



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**Executive Office on Early Learning**  
2759 South King Street, Room C6  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

March 19, 2024

**TO:** Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair  
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

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

**SUBJECT: Measure:** S.B. No. 2937 S.D. 1 H.D. 1 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING  
**Hearing Date:** Thursday, March 21, 2024  
**Time:** 2:05 pm  
**Location:** Conference Room 325

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) supports S.B. No. 2937 S.D. 1 H.D. 1 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 Hawai'i 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.



**SB2937 SD1 HD1**  
**RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING**  
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

March 21, 2024

2:05 p.m.

Conference Room 325

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2937 SD1 HD1**, which repeals immediately upon enactment, the restrictions on the laboratory school programs in the college of Hawaiian language at the University of Hilo that could be imposed on July 1, 2026.

The classrooms established by Act 46 (SLH 2020) were envisioned to support the great need for early childhood care and education here in Hawai'i. When OHA sought to create its strategic plan, one critical need our community expressed was the ability to provide high-quality keiki and kupuna care. The development and continued success of the classrooms not only fulfills the legislature's vision of Act 46 but also supports a crucial need for Native Hawaiian families on Hawai'i Island.

OHA has also greatly appreciated the ways these classrooms have been an opportunity for Hawaiian language-medium opportunities to thrive. For Hawaiians, the life of our language, 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, is tied to the health and well-being of our people and culture. "I ka 'olelo no ke ola, i ka 'olelo no ka make" is a revered 'Ōlelo No'eau or proverb that translates to "Life is in speech/language; death is in speech/language."

Practically speaking, removing the sunset simply allows these classrooms to remain open. However, their importance is greater than this practical implication. OHA believes this measure will provide multiple benefits including addressing the early childhood care and education shortage on Hawai'i Island and supporting the continued revitalization of our language.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of SB2937 SD1 HD1. **We urge this committee to pass this measure.**



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

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

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs  
Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 2:05 p.m.

By

Bonnie Irwin, Chancellor  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

#### SB 2937 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on SB 2937 SD1 HD1. The University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo) supports passage of SB 2937 SD1 HD1, 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 'APL 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 'APL, 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 SD1 HD1 seeks to accomplish.

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

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Unity, Equality, Aloha for all



To: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

For hearing Thursday, March 21, 2024

Re: SB 2937, SD1, HD1 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 Hawaii at Hilo from state English-medium standards, assessments, performance ratings, staff qualifications, and staff training requirements. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

#### TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

Do we really believe there should be universal standards for all Hawaii government schools regardless of which island the school is located on, which race or ethnicity or social class the students and teachers are, and whether the students and teachers are multigeneration kama'aina or newcomers from the mainland USA or first generation immigrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds? Do we really believe we should impose upon all students and staff a minimum set of standards

for curriculum content, assessment of student and staff performance, and staff qualifications and training requirements?

We have imposed such universal standards for many years because the students will grow up needing to make their way in Hawaii's multiracial population and economy. Then why would we want to adopt a different set of standards for ethnic Hawaiian children or children of any race merely because they are being taught through the Hawaiian language?

Do we hope and believe that the children in the laboratory school at UH-Hilo will go to live in some sort of a ghetto where Hawaiian is the predominant language of everyday usage and where employers will tolerate substandard performance? Year after year we see news reports that children in the charter schools are performing very poorly when compared to children in the standard schools; and we know that a majority of the charter schools have ethnic Hawaiian-focus curriculum and an activity-focused instructional method ("Ma ka hana ka 'ike") which fails to provide rigorous intellectual content including logical-deductive reasoning, algebra, U.S. and world history, etc.

To vote in favor of this bill is to adopt the soft bigotry of low expectations, telling the community in general, and the students and staff at these schools, that the diploma they receive is little more than a certificate of attendance and not a certificate of academic, intellectual, or vocational competency. Do not abolish the standards as a way of confessing and acquiescing to the inferiority of the education being provided; instead, fix the curriculum and instructional methods so that students will meet the standards despite the handicap of being pawns in a political game of trying to "normalize" Hawaiian language.

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 1:35:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristy Uilani K Palis	Ke Kula ?O Nawahiokalani?opu?u	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 1:22:05 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kupuna for the Mo'opuna	Kupuna for the Moopuna	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 2937 SD1 HD1**

Mahalo nui for this bill!





## *Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u*

*"No 'Ane'i Ko Kākou Ola"*

20 March 2024

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair  
Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Date of Hearing: 03-21-2024

Time: 2:05pm

Location: Conference Room 325

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

SB2937, SD1, HD1 RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING

**STRONGLY SUPPORT**

E ka Luna Ho'omalū Tarnas, ka Hope Luna Ho'omalū Takayama me ke Kōmike Ho'okoloholo me ke Kuleana Hawai'i, Aloha pumehana kākou,

SB 2937 ensures protection under Act 46 (2020) relative to distinctive Early Learning access and support for Hawaiian language medium childcare.

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'elikōlani (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 SB 2937**. 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 Maui 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. SB2837 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. SB2937 builds upon that proven success. Again, I urge passage.

Me ka mahalo ‘oia‘i‘o,



Director, Principal

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 9:03:09 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

SUPPORT!! SB2937 SD1 HD 1!!!

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 11:24:54 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support this bill!

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 12:01:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

<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 au i kēia pila. I SUPPORT this bill.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 12:44:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bruce Fischer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kāko‘o au i kēia pila!

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 12:53:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

Kāko‘o pila SB2937

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 12:54:46 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

<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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 1:55:56 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

<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 i kēia pila! I support this bill!

**SB-2937-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 8:28:43 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

<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-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/20/2024 10:39:49 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/21/2024 2:05:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support this Bill. Please continue to help immersion schools have power to make independent decisions regarding assessment and curriculum.

Humble submitted,

Andrea Kekipi-Aurio