanu Young have led some terrific interns each session and it is heartening to long-time advocates that they continue to find new ways to engage the public.

Community Alliance on Prisons urges the committee to pass this important bill onto WAM with support for the appropriation that is so crucial to a vibrant democracy – citizen participation!

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Safety, Weekly Population Report, January 30, 2023.

[https://dps.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2023-01-30\\_George-King.pdf](https://dps.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2023-01-30_George-King.pdf)

**SB-749**

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 8:43:42 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/2/2023 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

Civic participation is essential for a healthy society. We face momentous challenges, such as our lack of affordable house, inequitable access to health care, and dwindling natural resources. In order to confront our most complex problems, all communities, groups, and individuals must feel empowered and possess the tools for positive pro-social change.

When youth understand the system of government, participate in political action, and volunteer, they express a greater sense of efficiency and stay attuned to community concerns. As adults, they are more likely to vote, run for office, and care about public policy.

The State Capitol should be place of learning, listening, and expression. The Public Access Room has the potential to be a hub of civic learning. Outreach and enrichment programs will serve the community. Please support SB749.

Sincerely,

Erin Mendelson

Educator

**SB-749**

Submitted on: 1/28/2023 3:52:43 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/2/2023 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Wast of Tax payer Money!!!

**LATE**

**SB-749**

Submitted on: 2/1/2023 8:11:26 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/2/2023 3:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abby	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I am a senior at Radford High School named Abby Evans and I am in support of SB 749 relating to Advancing Civil Engagement.**

**Civic engagement is crucial for the success and involvement of the future generations. By allowing ourselves to become familiar with, and knowledgeable about the leadership processes in our country, youth become more prepared to become respectful and informed citizens. The world holds many different perspectives, and often the viewpoint of youth is not given enough credit. Just as each age group in life has different political priorities, so do students and youth.**

**Policies relating to vaping, to voting, and to sex education are all extremely impactful for the youth, and as such, should be addressed with that input in mind. It is only by working together with the leaders of the past, present, and future that we can ensure that every perspective is included.**