



March 20, 2025

Rep. Justin H. Woodson  
House Committee on Education  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: HR 105 and HCR 109

Chairman Woodson and Committee Members:

These measures affirm the Legislature's support for free and responsible scholastic journalism and Freedom of the Press in the First Amendment of the Constitution.

The resolutions intend to remind administrators that parental consent is not a legal requirement for publishing students' names and photos in school-sponsored student media

This is critical to protecting the rights of student journalists and preventing prior restraints on the media as prohibited by the First Amendment.

Revision of the current student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form is important to assuring that these rights of student journalists will be protected.

We hope you will pass these measures without amendment.

Thank you,

Stirling Morita  
President  
Hawaii Professional Chapter  
Society of Professional Journalists



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HAWAII HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 109; HR105**  
**3/20/25**

Thank you for considering HCR 109/HR105. The Student Press Law Center stands in strong support of this resolution. We would be happy to answer any questions or concerns the committee may have regarding this resolution or other student press freedom matters.

The Student Press Law Center (SPLC) is an independent, non-partisan organization that promotes, supports and defends the press freedom and First Amendment rights of student journalists and their advisers. Our free legal hotline provides services to students and teachers across the country. As such, we were involved in the passage of Hawaii's Student Journalism Protection Act, which protects the rights of student journalists at public schools.

We applaud Hawaii for being the 16th state to enshrine protections for student journalists into state law ("the statute"). Since its passage in 2022, SPLC has worked alongside Hawaii's student media advisers to ensure that the statute is implemented across the state through advocating for the required school board policy and providing training for school administrators. These efforts have led to the successful passage of an updated school board policy, but also highlighted some policies or procedures formerly unknown to us. When we were informed of the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form ("the form"), and the belief that it is required for the purposes of school-sponsored media, we had immediate concerns.

Given the distance the new statute creates between student journalist and school district, the former policy requiring the form has no place in the new scheme as contemplated by the legislature. This is because the statute provides that student journalists are "responsible for determining the news, opinion, feature, and advertising content of school-sponsored media", and any interference with that process is now contrary to state law, unless the student publication engages in a list of proscribed speech, also enumerated in the statute. At this point, requiring the students to furnish the form and indulge in its requirements assumes that the students are employees of the school district, encumbered by privacy laws like the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), even though only employees or agents of the district are so encumbered. Student journalists, engaging in their free speech rights mandated by the statute, are able to obtain lawful consent from interviewed or photographed subjects as governed by the strictures of their craft, including and especially journalism ethics. Fellow students are no exception: parental consent is not required when a minor independently consents to the depiction by a student journalist.



For these reasons, the form is obsolete when it comes to the work of student journalists in the school district. In order to alleviate confusion in the wake of the new statute, HCR 109/HR105 is essential to communicate to all student media in the state that the form is only needed for communications and releases that originate from the district itself.

Thank you for your support of HCR 109, and for your ongoing trust and respect for Hawaii's student journalists.

SUBMITTED BY: Jonathan Gaston-Falk, staff attorney  
[jfalk@splc.org](mailto:jfalk@splc.org)



**To: House Committees on Education and Higher Education**  
**Hearing: 2:00PM, Thursday, March 20, 2025**  
**Conference Room 309**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR109 / HR105 Supporting Free and Responsible Scholastic Journalism and Actively Supporting and Honoring the First Amendment of the United States Constitution in Student Publications**

Aloha Chairs Woodson and Garrett, Vice Chairs La Chica and Amato, and Members of the Committees:

Media Council Hawai'i is a non-partisan established in 1970 and is organization of individuals from the community and media which seeks to improve public access to information; strengthen public support for First Amendment rights and freedoms; and broaden public understanding of the role of the media.

Media Council Hawai'i supports HR105 and HCR109, which reaffirm the Legislature's support for free and responsible scholastic journalism and the principles of Freedom of the Press enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution.

The intent of the resolutions to remind administrators that parent consent if not a legal requirement for publishing student names and photos in school-sponsored student media is critical to protecting the rights of student journalists and preventing prior restraints on the media prohibited by the First Amendment. Revision of the current student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form is critical to assuring that the rights of student journalism will be protected.

We urge the committee to approve the resolutions without unwarranted changes or amendments.


Gerald Kato  
Media Council Hawaii  
kato\_gerald@yahoo.com

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HR105 and HCR109.

My name is Cindy Reves. I have a bachelor's degree in journalism and have been the adviser for McKinley High School's student newspaper for over a decade. I am Hawaii's director for the Journalism Education Association and was the lead adult advocate for the Hawaii Student Journalism Protection Act. I am also the author of these resolutions.

I have brought my concerns about Form SP/VR (which you can see in its entirety at the end of my testimony) to the DOE but they have not taken action. I appreciate the opportunity to make my points in public and on the record.

Form SP/VR

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|    | State of Hawaii<br>Department of Education | Student Publication/Audio/Video<br>Release Form-General |
| <p><small>This form supersedes all previous Student Permission to Videotape/Record, Reproduce Work and Student Publication/Audio Release Forms.</small></p> <p><small>Note: This form does not apply to the creation or use of digital or print media of students for research purposes, including post-secondary degree requirements. For more information visit: <a href="http://bit.ly/HIDORESEARCH">http://bit.ly/HIDORESEARCH</a> or <a href="http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/SchoolDataAndReports/HawaiiEdData/Pages/Data-Requests.aspx">http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/SchoolDataAndReports/HawaiiEdData/Pages/Data-Requests.aspx</a></small></p> <p><small>In order to protect students' rights to privacy as outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), parents/guardians or eligible students (those aged 18 or over) are being asked to give the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) permission to create and/or use digital/electronic or print media of students' name, voice, likeness or images of student work for the purposes described in this form.</small></p> |  |   |

Form SP/VR refers to FERPA.

The resolutions explain that FERPA does not apply to student journalists.

However, school administrators think it does, based in a Google Form I sent to advisers that asked

**To what extent do you think your administration believes this statement:**

To use a student's name and/or photo in school-sponsored student-produced media (such as yearbook, newspaper, broadcast, literary magazine, ...), the parent must have signed and returned the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form and marked "Yes."

My administration DOES NOT believe this.

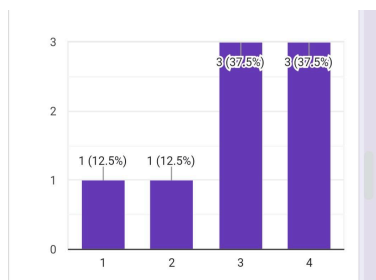
1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

4 ☐

My administration DOES believe this.



(The response that indicated a 1 was a college adviser.)

Form SP/VP only specifically names yearbooks, but the advisers who responded to the Google Form advise a variety of student-led media.

By providing Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) your permission, the student's names and/or likenesses, photo, video, and/or audio may be used in HIDOE school-related publication print and analog/digital media.

Potential HIDOE uses:

- A playbill, showing the student's role in a drama production
- Annual yearbook
- Honor roll or other recognition lists and programs
- Graduation programs and announcements
- Sports activity programs or sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of student
- School newsletters
- Audio and video recordings to aid with reinforcing appropriate behaviors
- Audio and video recordings capturing those memorable moments, such as graduation ceremonies and May Day and other holiday programs or school events
- Student photographs for classroom, teacher, school and/or HIDOE use
- Officially recognized activities and events
- Participation in distance learning lessons or school activities

Form SP/VR only specifies the consequences for a Yes or No, but there are schools with more than 30% of forms unreturned. Unreturned is not a "Yes."

Hawaii student teachers participating in educator preparation programs and staff in professional development courses within the HIDOE may have access to student work and/or other student publications during the course of their studies.

By checking "yes" and signing the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form (RS 24-0607), parents, guardians, and eligible students provide permission for all potential HIDOE uses for HIDOE non-commercial, educational purposes and cannot select individual items.

By checking "No" and signing the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form (RS 24-0607), HIDOE and school will not publish or display the student's photo, names, their school work, and any recordings, including but not limited to, the potential HIDOE uses listed on the front and back of this form.

This form is valid for the student while she/he attends the school listed on the front of the form, and where the form was turned into, unless rescinded by the parent or eligible student or revision of the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form (RS 24-0607).


Making sure that the student journalists we advise do not publish the names or photos of 30% of their school defeats the goal student publications have of being a "voice for the school," is time-consuming, and leaves advisers open to missing something and possibly being reprimanded.

The Student Press Law Center, who the DOE consulted to create webinars to educate those involved in student journalism, says minors can give consent. Students, not just student journalists, have first amendment rights.

Student journalists and those they interview should be making the decisions about whose voices are heard in student-led publications, and those decisions should be grounded in news value and journalism law and ethics, not FERPA.

Sincerely,  
Cindy Reves  
president, Hawaii Scholastic Journalism Association  
adviser, McKinley High School student newspaper  
state director, Journalism Education Association

Certified Journalism Adviser

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Form SPVR<br>   | State of Hawaii<br>Department of Education | Student Publication/Audio/Video<br>Release Form-General |
| <p><small>The use of this template of the Student Release Form is made possible through the assistance of the State of Hawaii Publications Release Forms. All use, then or hereafter, is subject to the provisions of the Copyright Law of the United States. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the State of Hawaii Department of Education. For more information, please contact the State of Hawaii Department of Education, 1555 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 200, Honolulu, HI 96813, (808) 541-2424. By signing this form, I agree to the terms and conditions stated in this form, unless I check the "no" box.</small></p> |  |   |
| <p>In order to protect students' rights to privacy as outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Inquiry (PPRI), parent/guardians or eligible students (those 18 and over) are being asked to give the Hawaii State Department of Education (HDOE) permission to create and/or use digital/electronic or print media of student voice, names or images (in images of student) for the purposes described above and audio recordings, photographs, and images, for the following educational purposes:</p>  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication on HDOE's website, social media accounts, or other digital/electronic media, or in print</li> <li>• HDOE staff professional development, including on-site and/or observer observations</li> <li>• Training within HDOE schools related to preparation programs</li> <li>• Participation in distance learning lessons and other educational purposes</li> </ul>   |  |   |
| <p>I understand that the distribution of these media may include print, online, or digital/electronic media and open-circuit broadcast, closed-circuit, or cable television transmission within or outside of the State of Hawaii.</p>   |  |   |
| <p>I understand that I will not be compensated, financially or otherwise, by HDOE for its use of these media, either for or in lieu of compensation or stipend.</p>  |  |   |
| <p>I understand that I am granting permission to HDOE to use my student's name or image in any media, including HDOE from any subsidiary resulting from or connected with the creation or use of these media. I understand that HDOE permission is granted for the full term of the media. I release all others in the media for which I am giving permission.</p>   |  |   |
| <p>I understand that I may withdraw my permission at any time without any negative consequences by submitting a written statement to my child's school. I understand that withdrawing consent will not affect my child's standing in school, nor my permission to create or use digital or print media of my child's name, voice, or images or any other work of my child's work exclusively for the non-commercial, educational purposes listed above.</p>  |  |   |
| <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> HDOE has no permission to create or use digital or print media of my child's name, voice, or images or any other work of my child's work exclusively for the non-commercial, educational purposes listed above.</p>  |  |   |
| <p><b>This form is valid for the student's/teacher's/authoring the below-listed student, unless rescinded by the parent or eligible student, the student uses the below-listed school, or revokes of the Student Educational Publication/Video Release Request Form 2-6-2019. By signing this form, I agree to the terms and conditions stated in this form, unless I check the "no" box.</b></p>  |  |   |
| Student's Name (Please Print)  | Parent/Guardian (Please Print)             |   |
| School   | Parent/Guardian's Signature & Date         |   |
| Home Address: Street number, street name   | City, State, Zip Code                      |   |

**Student Publication/Audio/Video Release-General (RS 24-007)**

By providing **Howe Department of Education** (HDE) your permission, the student's name and/or likeness, photo, video, and/or audio may be used in HDE school-related publications and/or analog/digital media.

**Potential HDE uses:**

- A playbill, showing the student's role in a drama production
- Annual yearbook
- Honor roll or other recognition lists and programs
- Student photographs and announcements
- Sports activity programs or sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of student
- School newsletters
- Audio and video recordings to aid with reinforcing appropriate behaviors
- Audio and video recordings capturing those memorable moments, such as graduation ceremonies and May Day and other holiday programs or school events
- Student photographs for classroom, teacher, school and/or HDE use
- Officially recognized activities and events
- Participation in distance learning lessons or school activities

Hawaii student teachers participating in educator preparation programs and staff in professional development working within the HDE may have access to student work and/or student publications during the course of their studies.

By checking "yes" and signing the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form (RS-24-007), parents, guardians, and eligible students provide permission for all potential HDE uses for HDE school - commercial, educational purposes and cannot select individual items.

By checking "no" and signing the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form (RS-24-007), HDE and school will not publish or display the student's photo, names, their school seal, and any recordings, including but not limited to, the potential HDE uses listed on the front and back of this form.

This form is valid for the student while she/he attends the school listed on the front of the form and where the form was turned into, unless rescinded by the parent or eligible student or revision of the Student Publication/Audio/Video Release Form (RS 24-007).

**HR-105**

Submitted on: 3/18/2025 2:40:22 PM

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

| Submitted By     | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Kimberlee Baxter | Individual   | Support            | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I have been a journalist since 2002, and I have been a communications and journalism professor on O'ahu since 2009. I currently oversee the student newspapers at Chaminade University and Kapi'olani Community College.

The proposal to force student journalists to have written permission from parents to approve the interview/quote and/or photographs of students is absolutely absurd. There is no FERPA violation for a student to be quoted and/or photographed for the media. Also, this is unconstitutionally singling out student journalists and infringing on their First Amendment rights while allowing non-student journalists to freely interview and/or photograph students.

For example, high school sports is wildly popular in the State of Hawai'i, and many high school athletes are photographed and interviewed for publication in print (i.e. The Honolulu Star-Advertiser), online (ScoringLive) or on air (Hawai'i News Now). Heck, entire games are shown featuring entire rosters of players who've never signed a consent form. So why would the McKinley Pinion be required to obtain permission to quote a student who just appeared on TV to the entire state?

The First Amendment shall not infringe on the freedom of the press, and student media is a credible and important part of the press that should be encouraged, not stifled. The State of Hawai'i needs good journalism to hold its government and people accountable and to deliver vital information that is in the public's best interest. That all starts with young students developing a love for journalism. You cannot do that by violating their First Amendment rights at a young age.

Protect student journalists' abilities to be student journalists. Protect students' First Amendment rights.



**HR-105**

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 1:10:32 PM

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

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify                |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Dominic Niyo | Individual   | Support            | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HCR109

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members,

I am Dominic Niyo, a student journalist and editor for The Pinion, McKinley High School's student-led newspaper. I am writing to express my strong support for House Concurrent Resolution 109 (HCR109), which advocates for free and responsible scholastic journalism and upholds the First Amendment rights in student publications.

As a student journalist, the ability to report facts accurately and without undue censorship is fundamental to our educational experience and personal development. HCR109 reinforces the principles established by the Hawaii Student Journalism Protection Act, signed into law in 2022, which grants student journalists the freedom to exercise speech and press rights in school-sponsored media. This resolution not only acknowledges our rights but also encourages a culture of ethical journalism within educational institutions. By supporting HCR109, the legislature affirms its commitment to fostering an environment where student journalists can responsibly inform and engage our communities.

Moreover, HCR109 provides essential protections for student journalists and their advisers against retaliation for exercising these rights responsibly. This assurance empowers us to tackle pertinent issues, hold authorities accountable, and contribute meaningfully to public discourse. Upholding the principles of HCR109 ensures that we, as emerging journalists, can perform our roles both legally and ethically, preparing us for future endeavors in the field of journalism and beyond.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I respectfully urge the committee to pass HCR109 to support the growth of free and responsible scholastic journalism in Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Dominic Niyo

Editor, The Pinion

McKinley High School

**HR-105**

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 1:14:26 PM

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

| Submitted By   | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify                   |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Michael Olderr | Individual   | Support            | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I support this resolution!

**LATE**

Testimony of Sean Taketa McLaughlin  
Hawaii' House Committee on Education  
Thursday March 20, 2025 at 2:00 pm, Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR109 / HR105 Supporting Free and Responsible Scholastic Journalism and Actively Supporting and Honoring the First Amendment of the United States Constitution in Student Publications

Aloha Chairs Woodson and Garrett, Vice Chairs La Chica and Amato, and Members of the Committee:

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration and support of this measure to rebuild a future for ethical journalism. Mahalo to the authors, cosponsors and you for taking concrete action.

As a longtime member of the Media Council Hawaii (MCH), I fully support MCH testimony drafted by Gerald Kato on this measure. You might remember the award winning student journalism project that we did with the Honolulu City Council -"Open City TV."

And I want to add my view as a former faculty member at UH Manoa and Leeward Community College, a consultant director/editor for DOE and and longtime advocate for the integrity of our information ecosystem - your clear educational message in adopting this measure, without unnecessary amendments, is greatly appreciated.

The next generation of student journalists are key to our hopes for a healthy information ecosystem and the integrity of our democracy.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration of this testimony and please feel free to contact me if you would like more information or perspective on this issue.

Sean Taketa McLaughlin  
[seantaketa@gmail.com](mailto:seantaketa@gmail.com), C: 808-595-4877