



March 30, 2025

To: Chair Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the Committee on Health

From: Health Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of HCR 186 / HR 179 - Managing Heat Exposure in Department and Charter Schools

Date: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, **Time:** 10:30 AM

Place: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, Conference Room 329, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the Committee,

The Health Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawaii is in strong support of HCR 186 / HR 179, which requests the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Health and the State Public Charter School Commission, to conduct a study on the practices of managing heat exposure in Department and charter schools to protect students' health during outdoor activities. This resolution is a necessary step toward safeguarding the well-being of Hawaii's students who are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat.

- **Importance of Addressing Heat Exposure in Schools:**

- The health and safety of students are paramount, particularly during outdoor activities in Hawaii's warm climate.
- Prolonged heat exposure can lead to heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and other heat-related illnesses, posing significant risks to students' health.

- **Benefits of Conducting a Comprehensive Study:**

- A study on current practices will help identify gaps and areas for improvement in managing heat exposure in Department and charter schools.

- This study will ensure that evidence-based recommendations are made to enhance students' safety and health protections during outdoor activities.
- **Collaboration Among Key Stakeholders:**
 - Involving the Department of Education, Department of Health, and the State Public Charter School Commission ensures a comprehensive and unified approach to addressing this critical issue.
 - Cross-agency collaboration promotes the development of practical solutions tailored to Hawaii's unique environment.
- **Impact on Student Health and Well-Being:**
 - Implementing improved heat management practices in schools will reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses among students.
 - Proactive measures to mitigate heat exposure will create a safer and healthier learning environment for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this vital resolution. Passing HCR 186 / HR 179 demonstrates Hawaii's commitment to protecting the health and well-being of our students as they engage in outdoor activities. Together, we can ensure that all students are safeguarded from the adverse effects of heat exposure.

Mahalo nui loa,

Alan Burdick, Chair, Health Committee
Melodie Aduja, Vice Chair, Health Committee

HR-179

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 12:50:52 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Climate Change & Health Working Group	Climate Change and Health Working Group	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Health Committee:

The Climate Change and Health Working Group supports HR 179 and its goal of protecting children from the dangers of heat-related illness.

Temperatures are increasing in Hawai‘i. Exercising in hot, humid weather places added stress on the human body, and children are especially vulnerable. Children are more likely to exercise beyond their limits because they may not recognize the symptoms of heat stress, or may feel pressure from coaches or peers to continue practicing in high heat. Additionally, children do not have control over the timing of recess, sports, or outdoor band practice, and may not have regular access to hydration during these outdoor activities, many of which occur at the hottest times of the day or year.

We spend taxpayer dollars to rescue heat-exhausted tourists – let’s prioritize the safety and well-being of our local children by proactively reducing heat-related illness at school.

HR 179 would request the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Health, to conduct a study on the current practices of managing heat exposure in state public and charter schools to protect students' health during outdoor activities and to develop a plan if the current practices are insufficient in managing heat exposure. It would also request the feasibility of using wet-bulb globe temperatures (WBGT) as the standard for measuring heat stress.

WBGT is the recognized standard for evaluating heat stress, adopted by the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the U.S. Department of Defense. Unlike air temperature or heat index alone, WBGT incorporates air temperature, humidity, wind speed, and direct sunlight to provide a more precise measure of how heat affects the human body.

We have learned from other states with hot humid weather that vague, unstandardized heat recommendations lead to harm. Georgia, for example, once led the nation in heat-related deaths in high school athletes despite schools having written heat practice policies. Only after several tragic heat-related deaths did Georgia adopt a data-driven WBGT approach, successfully reducing heat-related illnesses.

For these reasons, the Climate Change and Health Working Group urges you to pass HR 179 to urge DOE and DOH to examine the current practices of managing heat exposure in schools and to develop a plan if the current practices are insufficient in managing heat exposure to keep our children safe.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

The Climate Change and Health Working Group

HR-179

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 12:46:25 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Kiefer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Health Committee:

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Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kiefer, MD MPH

HR-179

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 2:20:47 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Mahealani Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in support of HR179. The State of Hawai'i has been experiencing record-breaking heat over the last several years. As a family medicine physician currently practicing primary care in Honolulu, I am seeing a rising number of patients suffering from heat-related illnesses. Children are physiologically more vulnerable to heat exposure, putting them at a higher risk for medical complications requiring hospitalization. It is imperative that we as a State develop a better understanding on how to prevent and manage heat-related illnesses amongst our school-aged keiki, through a collaborative approach with the health and education sectors. Please support this resolution to ensure that Hawai'i strengthens our public health systems and fosters the cross-sector collaboration necessary to address the climate and health crisis.