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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 18, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 637 HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.**

Hearing: February 20, 2025, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308 & Videoconferencing, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this measure, provides comments, and defers to the Department of Education. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation align with and not reduce or replace budget priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: This bill requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literary instruction. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee on Education amended the measure by:

- (1) Appropriating an unspecified amount of funds to the Department of Education for dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) recognizes the importance of early identification and intervention in addressing literacy challenges and appreciates the intent of this bill to strengthen the support systems available to students. Ensuring that all students, regardless of learning differences, have access to the tools they need to succeed is a shared priority.

As an agency dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving meaningful employment and independence, DVR acknowledges the long-term benefits of strong literacy skills. We appreciate the bill's focus on universal screening, evidence-based interventions, and professional development, which align with broader efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students.

We defer to the Department of Education's expertise in determining the best approaches for implementation. We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Department and the Legislature in addressing the diverse needs of Hawaii's students.

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



**STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA**

PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

February 20, 2025

The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Yamashita, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB637, HD1 Relating to Education

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB637, HD1**, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction.

The historical literacy rates in Hawaii once positioned the state as one of the most literate nations in the world, with 81% of the population speaking at least two languages and reading proficiently. However, as of 2024, only about half of Hawaii's students are proficient in reading. Research consistently shows that students who do not achieve reading proficiency by third grade face significantly reduced academic and career opportunities. This bill directly addresses these challenges by mandating the use of dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners, ensuring early identification of at-risk students and timely, evidence-based interventions. Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, all public schools will conduct mandatory screenings to assess phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and other critical literacy components, preventing long-term academic struggles.

Students with developmental and intellectual disabilities, who often face challenges in language processing, memory, and comprehension, will benefit significantly from HB 637. Early identification through dyslexia-sensitive universal screening will allow for timely and

targeted interventions, preventing them from falling behind due to undiagnosed reading difficulties. The Hawaii Multi-Tiered System of Supports (HMTSS) will provide structured, research-based literacy instruction, including multisensory learning approaches, explicit phonics instruction, and ongoing progress monitoring tailored to each student's needs. Additionally, professional development for educators will ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills to support students with diverse learning needs. Future educators will also receive structured literacy training as part of their teacher preparation programs, ensuring they enter classrooms ready to provide effective literacy instruction for all students in Hawaii's public-school system.

As Hawaii remains the only state without dyslexia-specific legislation, this bill is essential in closing the achievement gap, promoting equity, and ensuring that all students receive the literacy instruction and support they need to succeed academically and beyond.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 637, HD1.**

Sincerely,



Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



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

Date: 02/20/2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0637, HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports HB637, HD1, which provides a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to improving literacy outcomes. This bill mandates the use of universal screeners in early grades (kindergarten through grade 3) to ensure early identification of students with dyslexia and other language and literacy challenges. Early identification, paired with targeted interventions, can significantly impact a child's future by providing the necessary support to build a strong foundation in literacy.

The Department is committed to thoughtfully implementing the objectives of this bill and is forming a workgroup to review and determine a list of approved dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners. The workgroup will include internal stakeholders such as educators, school administrators, curriculum specialists, Department leadership, and external partners such as advocates, university experts, and community organizations. By bringing together expertise from multiple sectors, the Department ensures that the latest research, best practices, and the practical needs of schools and students inform decisions.

The Department anticipates that this initiative will cost \$750,000 in recurring funds to implement mandated dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners successfully. This investment is critical to identifying literacy challenges early, closing literacy gaps, and ensuring that all students, especially those with dyslexia and other language-based learning difficulties, receive the targeted interventions needed for

success.

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



info@hawaiikidscan.org
hawaiikidscan.org

February 18, 2025

Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita,
Chair, House Committee on Finance

Honorable Representative Jenna Takenouchi,
Vice Chair, House Committee on Finance

Regarding: **Support for HB637 Relating to Education**

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this testimony in strong support of HB637, which requires all public schools to implement universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities, and mandates the provision of professional learning opportunities to support the implementation of structured literacy instruction.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawai'i has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

Over two thirds of Hawai'i's students do not read proficiently,¹ yet there are insufficient early detection policies and standardized assessment regulations in Hawai'i to address students at risk of having dyslexia. Hawai'i is the only state without dyslexia-specific laws related to student support.² This void is allowing many students in Hawai'i to fall behind, as their needs are not being accurately identified and supported.

Research underscores that students who are not proficient readers by third grade face long-term academic and career challenges. Students who are not identified as struggling before grade three and brought up to proficiency have significantly lower rates of success in the future, are four times more likely not to graduate from high school on time, and have higher rates of future incarceration and other negative outcomes.^{3, 4} Students need scientifically-based intervention methods as early as possible to ensure their success. Many states have already seen the need to adopt policies that direct resources and guide responses to support these students ⁵ It is

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\), 1998–2024 Reading Assessments](#) Hawaii Snapshot

² National Council on Teacher Quality: [Hawaii: Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation of the Science of Reading](#)

³ Study: [Third Grade Reading Predicts Later High School Graduation](#)

⁴ Governors Early Literacy Connection: [Early Literacy Connection to Incarceration](#)

⁵ University of Michigan: [Debunking the Myths about Dyslexia](#)



imperative that Hawai'i also takes steps to identify our struggling readers and help our keiki achieve better outcomes.

This bill addresses these issues head-on, moving schools away from the “wait to fail” method, whereby students with dyslexia are not identified until they have experienced prolonged reading failure. Research has shown that the wait to fail framework is problematic for multiple reasons, including the negative impact reading challenges can have on the emotional well-being of struggling students and the difficulty students face in meeting grade-level expectations when reading interventions are initiated in later elementary school.⁶

HB637 also codifies the elements of a scientifically-based assessment tool, including core elements such as phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding and encoding skills, and rapid naming. Using a comprehensive tool will ensure the creation of a holistic profile of our students, equipping teachers to address specific student needs.

Finally, by requiring professional learning opportunities for educators and pre-service educators to support students with dyslexia, HB637 ensures that teachers will be equipped to understand and respond to students' needs in a way that aligns with evidence-based practices.

In closing, we strongly echo the Department of Education's testimony that “Every student deserves the opportunity to become a proficient reader, and HB 637 is a vital step toward making that a reality.”

Mahalo for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erica Nakanishi-Stanis".

Erica Nakanishi-Stanis
Advocacy Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

⁶ [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines](#), Massachusetts Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education

Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition
2444 Dole Street, Bachman Annex 6
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

February 19, 2025

Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition supports H.B. No. 637 HD1, as it will require all public schools to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings for students in kindergarten through ninth grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other developmental language disabilities; as well as provide professional learning opportunities for teachers in implementing structured literacy instruction and delivering evidence-based interventions within the tiered system framework.

As Hawai'i is the only state without dyslexia-specific legislation, this bill is essential in closing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students receive the literacy instruction and support they need to have a better chance of reaching their full potential, thus promoting educational equity. The pre- and in-service teacher professional development is another crucial component of this bill. Partnership with teacher preparation programs will ensure new teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver effective, evidenced-based structured literacy instruction. An access to ongoing professional development focused on literacy assessments and strategies for supporting all learners, including those with dyslexia and other language challenges, will ensure that teachers are continuously updating their skills and knowledge to implement with fidelity the Hawaii's Multi-Tiered System of Supports, where the instruction and interventions are evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, focused, and targeted.

We will defer to the Hawai'i State Department of Education regarding the implementation and provisions of the sections of the bill that are pertinent to the department.

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition is a network of education leaders who have made a collective commitment to promoting literacy throughout the state of Hawai'i. Together, we have developed the Hawai'i State Literacy Plan and Hawai'i Early Literacy Guide that focus on providing research-informed strategies to improve literacy for Hawaii's people.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

Members of the Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition

- Kim Guieb-Kang
- Karla Hayashi
- Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, on behalf of
Teach For America Hawai'i
- Kara Kusunoki
- Lauren Padesky, Ph.D.
- Petra Schatz, Ph.D.
- Charis-Ann Sole, M.S., MEd ECE
- Leslie Stiller-West



Date: February 19, 2025

To: House Committee on Finance
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
And members of the Committee

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for HB637, which would implement a Department of Education approved dyslexia-sensitive universal screener

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS strongly supports passage of HB637, which would support students with dyslexia and students with language and literacy challenges.

Currently, just over half of Hawaii's students are proficient readers. To improve student reading proficiency, it is necessary to address the root causes that contribute to the present levels of poor reading proficiency rates. A proactive and systematic approach is required to achieve high literacy rates for all students. Presently, the department of education is striving to address poor reading proficiency rates by administering a universal screener at the beginning, middle, and end of the year for all students from kindergarten to grade nine. The purpose of this universal screening is to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulty or failure, and to provide evidence-based interventions to support these students, in addition to core-structured literacy instruction. However, not all universal screeners are able to detect or identify students who may have certain underlying language challenges that impact learning. This is problematic because students with dyslexia or other developmental language disorders may need more intensive support or a more individualized intervention program to address the causes of their reading challenges. Unfortunately, Hawaii is the only state in the country that lacks dyslexia-specific laws to support students in this area.

Evidence shows that students who are not identified and brought to reading proficiency by third grade face significantly greater challenges to succeeding in the future. At the same time, a substantial body of evidence indicates that, with effective assessment and instruction, almost all students can learn to read. This includes students with language and literacy challenges and students who have dyslexia.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HB 637** which would support students with dyslexia and students with language and literacy challenges.



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 586-8126 Fax: 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov
February 20, 2025

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

Ms. Martha Guinan, *Chair*
Ms. Susan Wood, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Kathie Awaya
Ms. Virginia Beringer
Mr. Will Carlson
Ms. Annette Cooper
Mr. Mark Disher
Ms. Nancy Gorman
Ms. Mai Hall
Ms. Melissa Johnson
Ms. Tina King
Ms. Dale Matsuura
Ms. Cheryl Matthews
Dr. Paul Meng
Ms. Siena Molina
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Ms. Kau'i Rezendes
Ms. Rosie Rowe
Dr. Scott Shimabukuro
Mr. Herbert Taitingfong
Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Jasmine Williams

Ms. Helen Kaniho, *liaison to
the Superintendent*
Ms. Wendy Nakasone-Kalani,
*liaison to the military
community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Committee on Finance
Board of Education
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 637, HD 1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Dear Chair Yamashita and members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is in strong support of HB 637, HD 1 which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literary instruction.

SEAC advises the Department of Education on the needs of roughly 20,000 students who have been found eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The largest subgroup of special education students is identified as having a specific learning disability, and according to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, 80-90 percent of these students likely have dyslexia. Many students identified in other IDEA eligibility categories also have significant difficulties with literacy resulting in special education having the largest achievement gaps in reading on the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the National Assessment of Educational Progress of any other student subgroup.

Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening for grades kindergarten through 3rd grade could help to identify the estimated 15-20% of the school population who have dyslexia and related reading difficulties before they begin to fall behind and provide them with targeted interventions that could mitigate the need for specially designed instruction in the future. Without identification and individualized support, these students will fail to develop a strong foundation in literacy and become at risk of academic failure, higher rates of dropping out and incarceration, and lower future earnings.



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February 20, 2025
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Non-proficient readers who are currently in grades 4 and above will also benefit from this measure which mandates professional development statewide for all teachers to better recognize dyslexia and deliver structured literacy instruction and evidence-based interventions to address self-regulation, executive functioning, reading, writing and comprehension. Training will also include preservice in state approved teacher education programs, ensuring that future teachers will have the skills to identify students with dyslexia and address their unique learning needs.

SEAC urges your Committee to approve \$750,000 in recurring funding to support dyslexia-sensitive screeners. This investment will pay huge dividends in improving the academic success and future contributions of Hawaii's public school students.

Mahalo for the opportunity to express our support for this important legislation.

Respectfully,


Martha Guinan
Chair



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

February 19, 2025

TO: Chair Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

Hearing Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 **Time:** 10:00 a.m. **Place:** Conference Room 308 and Videoconference

FROM: Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of HB637 HD1 - Relating to Education

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii strongly supports HB637 HD1, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction. Additionally, it appropriates funds for this purpose.

Key Points

- **Early Identification:** Implementing dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings ensures early identification of students with dyslexia, allowing for timely and appropriate interventions.
- **Evidence-Based Interventions:** Utilizing evidence-based interventions ensures that students receive effective support tailored to their specific needs, improving their educational outcomes.
- **Professional Development:** Offering professional development on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions equips educators with the knowledge and skills needed to support students with dyslexia.
- **Pre-Teacher Training:** Supporting pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction ensures that future educators are well-prepared to address the needs of students with dyslexia.

Arguments in Support

HB637 HD1 represents a comprehensive approach to addressing the educational needs of students with dyslexia. By requiring the implementation of dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, this bill ensures that students with dyslexia are identified early and receive the support they need to succeed academically.

The professional development component of the bill ensures that current educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to support students with dyslexia. Additionally, by supporting pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction, the bill ensures that future educators are well-prepared to address the needs of students with dyslexia.

The appropriation of funds for this initiative is crucial to its successful implementation, providing the necessary resources to support the proposed changes and improvements.

We commend the Committee for considering this important legislation and urge its passage. The Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii stands ready to assist in any way possible to ensure the successful implementation of HB637 HD1.

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

Mahalo nui loa,

Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick

Co-Chairs, Environmental Caucus Democratic Party of Hawaii

HB-637-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 12:52:06 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Fairchild	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-637-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 2:35:38 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Please support this important legislation. Mahalo

HB-637-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 5:06:59 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
April Bautista	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I kindly ask that the Committee passes HB637 HD1.

Thank you,

April

April Kamilah Bagasao Bautista

Kalihi-Pālama