

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



YUUKO ARIKAWA-CROSS  
DIRECTOR

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

March 12, 2024

**TO:** Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education & Technology

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

**SUBJECT: Measure:** S.B. No. 2937 S.D. 1 – RELATING TO ACCESS TO  
LEARNING  
**Hearing Date:** Wednesday, March 13, 2024  
**Time:** 2:00 pm  
**Location:** Conference Room 309

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

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) supports S.B. No. 2937 S.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.



## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII’

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō’ike Mana’o I Mua O Ka ‘Aha’ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education and Technology  
Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

By  
Bonnie Irwin, Chancellor  
University of Hawai’i at Hilo

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

Chair Perruso, Vice Chair Kapela, and Members of the Committee:

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

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



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Ka Papa Alaka'i

Dr. Kēhaulani  
'Aipia-Peters,  
Pelekikena

Kēhaulani Shintani,  
Hope Pelekikena

Kyla Manzano  
Kākau 'Ōlelo

Leilani Ka'apuni,  
Pu'ukū

Kamalei Hayes

Dr. Kauanoe  
Kamanā

Nāmaka Rawlins

Dr. Pila Wilson

Kayla Asing

'Ānela Freitas

No 'Ane'i Ko  
Kākou Ola!

Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair  
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Date of Hearing: 03-13-2024  
Time: 2pm  
Location: Conference Room 309

Testimony of Dr. Kēhaulani 'Aipia-Peters, Governing Board Chair  
Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u Iki LPCS

SB 2937 SD1, RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING  
**STRONGLY SUPPORT**

E nā Po'o Kōmike a me nā Lālā Kōmike o ka Ho'ona'auao Pae Kulanui a me ka 'Enehana a me nā  
Po'o Kōmike a me nā Lālāl Kōmike o ka 'Ōnaehana Hana Aupuni, aloha nui kākou

My name is Dr. Kēhaulani 'Aipia-Peters, and I am the Governing Board Chair of Ke Kula 'O  
Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u Iki, Laboratory Public Charter School. I am providing written testimony in  
STRONG SUPPORT of SB 2937.

We, the governing board of Nāwahī, **STRONGLY SUPPORT** SB 2937, SD 1 that 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.

Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u is a laboratory school program of Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani,  
the Hawaiian Language college at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Repealing the sunset date of  
these exemptions ensures the continuance of our progress in Hawaiian Medium education and  
language revitalization. These exemptions also address the need for strategic and relevant  
assessments and evaluations that do not defer to English Medium education laws and policies.

The passage of SB 2937, SD 1 indicates an awareness of the significance of the Hawaiian language  
college at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo as they address the needs of and ensure the forward  
progress of Hawaiian language medium education.

Mahalo,

Dr. Kēhaulani 'Aipia-Peters  
Chair, Governing Board  
Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u Iki LPCS



## *Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u*

*"No 'Ane'i Ko Kākou Ola"*

13 March 2024

Representative Amy A. Perruso, Chair  
Representative Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Representative Scot Matayoshi, Chair  
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Date of Hearing: 03-13-2024

Time: 2:00pm

Location: Conference Room 309

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

HB2683, HD1 RELATING TO ACCESS TO LEARNING  
**STRONGLY SUPPORT**

E nā Luna Ho'omalū, nā Hope Luna Ho'omalū Kōmike Kulanui me ka 'Enehana a me ke Kōmike Kuleana Hana me ka 'Ōnaehana Aupuni, Aloha pumehana kākou,

SB 2937, SD 1 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, SD1**. 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. 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,



Director, Principal

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 2:37:50 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 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:

**STRONG SUPPORT for SB 2937 SD1!**

Mahalo nui for this bill!

Center for Hawaiian Sovereignty Studies  
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Kenneth R. Conklin, Ph.D. Executive Director  
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Unity, Equality, Aloha for all



To: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

For hearing Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Re: SB 2937, SD1 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. (SD1)

#### 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-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:36:00 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jesse P Neumann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:38:03 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimo Naho'oikaika	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill mahalo

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:38:26 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 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 which repeals the sunset date!

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:38:41 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 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 kēia pila SB2937 HD 1

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:40:26 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 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 HD 1

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:55:53 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jessica Waia'u	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

‘O wau ‘o Jess Waia‘u. He makuahine wau no ke keiki kaiapuni ma ke kula o Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u. I support this bill as my son is currently in Kindergarten at a Hawaiian Medium school.

Mahalo,

Jess Waia‘u

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:57:26 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexis K Maunakea K Stang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

'Ae, kako'o ame kokua loa keia pila. He mea nui no ke a'o I ke kula kaiapuni a pau! E ola mau ka 'olelo makuahine! E holomua kakou a e kako'o hou ke 'olu'olu, mahalo me ke akua pu. Me ka ha'aha'a, Alexis Maunakea Stang



**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 4:20:07 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 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 ka pila!

I support this bill.

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 5:50:04 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dr Sarah Strong, ND	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 7:35:20 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<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 SD1 relating to access to learning. Mahalo!

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 8:21:55 PM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Rep. Amy A. Perruso, Chair

Rep. Jeanne Kapela, Vice Chair

Date of Hearing: Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Time: 2:00pm

Location: CR 309 &

Video conference

Testimony of Kēhaulani Medeiros

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 (SD1)

KĀKO‘O, STRONGLY SUPPORT

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 5:18:44 AM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<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 that 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.

**SB-2937-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 9:30:48 AM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<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-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 11:07:23 AM

Testimony for HET on 3/13/2024 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristy Uilani K Palis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support!