



**STATE OF HAWAII  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**House Committee on Education**

Thursday, January 30, 2025

2:00 p.m.

Hawaii State Capitol, Room 309

**Measure: House Bill 471, Relating to Education**

**Purpose of Measure:**

Requires the Board of Education to establish a Korean language program. Appropriates funds.

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Education (Board) offers **comments** on House Bill 471.

The Board's responsibility is to formulate statewide educational policy, pursuant to Article X, Section 3, of the Hawaii Constitution, and section 26-12, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Board respectfully submits that the establishment and operation of programs does not fall within its purview, and that such a role would be best handled by the Department of Education (Department), which is statutorily tasked with the administration of programs of education and public instruction throughout the state.

The Department's Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design is tasked with advancing innovative and responsive instructional design and support systems to enable positive outcomes and reduce gaps for all student learners.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.

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:** 01/30/2025

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Bill Title:** HB 0471 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Board of Education to establish a Korean language program. Appropriates funds.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) recognizes the intent of HB 471 and respectfully offers comments.

The Department recognizes that honoring and supporting linguistic and cultural diversity is important in providing a meaningful and equitable education for every student. These efforts are guided by Hawai'i State Board of Education Policy 105-14 Multilingualism for Equitable Education and Policy 105-15 Seal of Biliteracy.

The World Languages program at the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design supports teaching and learning of a variety of world languages as proficiency in languages in addition to English is critical for success in the twenty-first century (Commission on Language Learning, 2017).

The Department has established Korean as a World Language that can be offered at K-12 grades. Decisions on which World Languages to offer are made at the school level.

The Hawai'i World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (HI WRSLL) includes cultures as one of the contexts for communication in the target language. The implementation of the HI WRSLL provides curricular and pedagogical supports for Korean teachers statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

Dear Chair Woodson and Representatives of the Education Committee,

Please vote in SUPPORT of HB 471 to establish and appropriate funds for Korean Language Programs in our public school because I believe doing so will benefit the students of Hawaii, our communities, and futures. Offering Korean as a world language option would enable motivated students to learn Korean properly, foster better communication with Korean investors and tourists, and follow global popularity trends in entertainment.

First, lets access prior knowledge about the historical background of South Korea. South Korea is a country located in Eastern Asia that was founded in 2000 BCE. It had an established monarchy with 27 different Kings until the split of North and South Korea. Ancient Korea also have made some signifcant inventions. For example, rain gage, the oldest astronomical observatory in Asia, and Ondol a floor heating system.

America's relationship with Korea developed in the 1950's. They signed the Mutual Defense Treaty also known as "the relationship forged in the blood." This treaty was an agreement between the two countries to promote peace, defend against external threats, and strengthen collective defense. Seventy years later, this partnership is still one of the world's premier alliances. The United States has been involved in the affairs of Koreans and currently maintains about 37,000 service personnel along the Demilitarized Zone along North and South Korea. To maintain this relationship, learning Korean can prove to be very useful.

Learning Korean twenty years ago may not have been relevant and useful, but today it is. South Korea, one of the world's poorest countries only a generation ago, is now the United States' seventh-largest trading partner and has the 11th largest economy in the world. It has a 1 trillion dollar economy with over 49 million consumers and a plethora of trade agreements in place. As South Korea continues to grow, its prospects for economic success remains strong.

Therefore, as South Korea's economy has developed, trade has become an increasingly important aspect of the U.S-South Korean relationship.

The U.S-Korea Free Trade Agreement, also known as KORUS ensures that 95% of bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products becomes duty-free within three years of entry. In addition, trade agreement requires equal benefits for both parties. As a result, since many Korean investors come to Hawaii, American investors should also be able to travel there. We have a strong trading system with Korea already, but future students may help make it stronger.

Offering Korean language could benefit our local economy as well. The state's largest market is Korea. According to state statistics, Hawaii exported \$233 million in goods to Korea in 2018, representing 35 percent of the state's total exports. This figure represents a significant portion of our total exports and underscores the importance of our economic relationship with Korea. Hawaii and Korea have strong economic bonds which are not going to stop anytime soon.

Some of the most luxurious condo properties in metro Honolulu are largely owned by Korean nationals. For example, the JL Captial project on Keamoku street close to the Ala Moana Shopping Center and just a few blocks down from the Convention Center. In addition, Korean tourists contribute significantly to our local economy. According to the Hawaii Tourism Authority, "Korean visitors spend about 275 million dollars in Hawaii every year." This shows the vital role Korea plays in our tourism sector. Proficiency in Korean can open doors to various career opportunities in fields such as international business, tourism, and diplomacy. Our students could become valuable assets to local businesses and organizations seeking to strengthen their ties with Korean partners.

In addition, Korean has been implemented into modern Hawaii. Korean food has been a regular in Hawaii. In fact, there in almost every strip mall there seems to be a Korean BBQ!

Second, when you enter a home, locals usually take their shoes off before entering a house. This habit stems from the Korean culture. Due to the Ondol system, many Korean homes' floors were heated from underneath using hot rocks, so taking your shoes off at the door was for your comfort. Third, Keeaumoku, also known as "Korea-moku," is Honolulu's informal Koreatown. A new Koreatown is popping up around Fort Street Mall led by Korean grocery store 88 Mart and Korean cafe chain Paris Baguette, along with a new generation of Korean entrepreneurs.

Many people are motivated to learn Korean. Duolingo, an app for language learning, claims about 8 million people are trying to learn Korean through its service. Plus, a report by the Modern Language Association shows a Korean uptake in US universities by almost 14% in recent years. Even UH professor Cheehyung Harison Kim said that Korean is the university's most popular foreign language program. Considering the data, providing this opportunity to student in Hawaii may better prepare us for the future. If they were able to take a language which motivated them, it would result in better attitudes, interest levels, and proficiency.

The Korean Wave, also known as "Hallyu" has significantly contributed to this rise. The global popularity of Korean pop culture, including K-drama, K-pop, and films, has created a surge in interest. For instance, BTS, a globally renowned K-pop group, has millions of fans worldwide. BTS's success is a testament to the global reach of Korean culture. Their music videos garner billions of views, and their tours sell out arenas around the world. The massive success of "Squid Game" and the Oscar-winning film "Parasite" has brought Korean media to the forefront of global entertainment. These phenomena have sparked interest in Korean language and culture on an unprecedented scale.

In addition, famous Korean actors and idols have set fashion and beauty trends across the world. Their fashion features a mix of Western and Asian styles, creating a unique aesthetics that

appeals to a diverse international audience. This generates a cycle of cultural exchange, where elements of South Korean culture are adopted globally, while global influences are also incorporated into K-pop fashion. A Statista Survey found that, “More than 50 percent of respondents...described Korean fashion as popular in their country.”

Have you ever heard of K-beauty? Maybe you have seen girls of all ages apply Korean beauty products onto their skin. K-beauty's success has reached all corners of the globe and has especially impacted America. From sheet masks to laser facials, all these products led Americans to associate the country's beauty exports with innovation and “glass skin.” Key products in Korean skin care routines, like hyaluronic acid and oil-based cleansers, and brands like Laneige and Tonymoly have become staples.

Ultimately, Korean should be introduced as a foreign language option at schools since many students are motivated to learn Korean. Along with that, the language is important to Hawaii economically. Lastly, Korean is a trending language across the world. Adding Korean as another language, could give students a brighter future. Please join me to bring Korean to secondary education in Hawaii. The potential is limitless because Korean is Dynamite!

Sincerely,

Jessica Lee

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 8:28:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Representatives,

I offer testimony in SUPPORT of HB 471 to establish a Korean Language Program throughout the Department of Education. Most people agree that exposure to a variety of world languages is critical for our youth developing cultural awareness, international friendships, and future career opportunities.

As an educator, I have observed how the ethnic composition of our student bodies in Hawai'i have changed over the last three decades. The Korean population has grown significantly along with the increase of trade with South Korea, Korean tourism, and Korean investment in our communities through real estate and small businesses. Korean restaurants, stores, churches, and affordable housing developments abound, as well as K-POP radio and Korean television stations. The children of Korean immigrants attend both public and private schools within our state; however, so far, only two O'ahu public high schools, Moanalua and Kalani, have Korean language classes. Children living in other DOE complexes throughout our state, who do not qualify for geographic exceptions, or are unable to make commutes to these two particular high schools, should have equal access to these Korean language classes.

We should give students of Korean heritage the same representation and respect as we do other cultures. In the last couple of years, the Filipino community has been recognized with the DOE establishing Filipino History & Culture classes, as well as the special recruitment and hiring of a cohort of Filipino teachers. My own biological children are multi-ethnic. Their Hawaiian and Filipino ethnicities are well represented nowadays, but their Korean heritage is not within the DOE. It's about time that Korean culture is valued, just as Japanese, Chinese, and other cultures are.

Thankfully, the University of Hawai'i has recognized the trends and economic potential and has a thriving Korean Studies program. Our schools should prepare the next generation to capitalize on the abundance of economic opportunities generated through partnerships with South Korea. If our students learn the language they will be prime candidates for jobs, especially since the population of South Korea is aging rapidly and the birth rate is plummeting; the country is in dire need of a work force. Plus, if there is a Korean language program here in our schools, then the UH graduates of the Korean Studies program can find job opportunities here within the DOE.

Please vote, "YES," to pass HB 471!

Mahalo nui loa,

Vanessa Distajo

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 8:51:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I am testifying in strong support of HB471 to establish a Korean language and culture studies program in our public schools. Hawaii's deep and long historical ties to Hawaii as well as the fact that Korea is a major trading partner and economic force in the world today are fundamental reasons why this course of study should be robustly taught in our schools. With such a program, we help prepare our students for better employment, open minds to different cultures, and deepen the ties between peoples.

Thank you for supporting this initiative.

Winston Welch, Honolulu

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 10:19:55 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Representatives,

I offer testimony in SUPPORT of HB 471 to establish a Korean Language Program throughout the Department of Education.

As a physician in Hawai'i, I have observed how the ethnic composition of our patient population in Hawai'i have changed over the last three decades. The Korean population has grown significantly, specifically within our own community, prompting the need for translators to communicate and develop trust with Hawaii's Korean growing community, regarding their health.

The Korean education starts with the aspiring students who want to serve the community as translators, health care providers, or business innovators. I, for one, wish to have the opportunity to learn the language in grade school, as languages are easier to absorb at a younger age, compared to now, when time is limited in carrying out my own health professional duty.

We should give students of Korean heritage the same representation and respect as we do other cultures. Growing up, in the US school system, there was no opportunity to learn Korean and never encouraged, compared to French and Spanish. Here in Hawaii, in which Korean growth is unique and significant, brings good reason to have Korean language as another language opportunity for the state of Hawaii.

Thankfully, the University of Hawai'i has recognized the trends and economic potential and has a thriving Korean Studies program. Our middle to high schools should prepare the next generation to capitalize on the abundance of economic opportunities generated through partnerships with South Korea.

If our students learn the language, they will be prime candidates not just within health care and our own community, but for other jobs potentially in Korea. Since the population of South Korea is aging rapidly and the birth rate is plummeting, the country is in dire need of a work force. Plus, if there is a Korean language program here in our schools, then the UH graduates of the Korean Studies program can find job opportunities here within the DOE.

Please vote, "YES," to pass HB 471!

Sincerely, Dr. Richard Lee

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 9:39:19 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Young Hee Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Woodson, vice Chair La Chica, and Representatives,

I offer testimony in SUPPORT of HB 471. Language programs can improve your career and business in Hawaii. In addition, Hawaii and Korea share a significant historical relationship, and learning Korean at school is critical to understanding the culture and history.

Please vote "YES" to pass HB 471!

Mahalo,

Young Hee Lee

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 7:44:39 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson and Representatives of the Education Committee,

I urge you to please vote in SUPPORT of HB 471, establishing and appropriating funds for Korean Language Programs in our public schools.

As an educator, I am grounded in my belief that schools should prepare students for college, careers, and citizenship. As workforce demands change, schools should appropriately respond to prepare students for the ever changing job market. As community (local and global) culture changes, schools should appropriately respond to prepare students for citizenship in contemporary culture. As Korean culture (food, entertainment, business) has exponentially increased in Hawai'i (and our country), we in education have the responsibility to prepare our students for careers and citizenship to honor the increase of that culture in Hawai'i (as we have done with other Asian ethnicities). HB 471 is a step in the right direction.

Mahalo for reading my testimony,

Joseph Manfre

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:11:34 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lorelei L Saito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson and Representatives of the Education Committee,

Please vote in SUPPORT of HB 471 to establish and appropriate funds for Korean Language Programs in our public school because giving students an opportunity to take this language will help them build their global community.

By being proficient in the Korean language students can enter professions that partner economically with South Korea. South Korea is currently a trading partner with the United States. It has a 1 trillion dollar economy with over 49 million consumers and a plethora of trade agreements in place. As South Korea continues to grow, its prospects for economic success remains strong.

With the growing interests among students who enjoy learning about Korean culture (food, music, entertainment industry), this type of language option in our public schools will be a welcome addition to the menu of courses currently being offered. UH professor Cheehyung Harison Kim said that Korean is the university's most popular foreign language program.

Mahalo for taking this bill into consideration.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Lorelei L. Saito

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 11:07:49 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I believe teaching Korean in school is important due to the long standing economic relationship & deep rooted cultural ties that Korea has with Hawaii.

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 12:51:44 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson and Representatives of the Education Committee,

Please vote in SUPPORT of HB 471 to establish and appropriate funds for Korean Language Programs in our public schools.

I was born to immigrant parents who wanted me to learn English as my 1st language rather than Korean. By learning English as a 1st language, sure, I was able to quickly pick up a greater number of opportunities, but I noticed the disconnect between me and my culture. My school does not offer Korean and I struggle to learn it outside of school especially with other time commitments.

It would be a wonderful opportunity for many in the same situation as I was in to have access to this kind of education.

Thank you,

Sydney Chung

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:02:02 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support bill HB471 to teach Korean in our schools. Hawaii is such a diverse state that we need to teach as much languages to our children as possible and include all nationalities we can.

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:36:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I 100% support this bill because we have a lot of Korean tourists that come to Hawaii. Implementing Korean language classes in school can benefit students who would want to work in the Tourist industry someday or become translators for Koreans who want to become residents here in Hawaii.

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:58:11 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carolyn O'Mahony	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure to expand the Korean Language Program in Hawai'i Schools. Hawai'i has historical and growing economic and social ties with Korea. Having Hawai'ian educated children with an understanding of Korean culture and language will enrich our community.

**LATE**

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 2:20:22 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support HB471 proposing that the Board of Education establish a Korean language program, which I think is important for access to Korean Americans and others to learn and understand their families' culture and strengthen international opportunities for the future.

**LATE**

**HB-471**

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:05:46 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Writing in support. Korean is a major language spoken by Hawaii residents and visitors to the islands. If there is demand from students, then classes should be offered as an option. Mahalo.