



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

Date: 04/02/2025

Time: 10:01 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0961, HD1, SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a two-year Librarian Pilot Program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on an island other than Oahu. Appropriates funds. Takes effect 7/1/2050. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of HB 0961, HD1, SD1 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.

HB 0961, HD1, SD1 is supportive of Department goals and objectives including:

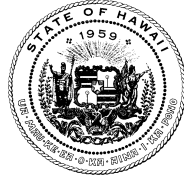
- Enhancing student achievement through improved literacy and research skills;
- Developing information literacy and critical thinking to prepare students for success in a digital world;
- Encouraging a love of reading by expanding access to diverse and engaging library materials;
- Supporting teachers 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 certified school librarians.

While the Department supports the merits of this bill and appreciates the appropriation in this measure, the Department would first request support for the priorities identified in its 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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

10:01 am

Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

**By Stacey A. Aldrich
State Librarian**

H.B. 961 HD1 SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION

To: Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) **supports H.B. 961 HD1 SD1**, 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 Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, April 2, 2025 10:01 AM

RE: **HB 961 HD1 SD1** 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 Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Library Association (HLA) **strongly supports HB 961 HD1 SD1**, 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.

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 SD1** 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

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 10:41:57 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Storm Stoker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a librarian at the University of Hawaii, I highly encourage you to pass this bill as more librarians at schools are needed. We can clearly see in college classrooms and in the culture in general that critical thinking skills are lacking. There is an inability for many to identify misinformation and early access to the knowledge librarians can share would be a huge help in these areas and help prepare students for college.

Thank you,

Storm Stoker

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 10:46:49 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Omura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

As a Maui native, I am writing to express my unwavering strong support for HB 961. This bill, establishing a two-year librarian pilot program for school complexes on Oahu and a neighbor island, is a crucial step towards equitable education for all Hawai'i's students. To me, this is personal. Librarians don't just manage books; they shape lives.

In 6th grade, it was my school librarian who provided an extraordinary learning opportunity, empowering me and my friends to establish our school's first live, closed-circuit televised daily morning announcements. This librarian gave us free rein to create the video broadcast, teaching us to use two VHS Handycam camcorders, wired microphones with an audio mixer, and an Elmo document camera as a teleprompter. The hands-on experience in audio and video production set the course of my future in the film and media industry. My personal experience underscores a fundamental truth: librarians are not just caretakers of books, but vital guides through the evolving landscape of information and technology.

Historically, librarians have been at the forefront of navigating emerging technologies, from microfiche to the internet. Today, we face a new frontier with AI. Just as my librarian opened doors with televised broadcasting, today's librarians are essential in teaching students to critically evaluate, ethically utilize, and access AI, ensuring no child is left behind in this digital age.

Currently, a significant disparity exists in our public schools, with only a fraction having access to licensed librarians. This gap denies students the critical literacy, research, and digital citizenship skills they need to thrive. HB 961's pilot program is a vital first step, demonstrating the necessity of licensed librarians in fostering independent learning and intellectual curiosity.

Investing in school libraries is investing in our Keiki's future. By ensuring access to licensed librarians, we empower students to navigate higher education, the workforce, and society.

Therefore, I urge the committee to pass HB 961 without delay. Let's provide all Hawai'i's students with the opportunities they deserve.

Respectfully,
Robert Omura

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 11:50:18 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katherine Shinsato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of the bill that proposes a two-year pilot program to incentivize the hiring of school librarians. As a teacher at a public elementary school currently pursuing my Master's in Library and Information Science (MLIS), I have witnessed firsthand the invaluable role that a licensed school librarian plays in fostering a thriving learning environment.

Our school is fortunate to be one of the few elementary schools that employs a dedicated librarian, and it is heartbreaking to realize that many other schools lack this essential resource. School librarians provide a wide range of services that directly support literacy and enrich the educational experience for students. These include organizing author visits, promoting literacy initiatives, and running library "clubs" where older students can mentor younger ones, or learn vital skills such as working the circulation desk. She is also able to maintain the library collection and make sure that it is up to date. These opportunities not only nurture a love for reading but also help develop leadership and organizational skills in our students.

Our students look forward to visiting the library, a space where they can explore books, engage in creative activities, and receive personalized guidance from a knowledgeable librarian. The impact of having a licensed professional managing the library is immeasurable, as it significantly enhances both academic success and a sense of community.

I strongly urge you to support this bill, as it is crucial for ensuring that all schools—regardless of their resources—can benefit from the expertise and services that school librarians provide. They are not just keepers of books; they are instrumental in building a foundation for lifelong learning and literacy.

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 3:37:41 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caitlin Ramirez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm writing to ask you to support HB961.

I've been a school librarian with HIDOE for 9 years. In that time, I've seen more and more school librarian positions cut or these positions filled with non-certificated staff. While I applaud the work these individuals do, they cannot fulfill the role at the same level of rigor and quality that a certificated school librarian can. This is particularly true of our rural schools, thus creating a situation of educational and literacy inequity between our rural and urban students. School librarians play a critical role in literacy for our keiki. School librarians curate library collections that engage readers and help them develop a life-long love of reading. We provide high-quality literacy instruction as well as instruction in digital citizenship and media literacy. We support teachers by collaborating to expand and enhance classroom instruction and provide access to essential information resources. I have empathy for our administrators who are trying to stretch their budgets to cover the needs of their schools and their students, but too often the library program is negatively impacted. This bill would help alleviate that impact for some of our rural schools. Please support this bill and make support educational equity in our state.

Mahalo,

Caitlin Ramirez

Testimony in Support of HB961 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Date: 3/30/2025

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Kristin L. Tarnas

Position: Strong Support

Aloha Chair Senator Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Senator Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of **HB961**, which establishes a two-year Librarian Pilot Program to serve one public school complex on O‘ahu and one public school complex on a neighbor island. This bill represents an important step toward improving educational equity and excellence across our public school system.

Currently, Hawai‘i’s **public schools** face a critical shortage of certified school librarians*:

- Only **32% of public schools on O‘ahu** have a certified school librarian.
- **Maui, Lāna‘i, and Moloka‘i** are served at just **16%**.
- On **Hawai‘i Island**, the number drops dramatically to **5%**.
- **Kaua‘i** currently has **0%** certified school librarians in public schools.

This lack of access leaves thousands of students without essential instruction in research, information literacy, and digital citizenship—skills they need to thrive in today’s knowledge-based economy.

Supporting the DOE’s General Learner Outcomes (GLOs)

Hawai‘i’s Department of Education has outlined six **General Learner Outcomes** (GLOs) that define the core expectations for all students across the state. These include:

- **Self-Directed Learner**
- **Community Contributor**
- **Complex Thinker**
- **Quality Producer**
- **Effective Communicator**
- **Effective and Ethical User of Technology**

Certified school librarians play a powerful and unique role in supporting these outcomes across grade levels and content areas:

- **Self-Directed Learners:** In school libraries, students learn to independently seek out, evaluate, and apply information, building the confidence to take ownership of their learning.
- **Community Contributors:** Librarians cultivate collaborative learning spaces and guide students in group projects that emphasize teamwork, shared responsibility, and community engagement.
- **Complex Thinkers:** Librarians teach critical thinking through research instruction, helping students distinguish between credible and unreliable sources, and encouraging inquiry-based learning.
- **Quality Producers:** Students under librarian guidance are supported in producing high-quality research papers, presentations, and multimedia projects—often incorporating feedback and revision.
- **Effective Communicators:** School librarians equip students with skills to organize their thoughts, present findings, and express ideas effectively in written, oral, and digital formats.

- **Ethical Users of Technology:** Librarians teach students how to use digital tools responsibly, from citing sources properly to understanding digital footprints, privacy, and cyber safety.

Advancing Common Core State Standards for ELA and Literacy

The **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects** are designed to prepare students for college, career, and lifelong learning. Certified librarians are trained specialists who help students meet these rigorous expectations by:

- Providing direct instruction in **research processes**, source evaluation, and academic integrity.
- Collaborating with classroom teachers to embed **literacy skills** into all subject areas.
- Promoting reading engagement through curated collections that reflect diverse perspectives and student interests.
- Helping students navigate **informational texts**, analyze arguments, and synthesize evidence across multiple sources.
- Ensuring equitable access to technology and digital resources needed for success across disciplines.

Why This Bill Matters

This pilot program would begin to address longstanding disparities in access to certified school librarians—particularly for neighbor island students. It will also provide essential data to inform statewide decisions about library staffing and resource allocation.

If we are serious about preparing students to succeed in a global, information-driven world, then we must invest in the professionals who are uniquely trained to teach them how to navigate it.

Please support HB961 and help restore a vital learning resource to our public schools.

Mahalo for your leadership and commitment to Hawai'i's keiki.

Sincerely,
Kristin L. Tarnas

ktarnas@gmail.com
66-1659 Waiaka Place
Kamuela, HI 96743

*Hawaii Association of School Librarians. *HIDOE School Librarians Spreadsheet*. December 2024. Prepared using data from the Hawaii State Department of Education, <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/1/d/1v3WN6EeKijRhqv37vb7UyH85hLHamtEuyLnutyq65U/preview>.

Screenshot of source for statistical data:

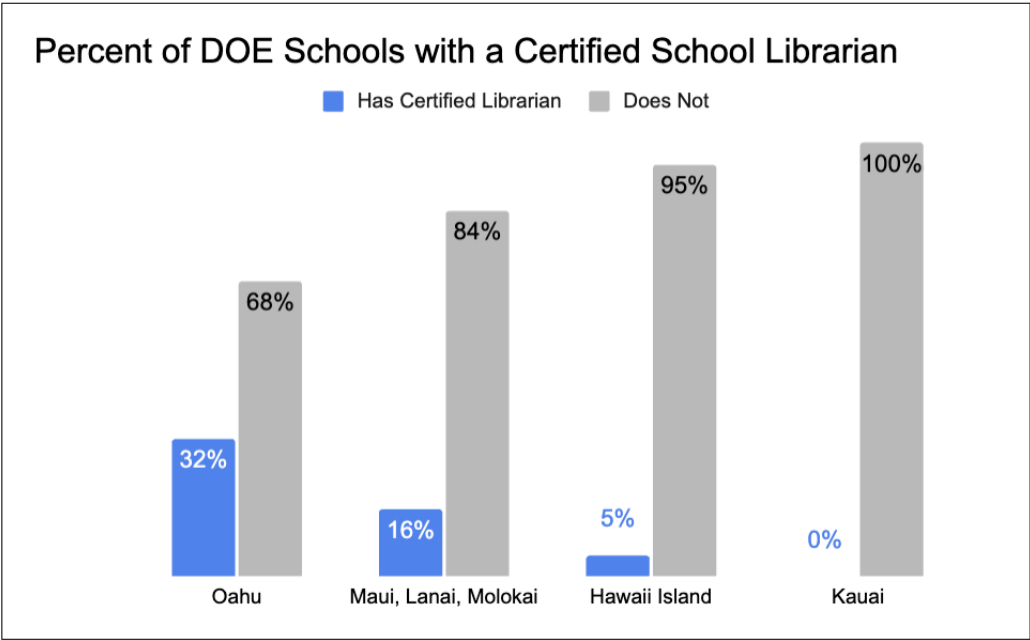
This spreadsheet was prepared by the Hawaii Association of School Librarians using data provided by the Hawaii State Department of Education in December 2024.

Questions? Contact: haslcontactus@gmail.com

Explanation of Data

[Percent of Schools with Librarians](#) calculates the number of schools with one or two licensed school librarians as a percentage of the total number of schools. Staffing data is from DOE: see ["Original Data" tab](#)

At a Glance



For a digital copy of this data use the following link or QR code: <https://bit.ly/3DGyF2M>



HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 12:09:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eden Peart	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha lawmakers,

few things can make a difference in the life of a school child like having access to a school library staffed by a certified librarian.

Studies show the school library is place in a school where students feel safest.

School libraries provide opportunities for student choice, support wonder, imagination and personal development! They help grow engaged and contributing citizens.

Libraries are an investment with abundant returns that have residual effects for generations.

Please move Hawaii into the forefront of honoring education and democracy. Start by restoring school libraries staffed with certified librarians in every Hawaii school.

Mahalo,

Eden Peart

31 March 2025

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 208
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Senator Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Senator Moriwaki, and Honorable WAM Committee Members Senators Aquino, DeCoite, Elefante, Hashimoto, Inouye, Kanuha, Kidani, Kim, Lee, Wakai, and Fevella:

I am writing to you in **very strong support** of **HCR961 SD1**. As you know, this bill would establish and appropriate “funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu 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. 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. As you just recently, there remain issues in 4th and 8th grade literacy scores [as the recent news made clear](#) here in Hawai'i and the nation, 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 school library media specialists who become leaders on their campus in shaping innovative curricula that bring together disparate fields and help keiki see connections between disciplines like sciences and traditional arts. They also foster a recreational love of reading that encourages people to self-discovery and citizenship.

I wasn't fortunate enough to grow up in Hawai'i, but was fortunate that all of my public schools in suburban Minneapolis had amazing librarians who helped me to go beyond the curriculum. They fostered my discovery of different literatures, arts, histories, and even helped me find a safe place when my own family was falling apart. These experiences helped give me 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 to those who were 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 feel some hesitation to dictate to the DOE, but I believe that the bill you have in front of you is a fine expression of your concern and hope that principals will have the resources available to maintain a licensed school library media specialist at each campus.

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, 5/28/22, 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.*

I hope that Senator Fevalla will equally support this as it supports "Having an educated population" and other aspects of the Hawai'i GOP Principles listed on the state platform.

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. Thank you again for considering my very strong support for this resolution.

Yours with Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew B. Wertheimer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew B. Wertheimer, MLS, Ph.D.

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 10:11:34 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tai Arakawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony to the Senate Ways and Means Committee**Wednesday, April 2, 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 Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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 and evaluate reliable sources of information, understand if the information is relevant to their needs, and incorporate it 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 which will at least limit the results to academic journals if not screen them for quality.

In their post-library instruction/information literacy class evaluations, there are usually several remarks from first year students about not knowing the campus library had a website where they can do their research. It is very worrying - and telling - that university-level students do not know or do not know to look for the campus library webpage when they need to do research for their

assignments. This indicates an underlying habit of not turning to their library and librarians for help with their information needs.

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 or not. Information and media literacy are skills that everyone can use both inside the classroom and outside. 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

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 10:45:50 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
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 for your consideration.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 2:54:21 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alita Charron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB961, which proposes a two-year pilot program to incentivize the hiring of certified school librarians in select regions, including O‘ahu. As a resident of Ka‘imukī, I believe this initiative is vital for enhancing student achievement and addressing the current shortage of qualified librarians in our schools.

The decline in certified school librarians across Hawai‘i has been alarming. In 2012, the state Department of Education employed 192 school librarians; today, that number has dwindled to just 84. On O‘ahu, only approximately one in three schools currently has a librarian. This shortage means many students lack access to essential resources and guidance that librarians provide. (The Mānoa Mirror; Honolulu Civil Beat)

According to data provided by the Hawai‘i State Department of Education as of December 2024 and prepared by the Hawai‘i Association of School Librarians, students are overwhelmingly devoid of a certified school librarian. ([Click here for data](#))

Numerous studies have demonstrated that schools with certified librarians experience **higher reading scores** and **improved overall student performance**. Librarians play a crucial role in teaching **research skills**, promoting **literacy**, and fostering **critical thinking**. Without their expertise, students may struggle with information literacy, an essential skill in today's digital age. (Honolulu Civil Beat)

Implementing a pilot program to incentivize the hiring of school librarians in targeted regions will not only provide valuable data on the benefits of such positions but **provide the essential and critical skills to the fortunate students, schools, and communities impacted by this bill**. This bill is a step in the right direction and I look forward to hearing about the positive outcomes on student achievement as a result. I look forward to future statewide policies to move past a “pilot” program to **permanent** school librarian positions for more than just two regions in our state.

I am a parent, a 2021 graduate from the Master’s in Library and Information Science program at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, and a community member, and I have witnessed firsthand the difference a dedicated librarian can make. While doing my practicum in school librarianship, from just ONE library lesson of 30 minutes elementary students were able to go from zero

coding experience to being able to use Code.org and create their characters, backgrounds, to dance to their favorite music. I saw these same students express reading comprehension by connecting a story read to them and making their own meme from story elements. The complex connections the students made with the story, the characters, combined with their own creative thinking and creative output are important steps in the analytical and deep critical thinking they will need as they grow and develop.

I urge you to support HB961 and advocate for its passage in the legislature. Your backing of this program will demonstrate your sincere commitment to our students, schools, and communities throughout our state that you are actively addressing the educational needs of our students and ensuring they have access to the resources necessary for success.

Thank you for considering my perspective. I appreciate your dedication to representing our district and look forward to the positive changes this bill can bring to our schools.

Sincerely,

Alita Charron
PO BOX 10655
Honolulu, HI 96816

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 5:16:50 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and the Committee on Ways and Means,

Please support HB 961 to establish and appropriate funds for a two-year Librarian Pilot Program to serve one school complex on Oahu and another island in Hawai'i.

We need to bring back school librarians because they have been reduced over the years. This program can be a first step to re-investing back into school libraries as important educational resources for students.

School librarians curate age appropriate books for each school's student populations. As a former school librarian, I know that school libraries function as community hubs where students can find different books to meet their fiction and non-fiction needs. School libraries host book clubs to read books that broaden student's horizons; book fairs where students can buy their own new books on topics of interest. School librarians foster student's love of books and reading, which are crucial for their literacy development and cultivation of lifelong learning habits.

School librarians foster skill sets needed to build well informed, democratically minded populations. Reading is a skill that needs to be exercised at young ages so that they can develop the willingness to focus, comprehend, and discern information as they move through society over time. Access to books is just as important as access to computer technology. While we do need the digital skills to operate in our computerized society, our students need to also learn that not all information is online. Books hold information and perspectives that may not be found online. We need to teach students the skills of persistence and diligence to navigate the different kinds of information in order to make sense of complex issues.

Thank you for supporting libraries as an integral part of building democratic and informed societies.

Ellen-Rae Cachola

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:22:10 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Corri Beadle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is imperative that we have librarians in our schools. We want our keiki to put down their electronic devices and read more and school librarians will help with this. School librarians have a magical ability of making books fun which instills a love of reading in our keiki. This will have long lasting and far reaching effects as it plants the seeds necessary for our keiki to become critical thinkers when they get older. It is crucial that when they become young adults, they will be able to stand with mana and let their voices be heard and create change. School librarians will have an incredibly powerful and positive impact on our keiki and help us to continue to course correct our future. Mahalo nui loa.

HB-961-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:36:16 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sunyeen Pai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear esteemed members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

I am a retired community college librarian and have worked with both 4-year universities and 2-year community colleges. I have observed that our 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 to get them to college learning level, at their own expense. These classes don't count toward degrees or certificates. This can be costly, time-consuming, and discouraging, causing many to drop out.

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

Many of us are 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 do this by helping students process their emotional responses to social media and teaching them to evaluate the agendas of social media posts before they take the actions recommended by such posts.

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 is having an impact on our students' academic abilities and workforce readiness. This is a big problem for rural and underserved areas, where there are far fewer school librarians available to students as there are in wealthier and urban O'ahu communities.

Regarding this bill, I do have concerns about the workload that may result in individual librarians serving multiple schools and I strongly advise that they are given needed resources to provide

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

With Hope and Gratitude,

Sunyeen (Sunny) Pai, PhD
Retired Professor and Librarian
Kapiʻolani Community College

HB 961 SD1 - Relating to Education - School Librarian Pilot

Hearing: Senate Committee on Ways and Means, 4/2/2025

Submitted by: Meera Garud

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in **support for HB961 SD1**, which would provide funds for a two-year librarian pilot program.

All students and teachers benefit from having a certified school librarian:

- School 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 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.

However, **only one in four schools has a certified school librarian** (see next page for data). This bill would help address this issue by appropriating funds for a two-year librarian pilot program, where the librarian would serve multiple schools in a complex.

I hope you will pass this bill to move our state in the direction of every student and teacher having a school librarian at their campus. Our state needs to stand by its commitment to provide all students with the resources and support needed for their growth and success. Mahalo for considering this critical issue.

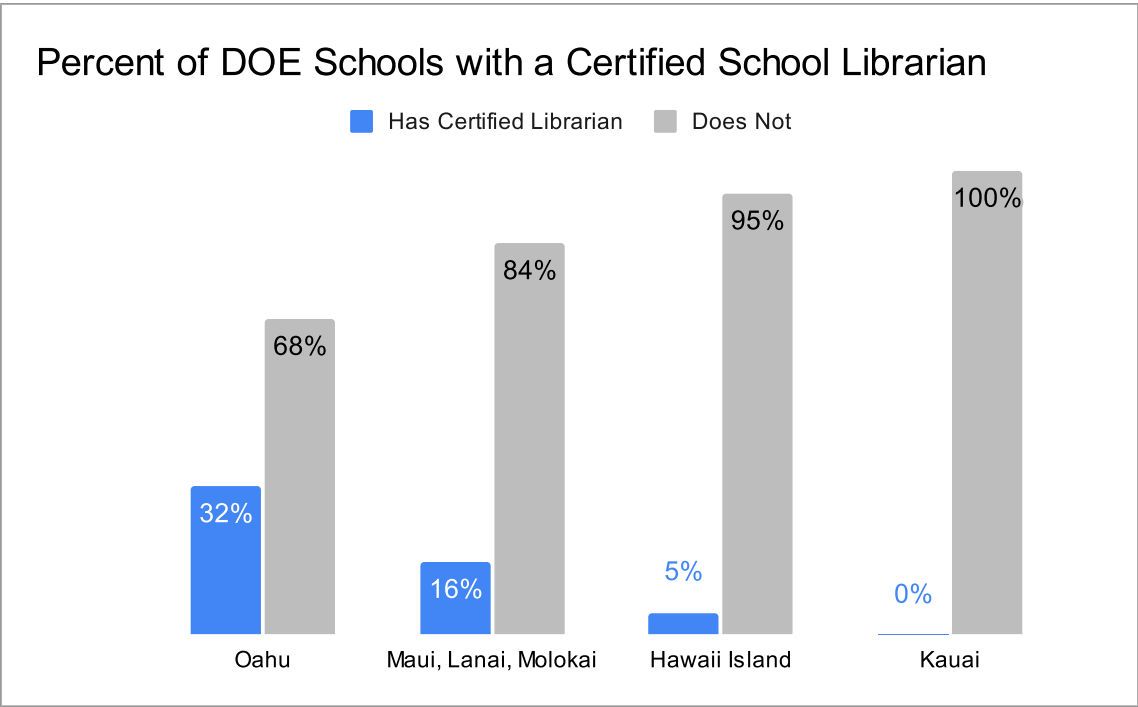
This spreadsheet was prepared by the Hawaii Association of School Librarians using data provided by the Hawaii State Department of Education in December 2024.

Questions? Contact: haslcontactus@gmail.com

Explanation of Data

"Percent of Schools with Librarians" calculates the number of schools with one or two licensed school librarians as a percentage of the total number of schools. Staffing data is from DOE: see ["Original Data" tab](#)

At a Glance



For a digital copy of this data use the following link or QR code: <https://bit.ly/3DGyF2M>



School Type	Schools with Certified Librarian	Total Schools	% of Schools with Librarian
Public DOE Schools	61	258	24%
Public Charter Schools	0	37	0%

Island	Schools with Certified Librarian	Total DOE Schools	% of DOE Schools with Librarian
Kauai	0	16	0%
Hawaii Island	2	41	5%
Maui, Lanai, Molokai	5	32	16%
Oahu	54	169	32%

Geographic Complex Area	Schools with Certified Librarian	Total DOE Schools	% of DOE Schools with Librarian	Island
Kau-Keaau-Pahoa	0	9	0%	Hawaii Island
Kapaa-Kauai-Waimea	0	16	0%	Kauai
Honokaa-Kealahakehe-Kohala-Konawaena	1	19	5%	Hawaii Island
Hilo-Waiakea	1	13	8%	Hawaii Island
Nanakuli-Waianae	1	9	11%	Oahu
Hana-Lahainaluna-Lanai-Molokai	2	11	18%	Maui, Lanai, Molokai
Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kulanihakoi-Maui	3	21	14%	Maui, Lanai, Molokai
Kailua-Kalaheo	4	14	29%	Oahu
Pearl City-Waipahu	5	17	29%	Oahu
Aiea-Moanalua-Radford	6	22	27%	Oahu
Castle-Kahuku	6	16	38%	Oahu
Campbell-Kapolei	6	18	33%	Oahu
Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt	7	28	25%	Oahu
Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani	9	25	36%	Oahu
Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua	10	20	50%	Oahu