



House Committee on Education

Testimony on HCR 87 / HR 81

Relating to Climate Week in Schools

March 20th, 2025

2:00 PM

Room 329

The Climate Change and Health Working Group (CCHWG) is a cross-sector collaborative interested in strengthening climate and health resiliency in Hawai'i. CCHWG supports this resolution that seeks to protect Hawai'i's children from heat-related illness through clear, data-driven guidelines and resources.

Testimony of the Hawai'i Climate Change and Health Working Group

In Support of HCR 87 / HR 81

Relating to Climate Week in Schools

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Education Committee:

The Climate Change and Health Working Group (CCHWG) strongly supports this resolution urging the Department of Education to establish an annual Climate Week in all public schools across the State. This essential initiative will expand climate awareness, strengthen climate education, and empower our youth to participate in sustainability efforts that protect their health and future.

As a cross-sector collaborative devoted to safeguarding the health of our residents in an era of escalating climate impacts, we recognize the importance of early and comprehensive climate education. Rising sea levels, intensifying storms, and the degradation of native ecosystems pose immediate threats to the health and welfare of all who call Hawai'i home. For youth, these challenges can create profound uncertainty and anxiety. By dedicating time each year to Climate Week, we can foster open discussions about eco-anxiety, build resilience, and ensure

that students have the resources and knowledge they need to navigate a rapidly changing world.

Climate education in youth will effectively promote environmental sustainability and public health. When students learn to examine policy, advocate for their future, and engage in meaningful projects – such as school-based sustainability, school gardens, or resource conservation – they strengthen their connection to the ‘āina and develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Such initiatives empower students to be active participants in climate solutions rather than passive bystanders, cultivating civic engagement and inspiring healthy, resilient communities.

Establishing an annual Climate Week will highlight the interconnections between environmental stewardship and public health, encouraging students to explore topics such as food security, heat-related illness prevention, wildfire mitigation, disaster preparedness, and mental health promotion. By partnering with environmental organizations and policymakers, our students will gain first-hand experience in collaborative problem-solving, amplifying youth voices in climate-related initiatives and preparing them to be Hawai‘i’s next generation of leaders and innovators.

For these reasons, the Climate Change and Health Working Group respectfully urges the Legislature to adopt this resolution. A dedicated Climate Week in our public schools is a proactive step toward raising awareness, reducing climate anxiety, and equipping our keiki with the skills and confidence they need to build a healthier, more sustainable and equitable Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

Sincerely,

The Climate Change & Health Working Group



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

MARCH 20, 2025

HCR 87/HR 81, URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH AN ANNUAL CLIMATE WEEK IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE TO SPREAD CLIMATE AWARENESS, EDUCATION, AND PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

POSITION: SUPPORT

Coalition Earth supports HCR 87/HR 81, which urges the Department of Education to establish an annual climate week in all public schools across the state to spread climate awareness, education, and participation in sustainability initiatives.

According to a report produced by the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission, global sea levels could rise more than three feet by 2100, with more recent projections showing this occurring as early as 2060. In turn, over the next 30 to 70 years, approximately 6,500 structures and 19,800 people statewide will be exposed to chronic flooding. Additionally, an estimated \$19 billion in economic loss would result from chronic flooding of land and structures located in exposure areas. Finally, approximately 38 miles of coastal roads and 550 cultural sites would be chronically flooded, on top of the 13 miles of beaches that have already been lost on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui to erosion fronting shoreline armoring.

As we work to reduce carbon emissions and stave off the worst consequences of climate change, we must begin preparing for the adverse impact of sea level rise on our shores. We are now quantifying the speed at which we must act. We cannot continue to develop the 25,800-acre statewide sea level rise exposure area—one-third of which is designated for urban use—without risking massive structural damage and, potentially, great loss of life.

Just two years ago, we witnessed the impact of the climate emergency on our shores. On August 8, 2023, wildfires swept across Maui and killed at least 100 people, making it one of the nation's deadliest natural disasters. The spread of the fires has been attributed to climate change conditions, such as unusually dry landscapes and the confluence of a strong high-pressure system

to the north and Hurricane Dora to the south. The wildfires destroyed over 2,200 structures, including numerous residential buildings, historic landmarks, and school facilities. In September 2023, a report from the United States Department of Commerce estimated the total economic damage of the wildfires to be roughly \$5.5 billion. Investing in renewable energy generation could not be more urgent, given the growing threat of climate catastrophes to our island home.

Therefore, **our state should take steps to hasten our transition to a clean energy economy and continue our fight against climate change, including by strengthening climate literacy programs in our public school system.** According to the North American Association for Environmental Education, climate literacy “is understanding your influence on climate and climate’s influence on you and society.” A climate-literate person understands the essential principles of Earth’s climate systems, knows how to assess scientifically credible climate information, communicates about climate change in a meaningful way, and can make informed and responsible decisions regarding personal and communal actions that may affect the environment and climate change.

Attaining climate literacy involves all scientific disciplines and a grounding in social, economic, and political forces. With this comes an understanding of environmental justice, how and why climate change disproportionately impacts communities of color, and how these communities are incubators of solutions. In addition, climate literacy includes understanding green career pathways and building a climate-ready workforce. A climate literate person knows the dispositions (how to respond), competencies (skills and abilities of how and when), and environmentally responsible behavior to address climate change.

In the age of anthropogenic climate change, it is imperative that we prepare future generations to address the climate emergency and its consequences for our island home.

*Coalition Earth is a nongovernmental organization that works to preserve the well-being of people and our planet. We champion policies that advance climate resilience, clean energy, public health, and economic fairness for working families. **Contact us at info@coalitionearth.org.***

HR-81

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 11:50:45 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul Bernstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representative Woodson and Members of the EDN Committee:

As a founding member of the Climate Future Forum that works to help youth engage in the legislative process around issues related to climate change, I'm writing in strong support of resolution HCR87 and HR81. I have seen first hand the need for further education about the science of and impacts of climate change. Following through on the resolution would help meet these needs. But perhaps more important is the need to educate youth on actions that they can take to address climate change. Stating these goals is an easy and important first step; therefore please pass these resolutions out of your committee so we can build the urgency to help our youth face and deal with climate change.

Mahalo,

Paul Bernstein

Founding member of Climate Future Forum

**To: Representative Woodson, Chair
Representative La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education (EDN.)
Re: SUPPORT for HR81/HCR87
Hearing: 03-20-2025, 2 pm**

LATE

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Mia Nishiguchi, and I am a junior student at Kalani High School. I am writing in strong support of HR81 because incorporating climate change and civic education in DOE schools will make a positive impact on students like me.

As a student myself engaged in the legislative process, I always get asked what I do and why. I have tons of friends who mention they didn't even know there were district Representatives and Senators until I taught them. I witness a huge gap in the public education system, and I believe HB81/HCR87 will help close the gap and give students the education they need. Especially in today's political climate, civic and climate education is needed more than ever. Our futures are on the line, and the blood in the hands of the adult generation cannot be passed down to the youth. Climate anxiety fills my mind and gives me more stress than I know I should bear at this age. I hope future generations can live on a sustainable planet without the fears that occupy our minds today.

Hawai'i shorelines have been increasing rapidly, threatening coastal communities and infrastructure. The acidity in the Pacific Ocean increased 25% in the past three centuries and will increase 40-50% by 2100. Climate change and civic education within DOE schools will allow students to utilize their rights for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Students' futures are being jeopardized. It is everyone's fundamental right to be able to fight for a sustainable environment. The future of our beloved islands is in the hands of the education system.

I urge you to support HR81/HCR87 so more students can utilize their rights to fight for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Our futures depend on and begin with education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

**Mia Nishiguchi
Grade 11
Kalani High School**

LATE

Committee: EDN
Representative Woodson, Chair
Representative La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education (EDN)

Position: **STRONG SUPPORT** for HR81/HCR87
Hearing: 03-20-2025, 2 pm

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Debbie Mililkan and I am a scientist, educator and mother. I am writing in STRONG SUPPORT of HR81/HCR87 because it is essential that we provide students in Hawai'i the experiences and opportunities to engage in climate change and civic education in all of our schools.

HR81 and HCR87 requests that the Department of Education recognize and establish a climate education week in public schools. By recognizing the importance of climate education, students will be better informed to exercise their rights to fight for a clean and healthy future. They will also be more likely to take positive action to mitigate climate change and encourage their family to take action as well. And, most importantly, we know that learning about climate change can reduce children's anxiety.

I urge you to support HR81/HCR87 so all of our students in Hawai'i can join the conversation and be prepared for their uncertain future.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Debbie Millikan, Honolulu, HI

LATE

**To: Representative Woodson, Chair
Representative La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education (EDN.)
Re: SUPPORT for HR81/HCR87
Hearing: 03-20-2025, 2 pm**

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Mari Dela Cruz, and I am an 11th grade student leader at Punahou School. I am writing in strong support of HR81/HCR87 because incorporating climate change and civic education in DOE schools will make a positive impact on students like me.

At Punahou, I have been blessed to receive climate related education from elementary through high school. I have been lucky to have the opportunity to already understand the science behind climate change through my science teachers and learn how to advocate for it in our local governments through my school's annual sustainability fair. I thank my education for inspiring me to take action on climate change - something that I would not have done without the help of my teachers and educators. It is essential that all students in Hawaii have the ability to be aware of climate change and know that they are capable of making a difference in order to nurture the next generation of climate advocates; something that is crucial to ensure our generation can fight for our future.

Hawai'i shorelines have been increasing rapidly, threatening coastal communities and infrastructure. The acidity in the Pacific Ocean increased 25% in the past three centuries and will increase 40-50% by 2100. Climate change and civic education within DOE schools will allow students to utilize their rights for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Students' futures are being jeopardized. It is everyone's fundamental right to be able to fight for a sustainable environment. The future of our beloved islands is in the hands of the education system.

I urge you to support HR81/HCR87 so more students can utilize their rights to fight for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Our futures depend on and begin with education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Mari Dela Cruz
11th grade, Punahou School

LATE

**To: Representative Woodson, Chair
Representative La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education (EDN.)
Re: SUPPORT for HR81/HCR87
Hearing: 03-20-2025, 2 pm**

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Vivienne Hill, and I am a senior in high school. I am writing in strong support of HR81/HCR87 because incorporating climate change and civic education in DOE schools will make a positive impact on students across the state.

When I lived in Singapore, I remember weeks at a time when the air was so thick with smog that we couldn't go outside all day at school. The smoke came from burning palm trees in Indonesia, cleared for plantations—it was cheaper than cutting them down. The sky turned completely gray. It was a reminder of how decisions made far away could affect us all. Here in Hawai'i, we thankfully don't face that kind of pollution yet, but without action, our environment could change. Schools teach a little about climate change and civic engagement, but it's often just a quick lesson, (led by teacher initiative) and not enough to show us how to make a real difference. If we want to protect the future of our shared home, we need better education that prepares us to take action now before it's too late.

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I urge you to support HR81/HCR87 so more students can utilize their rights to fight for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Our futures depend on and begin with education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Vivienne Hill

LATE

HR-81

Submitted on: 3/20/2025 7:01:19 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Olivia Sousa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Woodson, Chair

Representative La Chica, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Education (EDN.)

Re: SUPPORT for HR81/HCR87

Hearing: 03-20-2025, 2 pm

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Olivia Sousa, and I am a junior high school student at Le Jardin Academy. I am writing in strong support of HR81/HCR87 because incorporating climate change and civic education in DOE schools will make a positive impact on students like me.

The education system has failed to equip me with the knowledge to fully understand the crisis that threatens my future and the future of all students. We remain unaware of the dangers that jeopardize our lives, and we deserve the right to have access to all information about the crisis of climate change. With this in mind, I believe this vital information should be made publicly available and taught to all students in our state. I am committed to ensuring more students in Oahu receive this education, and it starts with this resolution.

Hawai'i shorelines have been increasing rapidly, threatening coastal communities and infrastructure. The acidity in the Pacific Ocean increased 25% in the past three centuries and will increase 40-50% by 2100. Climate change and civic education within DOE schools will allow students to utilize their rights for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Students' futures are being jeopardized. It is everyone's fundamental right to be able to fight for a sustainable environment. The future of our beloved islands is in the hands of the education system.

I urge you to support HR81/HCR87 so more students can utilize their rights to fight for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Our futures depend on and begin with education.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Olivia Sousa

11th

Le Jardin Academy