



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawaii 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Lisa Thompson
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **SR171 - Urging the DOE to study the impact of teacher salary step movements on salary schedule compression**

Position: **Support**

Hearing: **March 25, 2024, 3:15 p.m., Conference Room 229**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** SR171 which urges the Department of Education to conduct a thorough study on the impact of teacher salary step movements on salary schedule compression within the State's public education system, analyze current salary structures, analyze the impact of step movements on salary schedule compression, and make recommendations to improve teacher retention and satisfaction by mitigating the negative impacts of salary schedule compression through step movements.

When the long festering salary compression for Bargaining Unit 5 was addressed by the legislature and governor in 2022, thousands of Hawai'i educators were able to make ends meet and continue in the profession at a time when educators nationwide were leaving in droves. Without a meaningful look at the Unit 5 salary structure, the issue of salary compression is very likely to return again. During the bargaining process, oftentimes money is the last thing to be discussed and is right up on legislative funding deadlines. The ability to have in-depth discussions on the subject of salaries at the bargaining table are difficult and this resolution would be able to lay groundwork for future bargaining.

It should be noted that Article XX of the current Unit 5 collective bargaining agreement has language that states:

The parties recognize that annual incremental step movements are a viable recruiting and retention tool. Teachers who are not at the top of the salary schedule and who have effective evaluations shall move to the next highest step of the corresponding class at the beginning of each school year. Annual incremental step movements are subject to funding.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this resolution.



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

COMMITTEE REFERRAL: EDU

MARCH 25, 2024

SCR 142/SR 171, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO STUDY THE
IMPACT OF TEACHER SALARY STEP MOVEMENTS ON SALARY SCHEDULE
COMPRESSION

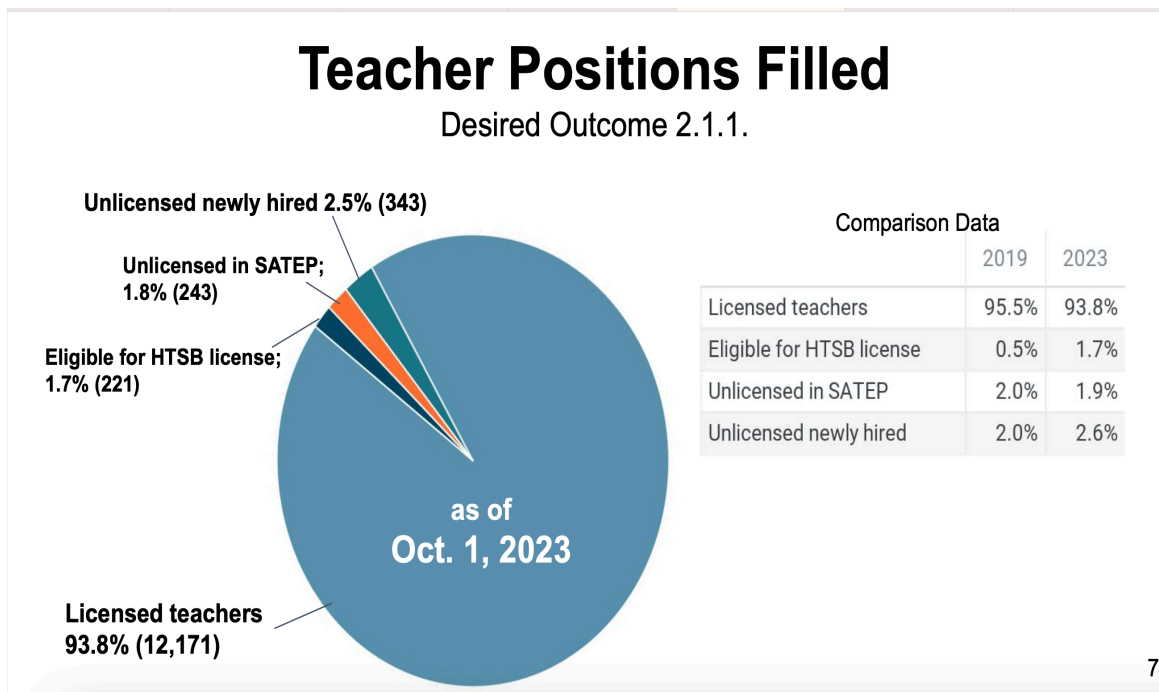
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** SCR 142/SR 171, which urge the Department of Education to study the impact of teacher salary step movements on salary schedule compression.

Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education found that when compared with other high-cost geographic locations, Hawai'i teachers are paid \$7,700 to \$26,000 less than their peers in school districts with similar costs of living, depending on length of service.

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the State Legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. **Restoring guaranteed annual increments, more commonly known as "step increases," would significantly help to alleviate that gap.**

Additionally, low teacher pay adversely impacts the State’s ability to recruit and retain quality classroom leaders. **While Gov. Josh Green recently said in his State of the State address that the teacher shortage had been cut by 50 percent, this figure is not entirely accurate.** In fact, by other measures, the teacher shortage is getting worse. According to a presentation provided to the Hawai’i Board of Education by DOE officials on January 13, 2024, **the number of licensed teachers employed by our state’s public school system has fallen from 95.5 percent of total positions in 2019 to 93.8 percent in 2023.**



As of October 1, 2023, the department had over 800 teaching positions that were filled by educators who fell into the categories of unlicensed newly hired (emergency hires), unlicensed but in the process of completing a state approved teacher education program, or eligible for a teaching license that has not yet been acquired. **While the DOE may only be actively recruiting for roughly 200 positions, that is almost certainly because many positions are currently filled by unlicensed teachers and emergency hires.**

Strengthening teacher compensation, as this bill modestly proposes, improves educator retention. A Stanford University analysis found that raising teacher wages by 10 percent reduces high school dropout rates by 3 to 4 percent. Similarly, a Florida study showed that pay raises reduced teacher attrition by as

much as 25 percent for hard-to-fill subject areas, with children's learning growth gaining from more exposure to experienced educators. When our state implemented differential pay increases for special education, Hawaiian immersion, and hard-to-staff positions, vacancies in those areas fell dramatically.

To deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we must pay teachers what they're worth. It is the least we can do for the hardworking educators on whom our children's and our society's future depends.

Mahalo nui loa,

Kris Coffield

Co-Chair, Legislative Committee

(808) 679-7454

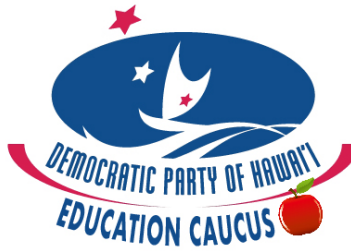
kriscoffield@gmail.com

Abby Simmons

Co-Chair, Legislative Committee

(808) 352-6818

abbyalana808@gmail.com



SCR 142/SR 171, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO STUDY THE IMPACT OF TEACHER SALARY STEP MOVEMENTS ON SALARY SCHEDULE COMPRESSION

MARCH 25, 2024 · EDU HEARING

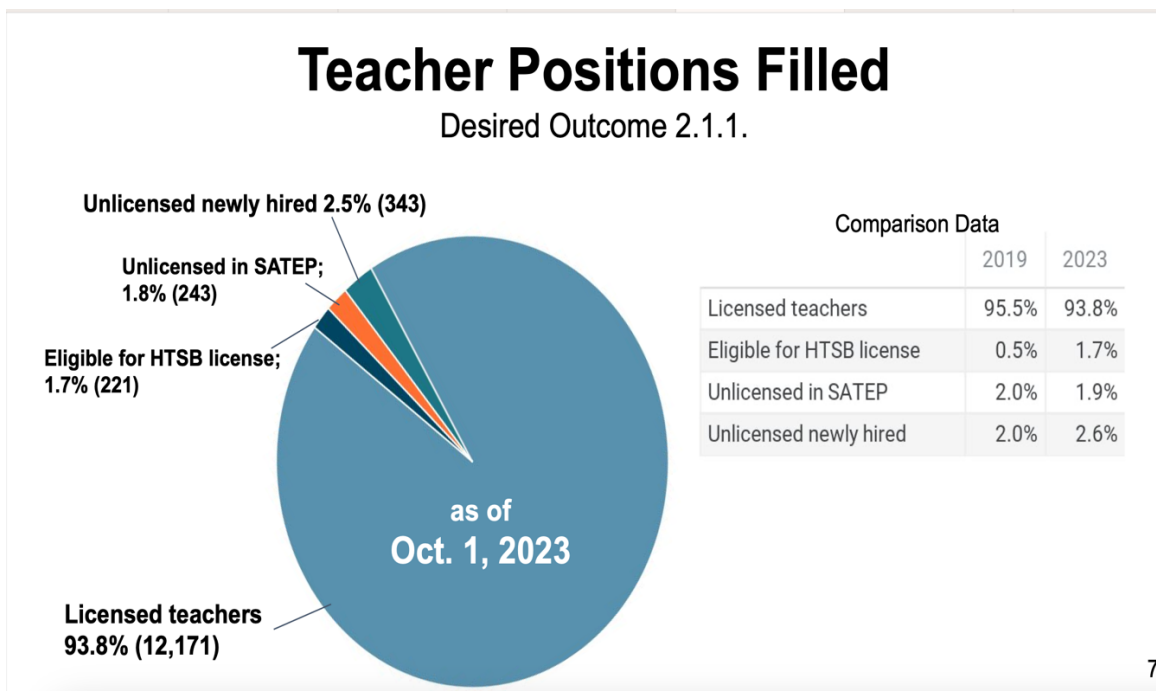
POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SCR 142/SR 171, which urge the Department of Education to study the impact of teacher salary step movements on salary schedule compression.

Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education found that when compared with other high-cost geographic locations, Hawai'i teachers are paid \$7,700 to \$26,000 less than their peers in school districts with similar costs of living, depending on length of service.

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the State Legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. **Restoring guaranteed annual increments, more commonly known as "step increases," would significantly help to alleviate that gap.**

Additionally, low teacher pay adversely impacts the State’s ability to recruit and retain quality classroom leaders. **While Gov. Josh Green recently said in his State of the State address that the teacher shortage had been cut by 50 percent, this figure is not entirely accurate.** In fact, by other measures, the teacher shortage is getting worse. According to a presentation provided to the Hawai’i Board of Education by DOE officials on January 13, 2024, **the number of licensed teachers employed by our state’s public school system has fallen from 95.5 percent of total positions in 2019 to 93.8 percent in 2023.**



As of October 1, 2023, the department had over 800 teaching positions that were filled by educators who fell into the categories of unlicensed newly hired (emergency hires), unlicensed but in the process of completing a state approved teacher education program, or eligible for a teaching license that has not yet been acquired. **While the DOE may only be actively recruiting for roughly 200 positions, that is almost certainly because many positions are currently filled by unlicensed teachers and emergency hires.**

Strengthening teacher compensation, as this bill modestly proposes, improves educator retention. A Stanford University analysis found that raising teacher wages by 10 percent reduces high school dropout rates by 3 to 4 percent. Similarly, a Florida study showed that pay raises reduced teacher attrition by as much as 25 percent for hard-to-fill subject areas, with children's learning growth gaining from more exposure to experienced educators. When our state implemented differential pay increases for special education, Hawaiian immersion, and hard-to-staff positions, vacancies in those areas fell dramatically.

To deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we must pay teachers what they're worth. It is the least we can do for the hardworking educators on whom our children's and our society's future depends.

Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com