



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

Date: 03/20/2025

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Resolution Title: HCR 0086 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH AN ALOHA CIVICS WORKING GROUP TO ENHANCE CIVICS EDUCATION IN HAWAII.

Department's Position:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HCR 80, which requests the Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) to establish an Aloha Civics Working Group to enhance civics education in Hawai'i. The Department appreciates the intent of this resolution and offers comments.

The Department acknowledges the importance of integrating the Aloha Spirit into civics education to promote respectful discourse, active listening, and collaborative problem solving. However, the Department has already undertaken significant efforts to strengthen civics education through the Civic Learning and Engagement Task Force (Task Force), convened at the direction of the Hawai'i State Board of Education (Board). The findings and recommendations of this task force were published in March 2024.

The Task Force, chaired by the Department's Deputy Superintendent of Academics, included representatives from the University of Hawai'i, Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education, community members, Department administrators, content specialists, teachers, and a student. In addition, speakers also addressed the Task Force from the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism; University of Hawaii Mānoa William S. Richardson School of Law; Promote and Advance Civic Education (PACE) Commission; and Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

The Task Force provided recommendations for the Board to consider to strengthen and elevate civic learning, and to objectively measure knowledge, skills, and participation. Included in these recommendations was to identify essential skills necessary for civic learning and engagement possibly connected to Nā Hopena A'o (HĀ). Nā Hopena A'o ("HĀ") is a framework of outcomes that reflects the Department's core values and beliefs in action throughout the public educational system of Hawai'i. The Department works together as a system that includes everyone in the broader community to develop the competencies that strengthen a sense of belonging, responsibility, excellence, aloha, total-well-being and Hawai'i ("BREATH") in ourselves, students

and others. With a foundation in Hawaiian values, language, culture and history, HĀ reflects the uniqueness of Hawai'i and is meaningful in all places of learning, and embodies the Aloha Spirit.

Additionally, a recent statewide civic education survey, conducted by the Hawai'i Supreme Court's Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education (PACE) in partnership with the Department, gathered insights from over 800 educators. Their responses highlight both the challenges and the promising strategies already in place to strengthen civics instruction.

Some of these include:

- Project-based learning, such as mock trials and debates, helps students actively engage with civics concept;
- Real-world connections, using current events and community issues, make civics more meaningful; and
- Interactive teaching methods, including role-playing, digital media, and discussions, foster engagement and critical thinking.

The Department remains committed to fostering civic learning and engagement and welcomes continued collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that students develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be active and informed participants in democracy; however, given the extensive work already completed by the Civic Learning and Engagement Task Force, and the data gathered from the PACE Report, the Department believes that the objectives of the proposed Aloha Civics Working Group have already been addressed. The findings and recommendations of the task force are now informing strategic planning and implementation efforts within the Department. As such, while the Department supports the intent of the resolution, we respectfully suggest that an additional working group is not necessary at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus Commission

Advocating for the Hawai'i LGBTQIA+ Community



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March 18, 2025

House's Committees on Education, and Higher Education
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Thursday, March 20, 2025

RE: **Strong Support for House Concurrent Resolution 86 with Requested Amendment**

Aloha Chair Woodson, Chair Garrett, and committee members,

I am writing in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 86 on behalf of the Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Commission, which was established by the 2022 Hawai'i State Legislature with the following purpose:

"...to improve the State's interface with members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus community; identify the short- and long-range needs of its members; and ensure that there is an effective means of researching, planning, and advocating for the equity of this population in all aspects of state government."

The Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission strongly supports House Concurrent Resolution 86 (HCR 86), which requests the Department of Education to establish an Aloha Civics Working Group to enhance civics education in Hawai'i. We applaud the resolution's commitment to fostering a deeper understanding of civic engagement, community responsibility, and the unique values of aloha that guide our islands.

Importance of Inclusive Civics Education

Civics education that reflects the diverse perspectives of our communities is essential for preparing students to engage thoughtfully and meaningfully in civic life. In a society as multicultural and inclusive as Hawai'i, it is imperative that our educational framework acknowledges and affirms the voices of historically marginalized communities, including the LGBTQIA+ community.

Request for Amendment to Include the Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission in the Working Group

To ensure that the Aloha Civics Working Group incorporates the experiences and perspectives of all of Hawai'i's communities, we respectfully request that HCR 86 be amended to include a representative from the Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission as a member of the working group.

Proudly established pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 369, as enacted through Act 41, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022

HI State LGBTQ+ Commission Testimony in Strong Support of HCR 86

The inclusion of our Commission would:

- **Promote Diversity and Inclusion:** LGBTQIA+ youth, like all students, deserve to see their identities and histories reflected in the curriculum, fostering a sense of belonging and civic responsibility.
- **Address Equity in Education:** LGBTQIA+ students often face unique challenges in educational settings. Our expertise can help guide the development of civics education that empowers all students to engage with their communities.
- **Enhance Cultural Competency:** By incorporating an intersectional lens, the working group can create a civics curriculum that embodies the spirit of aloha by honoring the richness of our community's diversity.

Conclusion

By including the Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission in the Aloha Civics Working Group, we can ensure that the enhanced civics curriculum reflects the values of equity, inclusion, and respect that are foundational to our state. We urge the Committee to adopt HCR 86 with this amendment to help cultivate a generation of students who understand the power of civic engagement and the importance of upholding the dignity of all people.

Should you or any member of your staff have any questions regarding this testimony you can reach the Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission at hawaiiistatelgbtqpluscommission@gmail.com.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your continued commitment to fostering inclusive education in Hawai'i.

Michael Golojuch, Jr. (he/him)

Vice Chair

[Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission](#)



HCR 86/HR 80, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH AN ALOHA CIVICS WORKING GROUP TO ENHANCE CIVICS EDUCATION IN HAWAII

MARCH 20, 2025 · EDN HEARING

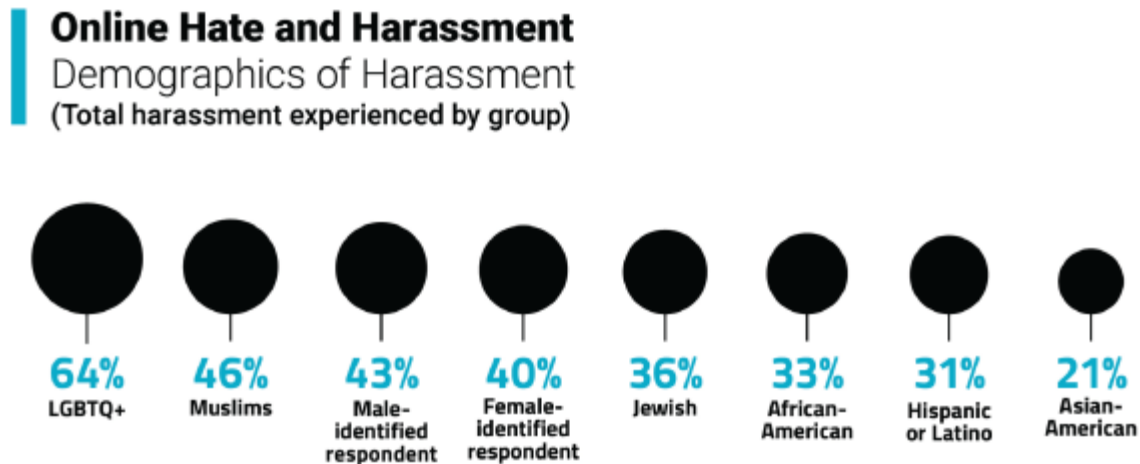
POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HCR 86/HR 80, which requests the Department of Education to establish an aloha civics working group to enhance civics education in Hawai'i.

"We must arm today's young people with innovative civic education that is relevant to them. Bringing high-quality civics to every school in every state of our union is the only way that the next generations will become effective citizens and leaders." –Sandra Day O'Connor, iCivics Founder and Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice

Civic education is essential to the preservation of our democracy. Today, our society is endangered by xenophobic authoritarians who seek to suppress the rights and perspectives of marginalized people. We are witnessing a resurgence of hate crimes in the U.S., which, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, have surged by nearly 80 percent since 2015. Data from the FBI showed a 168 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crime incidents from 2020 to 2021. These are shocking statistics that reveal the structural violence infecting our national community, which we must take seriously.

Increasingly, social media websites have become platforms for the perpetuation of political resentment and the reproduction of social inequality. Major social media platforms, like those owned by Meta, are currently rolling back fact-checking and misinformation detection efforts in an attempt to appease the despotic prejudices of the Trump administration. According to a 2018 report published by the data clearinghouse Statista, 64 percent of teenagers in the United States have encountered hate speech on social media. At the same time, incidents of political violence have been escalating. Cyberspace is no longer an undiscovered frontier. Today, our virtual and actual lives have become inextricably comingled. If we are not careful, though, technological advancement can generate the digital reproduction of violent extremism.



Source: Anti-Defamation League, *Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2021*

We have a responsibility to empower our keiki with the skills necessary to overcome misinformation and online hate speech, and to become fully engaged members of our civic community. As the nonpartisan organization iCivics, founded by former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, states, "Something special happens when we have confidence in our democracy. We engage. We raise a hand. We lift our voices. We listen to each other. We come together to share ideas and solve common challenges."

Increasing lack of faith in democracy among younger generations, dearth of civic knowledge, susceptibility to false information, and waning public trust contribute to our current levels of polarization, which is further exacerbated by the lack of meaningful, culturally relevant civic education in our schools. Since the earliest days of our constitutional democracy, public schools have played an essential mission in delivering civic learning. Research conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University found that students who receive quality civic education are:

- **More likely to vote** and discuss politics at home;
- **More likely to complete college** and develop employable skills;
- **Four times more likely to volunteer** and work on community issues; and
- **More confident in their ability to speak publicly** and communicate with their elected representatives.

To preserve the foundations of our democracy for generations to come, we should invest in civic education programming in our public school system.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com

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HCR-86

Submitted on: 3/20/2025 1:13:19 PM

Testimony for EDN on 3/20/2025 2:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Camron Hurt | Common Cause Hawaii | Support | In Person |

Comments:

Good Afternoon Honorable Members,

My name is Camron Hurt I am the State Director of Common Cause Hawaii. At CCHI we are dedicated to the protection and continued enhancement of our democracy. This resolution does exactly that. If we want to create a population of citizens who are civically engaged, we must begin educating them in a substantial and meaningful way. There are ways to start bringing students into civic engagement at a young age. It is paramount that we seek to explore these potential options so that we can ensure our continued Democracy.