



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1188 HD1
RELATING TO RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING

House Committee on Housing
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 12, 2025

9:00 am

Conference Room 430

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake and Committee Members,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) stands in strong **Support of HB1188 HD1**, which seeks to establish a teacher workforce housing stipend program in Hawaii. We acknowledge the recent amendments made to the original language of HB1181 and continue to provide our support for the bill. This bill is critical for addressing teacher shortages, especially in schools serving Native Hawaiian students in rural, underserved, hard-to-staff communities. HB1188 HD1 aims to improve educational equity by ensuring that qualified teachers remain long-term fixtures in schools that are essential for the education and cultural development of Native Hawaiian learners.

Educational equity is a key concern in addressing the disparities Native Hawaiian students face in Hawaii's public schools. Many Native Hawaiian students attend DOE, Hawaiian Focused, and Kaiapuni schools in hard-to-staff areas where teacher shortages have led to high turnover rates and a reliance on emergency hires or long-term substitutes, which can negatively affect the quality of education.¹ HB1188 HD1 offers a solution by providing housing stipends to attract and retain qualified educators in these communities, particularly those with large Native Hawaiian populations.

The bill extends educational stability for Native Hawaiian students by promoting teacher retention in schools where teachers are not only qualified but committed long-term. This stability ensures a supportive learning environment and consistent mentorship, both of which are vital for Native Hawaiian students who thrive in culturally grounded education with strong teacher-student relationships.

HB1188 HD1 also aligns with the Mana i Maui Ola Education Pathways by fostering a sustainable, culturally responsive education system. It helps recruit and retain

¹ *Hawai'i State Teachers Association. n.d. Ending Hawai'i's Teacher Shortage Crisis. Accessed 020125. <https://www.hsta.org/Crisis>.*

teachers who are dedicated to Hawaiian language, culture, and values, ensuring that Native Hawaiian students receive the culturally relevant education they deserve.

OHA strongly supports HB1188 HD1 as an essential step to ensuring that Native Hawaiian students and those in hard-to-staff areas receive the high-quality, culturally responsive education they deserve. By addressing the teacher shortage and improving teacher retention, the bill promotes educational equity in schools where Native Hawaiian students are most in need. Long-term, committed teachers will provide the stable and supportive learning environments necessary for these students to succeed.²

We urge you to **pass HB1188 HD1** and ensure that all students have access to the resources and educators they need to thrive.

² INPEACE. n.d. *Ka Lama*. Accessed 020125. <https://inpeace.org/equity/ka-lama/>.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/12/2025

Time: 09:00 AM

Location: 430 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Housing

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 1188, HD1 RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program to support teacher retention at public and charter schools classified as hard-to-staff. Requires reports to the Legislature. Amends the purpose and uses of the Teacher Housing Revolving Fund. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony and comments regarding HB 1188, HD 1, regarding teacher workforce housing.

The Department supports efforts to address Hawai'i's teacher recruitment and retention challenges. Our state's high cost of living and a shortage of affordable housing impact our ability to attract and retain qualified educators throughout our school system.

While the Department supports the intent of this measure, successful implementation of HB 1188, HD 1, would require dedicated staff resources to verify eligibility, process applications, and administer the stipend program. The Department appreciates the inclusion of funding in this proposal but asks that any additional funding or positions do not affect the Department's Board-approved budget requests.

The Department remains committed to working with the Legislature to develop comprehensive solutions to our educator workforce challenges.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1188 HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Aloha Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Housing Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** HB1188 HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING. Pursuant to the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, the Party supports quality public education and library services to every student, regardless of learning capacity or ability to pay. We also advocate for the importance of supporting and fairly compensating our educators.

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i believes that the future of our state and country depends on an educated and knowledgeable citizenry. To achieve this, we must ensure that our teachers, who are the backbone of our education system, are provided with the necessary resources and support to thrive. The high cost of living in Hawai'i has made it increasingly difficult for teachers to afford housing, leading to high turnover rates and a reliance on emergency hires and substitute teachers. This bill addresses this critical issue by providing housing vouchers to teachers at hard-to-staff schools, thereby alleviating their financial burden and improving teacher recruitment and retention. By establishing a dedicated funding source to deliver quality public education and library services to every student, regardless of their ability to pay, this bill ensures that teachers can focus on delivering quality education without the added stress of housing insecurity. Additionally, the bill's emphasis on supporting teachers at hard-to-staff schools aligns with our commitment to equity and ensuring that all students, regardless of their location, have access to qualified and dedicated educators.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1188 HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

PO Box 2041 • Honolulu, HI 96805 • www.hawaiidemocrats.org



HOUSE BILL 1188, HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING

FEBRUARY 12, 2025 · HSG HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1188, HD1, relating to teacher workforce housing, which establishes a Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program to support teacher retention at public and charter schools classified as hard-to-staff; requires reports to the Legislature; and amends the purpose and uses of the Teacher Housing Revolving Fund.

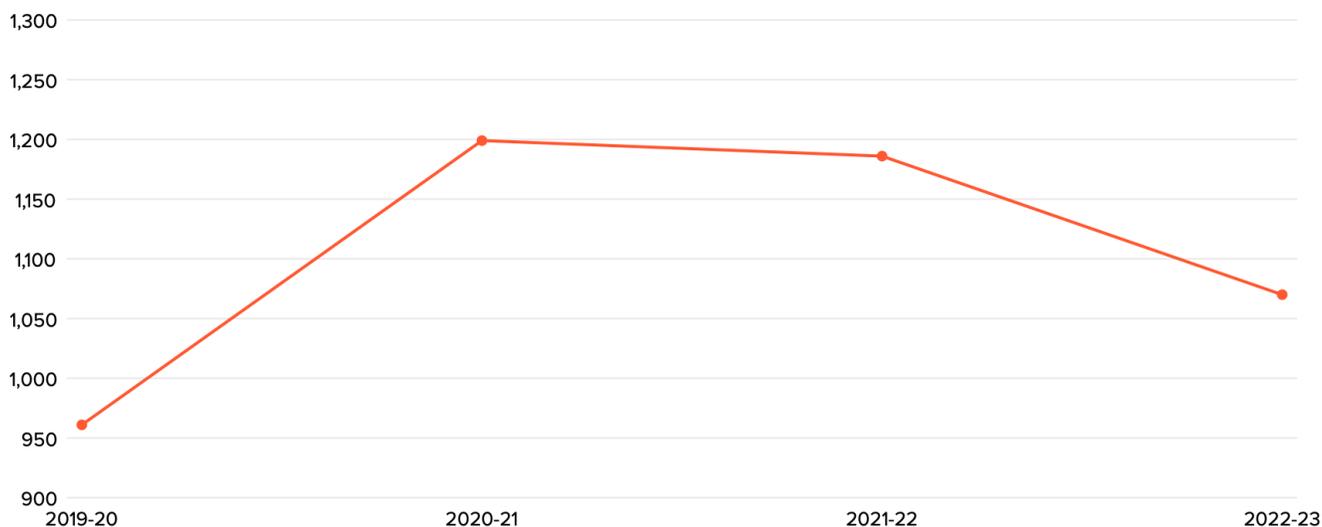
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education 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. **Establishing programs to make housing affordable for teachers and other members of the education workforce would help offset the low wages experienced by Hawai'i's educators.**

A 2022 survey by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University placed Hawai'i among the 10 states with the lowest teacher-to-population ratio. Moreover, as *Honolulu Civil Beat* reported in August of last year, voluntary teacher separations remain high, at over 1,000 per year (see chart below).

Voluntary teacher separations, 2019 to 2023

The number of teachers annually leaving the DOE remains high but has started to decline following the pandemic.



DOE has not released data for the 2023-24 school year.

Chart: Megan Tagami/Civil Beat • Source: [Hawaii DOE](#)

These trends are further exacerbated by the aging teacher workforce. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association has repeatedly cautioned against being overly optimistic about positive teacher retention data, **with a wave of experienced educators expected to retire in the next few years.**

We need to find permanent solutions to address our state's ongoing teacher shortage.

Hawai'i residents face some of the highest housing costs in the nation, at more than twice the national average. Researchers who authored the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach 2024* report found that a full-time worker would need to earn \$44.60/hour—\$or \$92,768 per year—to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market value in our state, with Honolulu experiencing a 67 percent increase in fair market rent between 2005 and 2015. Average rent for a two-bedroom unit surpassed \$2,000 well before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

One out of every four households in Hawai'i report that they are “doubling up” or are three paychecks or less away from being homeless, per the Hawai'i Applesseed Center for Law and

Economic Justice. Additionally, over 60 percent of households are severely cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, a number that rises to over 80 percent of extremely low-income households.

A recent survey conducted by the Holomua Collective found that 60 percent of residents face worries about not being able to pay a monthly bill and 63 percent face difficulties in saving money from their paychecks for future emergencies, retirement, or other expenses. A staggering 70 percent of middle-class respondents to Holomua’s survey say they will—or are unsure if they will have to—relocate in the coming years. As Holomua Collective states in its report on the findings, “These are the very workers powering Hawai‘i’s economy, now on the brink of leaving their homes behind.” That population includes the teachers who are tasked with educating our keiki.

To deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we must recruit and retain qualified educators. Our children’s future depends on our ability to meet that challenge.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com

HB-1188-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 2:25:12 PM

Testimony for HSG on 2/12/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rick Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure as it is much needed. Mahalo.