



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 0961, HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on an island other than Oahu. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of HB961, HD1 and respectfully offers comments.

The proposed certified librarian positions would provide expert guidance and support to school library staff (especially those without certified librarians) to work in partnership with teachers, and ensure that materials are curated in alignment with the Department's library material selection guidelines.

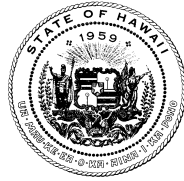
HB961, HD1 is supportive of Department goals and objectives including:

- Enhancing student achievement through improved literacy and research skills;
- Developing information literacy and critical thinking to prepare students for success in a digital world;
- Encouraging a love of reading by expanding access to diverse and engaging library materials;
- Supporting teachers and curriculum integration by incorporating research and media literacy into instruction; and
- Providing equitable access to print and online resources to ensure all students have the tools they need for academic success.

A challenge the Department may encounter if this bill passes, would be the ability to hire a certified librarian. The teacher transfer period occurs in the previous spring for the following school year. Therefore, hiring after the transfer period would likely be from a new hire list which may or may not have qualified teacher librarians.

While the Department appreciates the support of school libraries and the appropriation in this measure, we ask that it does not adversely affect the priorities identified in the Department's Governor-approved budget.

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



STATE OF HAWAII  
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM  
'OIHANA HALE WAIHONA PUKE AUPUNI O KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
OFFICE OF THE STATE LIBRARIAN  
44 MERCHANT STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Thursday, February 20, 2025**

**10:00 am**

**Conference Room 308**

**By Stacey A. Aldrich  
State Librarian**

**H.B. 961 RELATING TO EDUCATION**

To: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Finance

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) **supports H.B. 961 HD1**, which establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on an island other than Oahu.

School libraries and school librarians are a vital part of educational support for all students from K-12. School librarians are certified teachers who also hold a master's degree in library science, qualifying them to work with classroom teachers on lessons plans, support literacy, teach research skills and digital literacy skills. Our students are in, and will continue to be, a part of a complex world of information and disinformation. School librarians are vital for the development of the information skills needed to thrive now and in the future.

While it is optimal to have a school librarian in each school, this bill would pilot the idea of a rotating school librarian within a Department of Education complex to ensure that all teachers and students would have access to the expertise of a school librarian to enhance the development of curriculum and build students' reading, information research and digital skills.

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



Testimony to the House Committee on Finance  
Thursday, February 20, 2025 10:00 AM

RE: **HB 961 HD1** Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

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

The Hawai'i Library Association (HLA) **strongly supports HB 961 HD1**, which establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O'ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

Licensed school librarians are highly skilled teachers who help students develop the critical thinking, information literacy, and media literacy skills needed to be effective and ethical community problem-solvers. At a time when social media content can be so misleading, skilled literacy instruction can train our students to be discerning consumers of information. School libraries are places where students can learn the digital technology skills they need to succeed academically, to be productive and responsible members of society, and become future contributors to our local workforce. School library programs managed by licensed school librarians are dynamic hubs of learning and literacy.

Unfortunately, student access to high quality school libraries is at its lowest with only 24% of DOE schools having a licensed school librarian. Access is also starkly inequitable: only 10% of schools on neighbor islands have library programs managed by licensed school librarians, compared to 32% of schools on O'ahu.

In Section 1, subsection 1, it states "The purpose of this Act is to: Establish a two-year pilot program for... certified librarians to provide rotating support services to schools in one school complex on [O'ahu] and one school complex on a neighbor island." How many schools would the librarian serve since the wording specifies "rotating support services." The students and teachers who participate in this program will have split attention from the librarian, and the librarian will need to spend extra time to plan schedules, instruction, and travel between schools.

It is important to acknowledge the passionate, licensed school librarians who are willing to take on a split appointment temporary position in this two-year pilot program. How will the Department of Education consider community needs and resources while working with stakeholders to identify participating schools, goals, and evaluation criteria?

Students deserve access to school librarians and that access should not be determined by their zip code. This bill acknowledges the crucial role that school libraries and librarians play in preparing students for success in higher education and the workforce. We urge you to pass **HB 961 HD1** to demonstrate our state's commitment to providing all students with the resources and support needed for their growth and success.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Kelly Ann Deluna Campbell  
President  
Hawai'i Library Association



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

**Osa Tui, Jr.**  
President

**Logan Okita**  
Vice President

**Cheney Kaku**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Ann Mahi**  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Item: **HB 961 HD 1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION - SCHOOL LIBRARIAN PILOT**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Hearing: **Thursday, February 20, 2025, 10:00 am, Room 308**

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

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association stands in strong support of HB 691 HD 1 which establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

Only 29% of the 258 Public Schools in Hawai'i have a licensed librarian. Our members have shared stories of under-utilized school libraries that lack true librarians. Many schools opt to hire an Educational Assistant to check-out books to students, but this doesn't keep a school's library resources up to date, provide research assistance to faculty and students, or help schools navigate the vast issues with technology, misinformation, and more.

The HSTA believes that school librarians are essential to a functioning democracy for many of the same reasons school libraries themselves are vital. Librarians are the key to unlocking the potential of those resources and maximizing their impact.

### **Here's why school librarians are so critical:**

Expert Curators and Guides: Librarians are trained professionals who curate diverse and relevant collections of resources, including books, digital media, and databases. They help students navigate this wealth of information, finding what they need for their studies and sparking curiosity about new topics. This is crucial in a world of information overload, where the ability to discern credible sources is paramount.

Information Literacy Advocates: Librarians teach students how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively. They equip students with the critical thinking skills necessary to distinguish fact from opinion, identify bias, and understand the difference between reliable and unreliable sources. These skills are foundational for informed participation in a democratic society.

Champions of Intellectual Freedom: Librarians defend the right to access information and diverse perspectives, even those that might be controversial. They foster an environment where students can explore different ideas and develop their own informed opinions, which is essential for a healthy democracy.

Technology Integration Specialists: Librarians are often at the forefront of integrating technology into education. They help students develop digital literacy skills, including online research, digital citizenship, and responsible use of technology. These skills are increasingly important in the digital age and crucial for civic engagement.

Collaborative Partners: Librarians work with teachers to integrate library resources and information literacy skills into the curriculum. They collaborate with teachers to design research projects, provide targeted resources, and support student learning across all subjects.

Personalized Learning Support: Librarians provide individualized support to students, helping them find resources, develop research skills, and explore their interests. They create a welcoming and inclusive space where all students feel supported in their learning journey. This personalized attention can be especially beneficial for students from underserved communities.

Community Builders: School librarians often create programs and events that engage the wider school community, such as book clubs, author visits, and workshops. They foster a love of reading and learning, contributing to a more informed and engaged citizenry.

In short, school librarians are not just keepers of books; they are educators, information specialists, and advocates for intellectual freedom. They play a vital role in preparing students to be informed, engaged, and responsible citizens in a democracy.

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

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 1:02:43 PM

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

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

Comments:

Greetings Committee Chair and Committee members,

As a retired school librarian who worked in a local school library for 19 years, I strongly support HB 961, to establish and appropriate funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O‘ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island. I hope this initiative, in conjunction with HB 962 or as a stand-alone, will help re-establish certified school librarian support at hard-to-fill areas and will extend services where positions have not been available.

Licensed school librarians make a significant impact upon learning in K-12 schools, especially in developing reading fluency, information literacy, and media literacy skills essential to 21st Century learning. In 2025, these skills are even more vital to our students than ever.

Mahalo,  
Marcia Kemble  
Makiki

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 3:03:35 PM

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

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

Comments:

Dear Honorable Legislators,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony supporting HB Bill 961. I am writing as both a parent of three children in Hawai'i public schools and a public librarian. As a trained librarian with a Master's Degree from the University of Hawai'i I know what specialized training it takes to become a school librarian. In our fast-paced society with internet and social media reporting news events as they happen, I am well aware of the need to educate our keiki with critical thinking skills and research abilities. They need these skills to judge information on the web and elsewhere and to become functioning members of society. School librarians teach a variety of skills like research, media literacy and computer literacy. Not just anyone can operate a library. They also have the expertise to purchase materials and maintain an essential hub on campus where all are welcome to learn, grow and interact with one another.

Each of my children are fortunate enough to go to schools that have wonderful, knowledgeable librarians from elementary to middle to high school. I credit school librarians for getting my children excited about reading and learning outside of the classroom. My oldest daughter is in an AP research class where she's been able to conduct independent research after writing numerous papers and synthesizing other material on laws and court cases including professional journals. I'm not sure she could have done this without the support of her teachers and librarians. She goes to them for guidance and help and they support her and her classmates to take college level classes in 10th and 11th grade in Mililani. She is well prepared for college and I have great confidence in her education and next steps after graduation.

All the children and students of Hawai'i deserve these learning opportunities as well. They deserve a well-staffed library space where they can be challenged, accepted and get curious. The staffing levels of degreed school librarians has been greatly reduced in the last few decades so now only 1 in 4 schools has a school librarian. This cannot continue if we want the children of Hawai'i to be well educated citizens that can hold their own against citizens of other states and countries. It is time to invest in bringing school librarians back to do important work only they can do.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to share my views and experience with you.

And thank you for the generous support you give to both our schools and public libraries. Learning makes Hawai'i great and strong well into the future and libraries inspire life-long learners.

Mahalo nui,



Jessica Hogan

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 5:07:10 PM

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

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

Comments:

My name is Danielle Todd, and I am writing in strong support of HB961.

As a public librarian, I see firsthand the critical role that literacy and information literacy play in the success of individuals and our communities. My own path to this profession was significantly shaped by the dedicated and knowledgeable school librarians I encountered throughout my education. They were more than just keepers of books; they were educators, mentors, and guides who fostered my love of reading, taught me how to research effectively, and instilled in me the importance of critical thinking. These skills, nurtured by my school librarians, are fundamental not only to my career but to my ability to navigate the complexities of our information-rich world.

Investing in school librarians is an investment in our students' future. School librarians are specifically trained in curriculum integration, child and adolescent development, and information literacy instruction within an educational context. They understand the specific needs of students and are equipped to support their learning in a way that complements the work of classroom teachers.

This pilot program is a crucial step towards ensuring that all students in Hawaii have access to the invaluable resources and support that a certified school librarian provides. It will allow us to gather data on the impact of school librarians on student achievement and demonstrate the long-term benefits of this investment. I urge the committee to support HB961 and invest in the future of our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

My name is Angela Ramey and I am in support of HB 961. I am the certified school librarian at Ho'okele Elementary School in Kapolei. Thank you for allowing testimony for HB 961, and I fully support this bill. Our school library offers a rich, innovative, and collaborative space that is created to inspire, support, and strengthen teaching and learning for our students, teachers and staff, as well as our entire school community. This is my 30th year as an educator and my fourth year as the school librarian at Ho'okele Elementary, and reaching every single student and their families has been the honor of my lifetime. Librarians in school libraries aren't a luxury. We are critical for student learning. We are essential for student success. We are necessary for student well-being and our existence means we bridge the gap between technology and resources for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Students who have access to a licensed librarian and current library resources simply perform better in school and are better prepared for college, career and life. Over five decades of research tells us that school libraries and librarians have a positive impact on student achievement and well being. Conversely, there is literally no research that supports not having school librarians or limiting students' access to a library leads to increased reading achievement or or well being. Libraries enable ALL learners, each and every one of them, to see themselves and learn about others, to think critically, and have access to the high quality tools that enhance learning and expand their opportunities.

In January of 2024, I put together a table of all schools in the Leeward District - whether they had a school librarian or not and what their ELA proficiency score was on the most recent StriveHI reports that to which I had access. Leeward schools that did not have fully functioning school libraries with a licensed school librarian had ELA proficiency scores ranging from 18%-53%. The Leeward schools with certified school librarians and fully functioning libraries ranged from 50+%-83% proficiency. It's really staggering the impact a properly staffed school library has on every single person in the school community. Libraries are not archaic remnants of the past, and anyone who thinks this is misinformed. They are spaces that have an immediate positive impact on students, teachers and families. Without them, these same stakeholders suffer. For many students, their school library is the only source of reading material and technology access.

Every child in Hawai'i should have equitable access to a school library with a certified librarian, and the fact that 75% of them do not have access to them is a serious crisis. Please support HB 961. In doing so, you are supporting the very basic needs of students in Hawai'i. Thank you for your consideration.

Angie Ramey, MAT, MATLCC, MASLS  
School Librarian  
Ho'okele Elementary School  
511 Kunehi St., Kapolei, HI 96707

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 8:06:53 PM

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

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

Comments:

Dear members of the House Finance Committee:

I am in strong support of HB 961 HD1, as it addresses a problem that has been growing in our public schools, the lack of access for our keiki to school librarians. I will express my concern, however, regarding how these “school complexes” will be defined. If one person is assigned too many students from too many campuses this program will have inherent weaknesses that may undermine the good intentions of this bill. There is also no mention of funding for necessary materials, equipment, and travel between schools, among other things. I also ask that very careful and expert consideration be given to how the program is evaluated, defining outcomes that will show learning and social benefits (e.g. a sense of safety) and take into consideration the very short timeline of two years. Most likely it will take several months for a new program to get started.

Regarding knowledge of the problem this bill addresses, I speak with experience as I am a retired community college librarian and work with both 4-year universities and 2-year community colleges and I have observed that high school graduates are struggling to adjust to college-level learning. Community colleges accept all students, but many arrive underprepared for college courses. As a result, they often need to take remedial classes—at their own expense—which don’t count toward their degree or certificate. This can be discouraging, causing many to drop out.

School librarians can train students to study better and successfully pass college entrance and qualification exams, highlighting the vital role librarians play in student preparedness. School librarians can significantly impact students’ reading and math skills, which are crucial for entering the workforce or pursuing higher education. Community colleges are already working to prepare high school students for college through dual-credit programs, but librarians play a critical role in helping students develop the research, writing, and critical thinking skills necessary to succeed.

We are also concerned about the increasing spread of social media bias and misinformation. With the rise of AI, we need school librarians back in schools to teach students how to evaluate and critically analyze the information they find online.

Librarians also help students process their emotional responses to social media, providing guidance before they take action. Beyond academics, school librarians offer a safe space for

students, identifying those who may be feeling isolated or disconnected. Instructors often don't have the time to monitor every student, but school libraries offer an essential, supportive learning environment outside the classroom.

There has been a severe decline in school librarian positions across the state over the last few decades, and research indicates that this may be having an impact on our students' academic abilities and workforce readiness. This is particularly noticeable in rural and underserved areas, where there are far fewer school librarians available to students as there are in wealthier and urban O'ahu communities.

Please support restoring this invaluable service to all members of our community.

With Hope and Gratitude,

Sunyeen (Sunny) Pai, PhD

Retired Professor, Kapi'olani Community College

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 9:35:47 PM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of this bill, in hopes that we will provide library services in more of our schools.

I am a former first grade teacher and have seen the impact that a school library with a certified librarian can have. A working library with a certified librarian helps our students to develop as learners and provides support for students in learning to read and analyze information and to do research into different topics. It is an important support for developing the skills for college and future work.

When I was teaching, we collaborated with our librarian in teaching reading, research, and analytical skills to my students. Our librarian managed our library collection and made sure that my students would have the books and resources to do reports. She also ran programs to encourage students to read, and found ways to put books into their hands, whether they were official library books or donated ones to make sure that all of our students would have access to resources.

A library on campus with a certified librarian helps the school, teachers, and students. Not all students have books at home or the ability to visit our state libraries, so it helps make up for the gaps that might exist. It also can provide a place for students to come to learn to enjoy reading and literacy.

Please support our librarians and libraries.

Sincerely,

Lynn Otaguro

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 1:16:10 AM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha Members of the Committee,

I am writing to strongly support HB961, which would establish a two-year pilot program to hire certified school librarians for one school in O‘ahu and another school in a neighbor island. I am currently a master's student in Library and Information Science program and am pursuing a career as an informational professional.

During my program, I had the opportunity to volunteer at a middle school in Honolulu. Although the library has abundant resouces, they have not been well organized due to the absence of a certified school librarian. It was heartbreaking to see students unable to appropriately use materials due to this dificiency.

While the library was being renovated, I assisted with shelving books. During my volunteering, I learned that the school administration, due to thier limited budget, had tended to focus on major subject such as Mathematics, English, and Science, rather than Music, Athletics, or Art. However, I believe that students' creativity stems from diverse educaiton, and the school libraries are the best places to offer diverse resources that align with students' individual interests.

Thus, I believe this bill would contribute significantly to enriching the educational environment in Hawai‘i schools through the efforts of educated librarians, the related community, and government aid. Mahalo for considering my testimony.

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 6:16:42 AM

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

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

Comments:

Please support HB 962 as school librarians are a critical need in low-performing schools. A school librarians reaches children of all ages from kindergarten to high school developing using the world wide web for internet searches to find unbiased information. School librarians also promote and encourage reading comprehension and LOVE of learning. As a retired private school librarian, I saw the impact of teaching research skills to students.

Thank you.



**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:18:08 AM

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

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

I am in support of HB961.

HB961 establishes and appropriates funds for a 2-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O’ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

School librarians maintain the school collection, work with teachers in a variety of subjects, create literacy events, and do so much more. They are valuable assets in the ecosystem of a school.

I believe every school should have their own permanent full-time credentialed librarian but this bill is a good start.

Imagine what our schools would be like if every library had a passionate school librarian like Molokai High School’s Diane Mokuau. She literally changed the trajectory of many students’ lives.

<https://www.slj.com/story/multitasking-in-molokai-diane-mokuau-2021-school-librarian-of-the-year-pandemic-COVID>.

Mahalo for the opportunity to state my support for HB961.

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:18:27 AM

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

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

Comments:

Testimony to the House Committee on Finance

Thursday, February 20, 2025 10:00AM

RE: HB 961 Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighboring island.

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

I am writing to support HB 961 as a private individual who has a background in academic librarianship. The decline in both school libraries and degreed School and Media specialists (Master's in Library Science, with a school library specialization) has had a ripple effect on the students we are seeing in our colleges and universities. Over the last decade or so, more undergraduates are attending university lacking information literacy skills that they should have begun learning at the elementary school level. This includes the ability to locate reliable sources of information, evaluate if information is reliable, and incorporate this information into their assignments. Reading comprehension and the ability to write are also affected. This applies to students across the board, and STEM students need to know how to access peer-reviewed resources in particular. Consider the fact that these are the young people that will be in charge of designing our infrastructure and healthcare, and also consider the fact that most of the time the first place they consult for information is Google, NOT GoogleScholar.

While there is a lot of discussion about encouraging our children to attend college, we as a community are not helping them achieve this goal by reducing access to libraries and qualified librarians. Librarians, unlike teachers who are assigned to work in the library, know what age-appropriate resources are available. I had a teacher walk into my place of work asking for help putting together an ebook list for her school, per her principal's request - when her school

already had access to ebooks. Neither she nor her principal knew that they had access, as the previous librarian had retired and was not replaced by a licensed individual. Nor did the teacher know how to access the school's collection, as the library website had been taken down and the link to the search box was buried under another heading, making access extremely difficult.

Access to libraries and qualified librarians is important regardless of whether a child intends to go to college. Information and media literacy are skills that everyone can use both inside the classroom and in the real world. Part of a functioning democratic society is having a population that has ready access to information and the skills to sort through and understand that information so that they can make informed decisions for themselves.

That said, it is also important that the qualified librarians that fill these positions have a living wage. Librarians, like teachers, are called to their service-oriented careers out of a love of the job. Being able to fulfill their duties to their communities without having to worry about being able to pay rent or bills means that they can focus their time and energy on their students. HB 961, if funded appropriately, would help give both children and licensed librarians the foundation for their own agencies.

Thank you,

Tai Arakawa

19 February 2025

House Committee on Finance  
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 306  
415 South Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Representative Yamashita, Vice Chair Rep. Takenouchi, and Honorable COF Members Representatives Grandinetti, Holt, Hussey, Keohokapu-Lee Loy, Kitagawa, Kusch, Lamosao, Lee, Miyake, Morikawa, Templo, Alcos, Reyes Oda, and Ward:

I am writing to you in **very strong support** of **HCR961** and **HCR962**. As you know these bills would establish and appropriate “funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O‘ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island and Require DOE “to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. Appropriates funds.”

I’m writing to you as a librarian, professor of Library and Information Studies, and as a concerned citizen, and parent. I’m sure you serve in the legislature because you know our keiki are the key to our future. Countless studies show the importance of licensed school library media specialists on raising test scores. This was highlighted by a recent study of test scores for 4th and 8th graders in literacy and math. The report had some good news, but much more could and should be done to help our keiki to be better learners and critical thinkers.

Good principals recognize this and recruit a school library media specialist who will become a leader on her/his campus in shaping innovative curricula that bring together disparate fields and help keiki see connections between disciplines like sciences and traditional arts and Hawai'i 'Ike. They also foster a recreational love of reading that encourages people to self-discovery and citizenship.

I didn't grow up in Hawai'i, but was fortunate that all of my public schools in suburban Minneapolis had amazing school librarians who helped me to go beyond the curriculum. They fostered my discovery of different literatures, arts, histories. Beyond literacy, they even helped me find a safe place when my own family was falling apart. These experiences helped me gain empathy and global and local understanding that made me who I am today – perhaps much more than my regular classroom instructors who had to take care of large classes, which included students who were gifted and others struggling academically. Good school library media specialists also assist teachers and counselors to help students recover from challenges like coping with the fires in Maui that are impacting young people there.

I imagine that your committee might hesitate to dictate to the DOE, but I believe that the bills you have in front of you are a fine expression of your concern, and help principals to have the resources needed to maintain a licensed school library media specialist at each campus. It then applies study to critically examine the impact.

As an educator of future librarians and school library media specialists, I've seen amazing graduate students enter this field. The new generation of school library media specialists are helping our keiki deal with emotions and trauma (like the disaster on Maui) to the complexities of sorting out information from disinformation that surrounds them during their waking hours online. They've also helped them to connect with literature from the host culture and their own ethnic experience in ways that are deeply healing and liberating.

However, I've been concerned that few of our graduate LIS students stay in the School Library Media pathway because they worry about future employment, so instead they become public librarians, academic librarians, or add to the brain drain leaving the state. Passing this resolution will be an important step in also encouraging students to invest in the education needed to be an engaged school librarian who can help transform our schools to generate future-oriented learners who can think about science and the host culture, or discover innovative connections that will guide our future.

As a proud Democrat, I should add that this echoes the PLATFORM OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII (As Adopted at the 2022 State Convention, May 28, 2022, p3):

*We support establishing a dedicated funding source to deliver a **quality public education and library services to every student, regardless of learning capacity or ability to pay, in an environment conducive to the learning process. These resources shall be made available at every level, from preschool through higher education, including life-long learning.***

Before I conclude, I should point out that these views don't necessarily represent the views of my employer, but I would be remiss if I didn't express my personal and professional conviction that this is one of the most critical issues facing our state, and that your support of this resolution is critical to help make sure we can recruit and retain the best school library media specialists for our keiki. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at my personal email [drew.wertheimer@gmail.com](mailto:drew.wertheimer@gmail.com). Thank you again for considering my very strong support for this resolution.

Yours with Aloha,



Andrew B. Wertheimer, MLS, Ph.D.

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:45:03 AM

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

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

Comments:

**I strongly support any effort to encourage hiring certificated school librarians. The services we provide far exceed those offered by non-trained, non-certificated teachers that so often are hired to save money. What schools lose in these situations is enormous.**

**Below is a partial list of the services I offered when I was the certificated school librarian at Kalama Intermediate School.**

**Library Services Menu 2018-19**

**Small Bites: Short lessons**

- **Overdrive eBooks**
- **Novelist**
- **Kalama Library Catalog & Website**
- **Kalama Resources Website**
- **QR Museum visits**

**Intermezzo**

- **Book check out, full classes with teacher or 5 or fewer on a pass**

**Entrees: full-period lessons All entrees are best paired with collaboration sessions with the teacher so I can cater the lessons directly to your needs**

- **Library Orientation**
- **Citation and Bibliography**
- **Research Using Google Explore tool**

- **Website Evaluation**
- **Fake News**
- **Database Research**
- **Search Strategies**
- **Advanced Internet Search Skills**
- **Making Book Hooks in Augmented Reality**

**Any other information services you need**

**Dessert**

**You can almost always send up to 5 students at a time on a pass to browse & borrow or to read or do homework. It's a nice reward for students who complete tasks, work ahead, etc.**

**Note: If the service you need is not on this list, I want to provide it, too. Please let me know how to support your program and your students!**

**Final note to legislators: I was forced out (as were most of my certificated librarian colleagues before me) so that Kalama could hire a non-certificated teacher in the library position. The new hire provides none of the information literacy services above; only book circulation services. For three years now, Kalama students have been left with a completely depleted library curriculum. This tragedy has played out in a majority of schools across the state. Hawaii students deserve to learn how to recognize disinformation and how to evaluate the quality of information online at the very least.**

**[t.ly/VNskV](https://t.ly/VNskV)**

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:47:44 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen-Rae Cachola	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

I write to ask you to support HB 961.

I applaud your efforts to fund a two-year pilot program for a licensed school librarian to gather data on the need for school librarians across the state. But please realize that school librarians, and attention toward their needs, should be fully funded across all schools, even beyond two-years.

School librarians are already under-resourced. School librarians are already not in all public school campuses. In this bill HB 961, it states that 75 out of 258 public schools, or only 29%, have certified full or part-time school librarians.

In today's political climate, there have been instances of non-certified members of community, organized by groups like Moms' for Liberty, who are seeking to control what books are part of library shelves, intervening in librarian's own professional training and ethics.

I support any research you need to do, to decide on public funding toward the need of school librarians. But please realize that the positions are already underfunded and de-professionalized as they are not all full-time positions. These school librarian positions need to be valued by our government as important to restore and revive for the educational needs of our students and the future.

What support will be given to the selected librarian who will provide rotating support services? I hope that this position will lead to full-time school library positions, and not perpetually be a temporary, two-year programs. The job duration, as it is currently described, is very short and with a lot of responsibility and schools to cover to justify the saving of a profession. Without our state's commitment and investment in permanent, long-term commitment to school librarian positions, we will be contributing to the diminishment of education and literacy development of our keiki.

I also hope that if the DOE manages this data collection process, they should look at school complexes that already don't have school libraries. Why are school libraries no longer being invested in by their schools and educational systems? How can we challenge the misinformation that may be circulating among educational administrators that all information can be found



online by googling it? Why is there no care about the existence of important historical and cultural information that is not online? The rise of information corporations reveal there is bias in algorithms behind online search engines and social media feeds.

Therefore, school librarians are still important to expose and train students, faculty, and administrators to know how to look for older forms of information, such as print books, to help them find diverse sources of information, and build people's skills, especially at a young age. We are living in a very complex society and we need to be training our youth to develop the mental capacities to think, navigate, and deal with challenges that may not have been experienced by recent predecessors. The basic skills of reading, reading comprehension, comparing different view points, and critical thinking, are crucial in building a society that can make informed decisions based on diverse sources of documentary evidence.

Sincerely,  
Ellen-Rae Cachola

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:54:30 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meera Garud	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

I am writing in **strong support for HB961 HD1**, and respectfully offer questions and comments regarding its implementation.

Why this bill matters: All students and teachers benefit from having a librarian but only one in four schools has one.

- Librarians collaborate with teachers to create meaningful, project-based learning experiences where students learn lifelong skills like critical thinking, media literacy, information literacy, and problem solving.
- The 2020 Hawai‘i State Literacy Plan recommends that the state ensure that schools have school libraries and school librarians.
- The newest DOE Strategic Plan stresses the importance of ensuring that “all students” have access to high-quality learning and resources.
- Unfortunately, data provided by the DOE in 2023 showed only 1 in 4 schools had a licensed school librarian with students on neighbor islands far less likely to have one.

Our state needs to stand by its commitment to providing all students with the resources and support needed for their growth and success. This bill would help address this issue by appropriating funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O‘ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

Questions and clarifications:

- Baseline data: This bill states 75 out of 258 public schools (29%) have a librarian position, which is an increase from data provided by the DOE in 2023 that showed 63 schools (24%) had a “certified librarian” (data: <https://bit.ly/3PecS4V>). Are there now 75 schools with a certified librarian? Could this be clarified?
- Effectiveness: The students and teachers who benefit from this program will have split attention from the librarian, and the librarian will need to spend extra time to plan schedules, instruction, and travel between schools. Some schools have not had a librarian in several years and it would take tremendous effort to build a strong library program for several of these at once. How many schools would the librarian be expected to serve? What resources would the librarian have for replacing outdated materials?

- Recruitment: Program success depends on recruiting passionate, licensed school librarians who are willing to take a split appointment temporary position. My understanding is two years is too short to establish tenure in the DOE, so I wonder if the funding could be extended to at least three years?
- Evaluation: The bill requires a program report. What would be the program's evaluation criteria? Two years is a short time to see statistically significant impacts on formal metrics like test scores. I think it will be valuable to survey parents, teachers, and students to understand the short-term impact of this program.

Despite these questions, I am confident this program will help move our state in the direction of every student and teacher having a school librarian at their campus. I hope the DOE will work with a range of stakeholders to identify the participating schools, the goals, and evaluation criteria to ensure this program's success. Mahalo for considering this critical issue.

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:58:32 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Jacobson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a parent of a second grader at Ka'a'awa Elementary School and a graduate student in the Library and Information Sciences program at UH Mānoa. I am writing in *strong support* of HB961, a bill that establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighbor island, recognizing the vital role of school libraries and *licensed* librarians in preparing students for success.

As a parent and future librarian, I understand that school librarians do far more than manage books. They are essential educators who collaborate with teachers to develop engaging lessons and activities that enhance student learning. They equip students with critical thinking, information literacy, and media literacy skills—skills crucial for navigating today's complex world and becoming ethical problem-solvers. This includes teaching students how to find credible resources, evaluate information critically, organize research, and present information effectively. Libraries staffed by *licensed* librarians become vibrant learning hubs, fostering literacy and a love of learning.

My daughter's education has been significantly enriched by having access to a *licensed* school librarian. These professionals not only prepare students for college but also instill lifelong skills. All children in Hawai'i public schools deserve the benefit of a highly educated and qualified librarian.

HB961 takes a crucial step towards ensuring that all students have access to these vital resources. By establishing this pilot program, we can gather data and demonstrate the impact of licensed librarians on student outcomes. I urge you to *support* this bill to underscore our commitment to providing all students with the essential resources and support they need to thrive. Thank you for your consideration.

**HB-961-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 5:07:41 AM

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

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

Comments:

Please support and pass HB961 HD1.

Thank you,

April

April Kamilah Bagasao Bautista

Kalihi-Pālama