

Testimony of the Board of Psychology

**Before the
House Committee on Finance
Thursday, February 20, 2025
10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 624, H.D. 1, RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY**

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christopher Fernandez, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Psychology (Board). The Board supports this bill and offers the following comments.

The purpose of this bill is to create a School Psychologists Working Group (Working Group) to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation for an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists that can be acted upon in 2026.

With the addition of the Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA) and the Board of Psychology as explicit members of the Working Group, the Board maintains its offer to assist the Department of Education-led group in recommending actionable steps towards regulating school psychology. The Board also believes any other stakeholders strongly affected by the regulation should also be included.

Finally, the Board continues to request the Working Group remain exempted from Hawaii Revised Statute Chapter 92.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

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

Date: 02/20/2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0624, HD1 RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS.

Purpose of Bill: Creates a School Psychologists Working Group to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation for an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists that can be acted upon in 2026. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB624, HD1.

The Department of Education recognizes school psychologists' critical role in supporting students' academic, social, and emotional well-being. To ensure high-quality services, the Department currently has standards that need to be met to be employed as a school psychologist.

To explore additional ways to sustain high professional standards for the school psychology role group, the Department would be willing to participate if a working group is established.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB624, HD1.



Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 20, 2025 10:00 AM
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

COMMENTS AND PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO HB624, RELATED TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

The Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA) respectfully requests an amendment to HB624 to ensure that our organization, as a stakeholder, participates in the proposed working group to develop procedures for the licensing of school psychologists by 2026. Hawaii is the only state that does not license school psychologists. A license is needed for school psychologists to work in private schools. We wish to work with the school psychologists to help them become licensed and hope they will accept our participation in the working group. We do not oppose licensing of school psychologists.

There are two main issues which have eluded consensus: the appropriate oversight Board and scope of practice. Forty-eight states license or certify school psychologists through Departments of Education, under Teachers Standards Boards yet previous proposals in Hawaii have placed School Psychologists under the Board of Psychology. We bring up these concerns to be constructive in finding the best way to license school psychologists.

Texas is the only state which licenses school psychologists under the Board of Psychologists. Texas has multi-disciplinary boards whereby members of various professions regulate other professions despite lack of qualifications to adequately understand the implications of their decisions. Even though both professions call themselves "psychologists", the two professions are distinctly different with different training and responsibilities. School psychologists evaluate students for special education placement and perform counseling for commonly encountered school behavior problems whereas psychologists assess and treat the full range of mental health disorders. Previous proposals for licensing of school psychologists have not adequately delineated their scope of practice, thus leaving open the possibility of assessing and treating the full range of mental health disorders, for which they lack the necessary training.

If the Hawaii Department of Education cannot license or certify school psychologists, another suitable arrangement would be licensing under the Department of Commerce and

Consumer Affairs similar to social work and marriage and family therapy, which do not have their own board and are also not under the board of another profession. To ensure success, it is vital that all crucial stakeholders are represented. Doing so would hopefully break the decades-long impasse that has prevented licensure of school psychologists in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alex Lichton, Ph.D." The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Alex Lichton, Ph.D.
Chair, HPA Legislative Action Committee



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Thursday, February 20, 2025; 10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 0624, HOUSE DRAFT 1, RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS.

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 0624, House Draft 1, RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS., and offers a **FRIENDLY AMENDMENT** for your consideration.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

This bill, as received by your Committee, would create a school psychologist working group within the Department of Education to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation on an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists in 2026.

This bill would take effect on July 1, 3000.

Hawaii's statewide public education system is student-centered and grounded on the principle of equity. Equity depends squarely on the State's ability to ensure that all children have the opportunity to pursue and excel in learning. The biggest challenge to children who are experiencing chronic absenteeism from public schools is health care. As a community, we must do more to ensure that our students have access to health care so that serious issues may be addressed early on.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of schools had created additional stress for Hawaii's children and their families. Ever present inflation, stagnant wages, and higher crime levels have all led to consequential impacts to families and especially the youth. FQHCs throughout the State have found an increase in the incidence of mental health issues. This is also seen in our schools where teachers and administrators have confirmed an increased in violence, absenteeism, and lower morale.

FQHCs have been providing and will continue to provide essential health care, including mental health services, to the complex of schools at or near their campuses. However, there is a serious lack of mental health professionals to adequately address the increased need for mental health services.

Because of this, the HPCA has long supported any and all efforts to promote workforce development for the health care industry. It is hoped that by establishing a new licensure category of psychologists who serve in schools, the number of qualified and capable professionals who can be recruited and retained will increase to meet this desperate need.

However, to ensure that the Working Group has the most accurate demographic information to determine whether the establishment of a new licensure category is warranted, we recommend that a representative from the State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA) be included as a member. Because SHPDA is charged with regulating the development of health care facilities and the staffing of professionals at those facilities based on community needs, they would have the data to ascertain the regions (i.e., school complexes) throughout the State that are in greatest need for mental health services.

With that amendment, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiipca.net.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Finance

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 20, 2025

H.B. 624 HD1— RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 624 which establishes a working group within the department of education to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation to the legislature on an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists in 2026.

Hawaii remains the only State in the nation without credentialing requirements for School Psychologists. Without proper credentials, individuals with inappropriate training can qualify for and be hired to practice as a School Psychologist for the Department of Education, which places our keiki at particular risk for malpractice. The creation of a working group especially with a representative from the Hawaii Association of School Psychologists, to recommend actionable steps towards licensure for these professionals is a step in the right direction. Creating a path toward licensure would ensure that DOE School Psychologists have all the adequate training and certifications needed to perform their duties and responsibilities at a high level.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 624.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



HB624 Credentialing School Psychologists in Hawai'i

Aloha Chair Woodson and members of the committee:

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists believes that credentialing is important for all professionals that are entrusted to care for students, especially those with special needs. Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) 465 protects the professional integrity of the term "psychology" by ensuring that non-licensed individuals cannot practice psychology. This public protection ensures that specialized training and expertise is required to practice psychology. Currently, School Psychologists are 'exempt' from needing such a credential to practice in the educational setting (HRS 465) and have no credentialing in the State. Hawai'i is the only State in the nation that allows this. This exemption has allowed individuals who do not have graduate training in school psychology and who do not meet the nationally accepted certification standard to practice "school psychology" within the educational setting. We are asking for the legislature's support to establish credentialing requirements for School Psychologists in the State, thereby ensuring that students receive services from highly qualified and properly licensed professionals. Additionally, recent updates to CMS now explicitly name licensed School Psychological services as billable, and would enable the DOE to generate additional funds under Medicaid. Finally, the proposed legislation aligns with the nationally adopted language and structure for credentialing School Psychologists.

Graduate training in school psychology and a supervised internship aligns with the Practice Model set forth by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The Practice Model outlines the professional expectations of respecting the dignity and rights of all persons and maintaining professional competency and integrity in professional relationships to foster and maintain the public's trust. The NASP practice model outlines the training of school psychologists, which requires them to be forthright about their qualifications, competencies, and roles. We work in full cooperation with other professional disciplines to meet the needs of students and families and avoid multiple relationships that diminish their professional effectiveness. We maintain the public trust by respecting law and encouraging ethical conduct. When untrained and unqualified persons are employed as a school psychologist under this current exemption in HR 465, but do not meet the graduate level training requirements, the integrity of the profession is compromised and the public is not protected. The training of school psychologists is unique in that we have extensive training in cognitive, academic, social/emotional, behavioral, and adaptive assessment practices and training to ensure these measures are fair, reliable and valid. When these assessments are not utilized and administered as they were designed by properly trained professionals, the students are not being fairly assessed, which can result in inaccurate results. The research is clear that students who are identified with special learning needs are at a higher risk for a number of negative outcomes, such as dropping out of school, qualifying for lower-level jobs, or becoming involved in criminal activity. Raising the standards of practice for all school psychologists working in the state of Hawai'i will increase appropriate service delivery to those students most in need.

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists asks that you support the credentialing of school psychologists to ensure that all children in Hawai'i are afforded the same protection of a licensed and credentialed professional working within their scope of practice. This working group is the next step in this process.

Respectfully Submitted:

Leslie Baunach, NCSP
HASP Legislative Chair

HB-624-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 4:18:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
SuiLong Xiong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, my name is SuiLong Xiong and I am a school psychology intern at the Ka'u, Kea'au, Pahoa complex area. I support this bill because it ensures protections againgst malpractice for our kids. School psychologists have unique and specialized training that is not interchangeable with other fields of psychology. Please support credentially school psychologist and protecting our title.

HB-624-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 7:37:01 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alec Marentic	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of HB624, which seeks to establish a School Psychologists Working Group to develop recommendations for credentialing and licensure of school-based mental health providers, specifically school psychologists. This measure is not only crucial for the well-being of Hawai‘i’s students, but it also addresses a significant gap in our state’s educational and mental health services infrastructure.

Currently, Hawai‘i remains the only state in the nation that does not regulate or credential school psychologists. This lack of formal recognition presents a critical challenge in ensuring that our students have access to qualified professionals capable of addressing their diverse academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. As school psychologists, we are specially trained in both mental health and educational systems, making us uniquely qualified to support the growing mental health needs of students while also helping to close achievement gaps.

The demand for comprehensive mental health services in schools has never been more urgent. Research shows that addressing mental health concerns early in life leads to better academic and life outcomes. School psychologists are uniquely trained to support schools in meeting these needs, and integral to this process, providing evidence-based interventions, assessments, and consultations to ensure students succeed. However, without appropriate licensure, school psychologists in Hawai‘i face barriers that limit their effectiveness and prevent the state from leveraging their full potential.

The creation of a School Psychologists Working Group under HB624 is a necessary first step in developing an immediate pathway to licensure. This group will allow stakeholders to propose actionable steps and outline legislation that can be acted upon by 2026. Given the rising need for mental health support in schools, it is imperative that we move toward regulating and credentialing school psychologists to ensure students receive the highest quality care.

Passing HB624 is not only an investment in the health and well-being of our keiki, but also a critical step toward aligning Hawai‘i with national standards. Our students deserve access to qualified, regulated professionals who can support them in achieving their full potential. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of HB624.

Sincerely,
Alec Marentic
School Psychologist
Hawai'i Department of Education

2/19/25

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

HB624:

Aloha Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of HB625 to create a School Psychologists Working Group to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation for an immediate pathway to licensure for School Psychologists. Hawaii is the only state in the nation without a credential for School Psychologists and we are the only one of the Unit 13 educator groups that is not eligible for some kind of licensure under DCCA. Without a credential, we can't be part of the NASP Interstate compact or bill Medicaid for direct services.

I was born and raised in Hawaii and moved to California where I earned my graduate degree in School Psychology and worked there as a School Psychologist for over 20 years. While I'm so happy to be home and working as a School Psychologist here, the disparity between the role of the School Psychologist here in Hawaii compared to the rest of the US is truly disheartening. In order to provide high quality supports and services to our keiki, it only makes sense that we provide some kind of credentialing or licensure for our role group as it directly impacts how well we are able to support our schools and families here in Hawaii. My colleagues in other states are always shocked to learn that we don't have a state credential or any licensure requirements! Without proper credentials, individuals with inappropriate training can actually qualify for and be hired to practice as School Psychologists for the Department of Education, which places our keiki at particular risk for malpractice and is not at all aligned with national standards.

By creating a working group to recommend actionable steps towards licensure, we will be finally creating a path toward licensure that would ensure that DOE School Psychologists have all the adequate training and certifications needed to perform our duties at the highest level, meeting national standards and maintaining the high quality of skillsets and services that our unique training provides.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melissa Dawson,
School Psychologist

Testimony Support for HB624
February 19, 2025

Aloha,

School Psychologists work to provide effective services to help children and youth succeed academically, social-emotionally, and behaviorally, by providing direct educational and mental health services for our keiki. Additionally, we work with parents, educators, and other professionals to create supportive learning and social environments for all children. As a practicing School Psychologist for the DOE and an executive board member of the Hawai`i Association of School Psychologists (HASP), I am writing in support of licensure of School Psychologists in Hawai`i. Currently, Hawai`i is the *only* state in the country that does not have a credentialing process in place for School Psychologists, despite two sunset evaluations conducted regarding Psychologists that clarified all Psychologists should be licensed (Report No. 81-6, 1981; Report No. 87-22, 1987). There are a couple of reasons this is extremely problematic. First and foremost, having no credentialing requirements may potentially result in unqualified individuals working in School Psychologist positions, which could potentially cause harm to our keiki. The majority of School Psychologists are recruited from the mainland, coming in with varying qualifications, whereas others are individuals within the state of Hawaii who have earned a degree in a similar field, such as Counseling, Industrial/Organizational, or Clinical Psychology, hired into School Psychologist positions, even if they have not received adequate training to be working in these positions. It is clear that the state of Hawaii has a severe shortage of School Psychologists, and because of this, it is not surprising that unqualified individuals may be fulfilling School Psychologist roles; however, it is imperative to understand that this causes more harm than benefit to our keiki, as it places them at particular risk for malpractice.

The reason this is problematic is showcased in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which recognizes School Psychologists as “specialized instructional support personnel”. School Psychology programs are unique from other mental health programs in their focus on the interpretation of assessment results, formulating educational implications from the results, and then linking those results to effective, research-based interventions that can be implemented in the school setting. School Psychologists also receive specific training in special education law and are trained in the special education eligibility process. They are trained as Psychologists who are specifically trained to practice within the school, rather than a clinical setting. Although any mental health professional can be trained to administer assessments, the interpretation can be very problematic for anyone who is not trained, yet is placed into a School Psychologist position, and this can result in damaging consequences for students. For instance, I was made aware of a past case in our state where an unqualified individual working in the role of a School Psychologist had misinterpreted the cognitive (IQ) scores of a student who spoke English as a second language, when the cognitive test had been administered in English, a language in which this student was not fluent. The student scored within the extremely low range when tested in English, resulting in an educational classification of Mental Retardation at the time (now called Intellectual Disability), and the student consequently began to receive intensive special education services to meet what were determined to be his needs, based on the evaluation results. Unfortunately, this was very inaccurate, as the student apparently had average intellectual abilities when tested years later in his dominant language. Therefore, it appears this student

received inaccurate programming for years until the error was realized, and by that time, he had missed years of receiving appropriate instruction/curriculum in school. This is just one example to highlight how an individual unqualified to practice as a School Psychologist may not be able to make accurate decisions to assist our keiki, as this professional had not received the appropriate and specialized training necessary to do so. It is critical to have qualified professionals working in our field.

Second, the state's failure to require licensure of its School Psychologists means that, by law, the state is unable to seek warranted reimbursements from the federal Medicaid program for direct services provided by School Psychologists in an educational setting. If we had a licensing process in place, we would be able to bill for our services, other than just administrative work, and this money would be used to support the department's overall operating budget.

It would make the most sense for School Psychologists to be licensed and registered through the Board of Psychology to ensure the delivery of quality service to students and the community, as it is a consumer protection agency. It would be the most seamless transition because School Psychology has already become a part of the Board of Psychology. It is important to consider that all Psychologists are indeed Psychologists, regardless of the setting we work in (i.e., school, private practice, hospital). Why should School Psychologists be the only area of Psychology exempt from having to follow professional standards in our practice? Licensure is a requirement for all other Psychologists. As School Psychologists, we work with children with special needs, as we have specialized training to do this. We must have credentialing standards in place to be held to higher standards and to protect our children.

In summary, credentialing is important for all professionals, but it is critical for professionals who work with keiki with special needs. Our keiki need to be protected through the implementation of a credentialing process.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Garrett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amanda Garrett, Psy.D., NCSP
Nationally Certified School Psychologist
Treasurer-Elect of the Hawaii Association of School Psychologists (HASP)

HB-624-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 5:06:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
April Bautista	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I kindly ask that you pass HB624 HD1 out of Committee.

Mahalo,

April

April Kamilah Bagasao Bautista

Kalihi-Pālama