

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: 01/30/2025

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0625 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a nationally certified school psychologist incentive program.
Appropriates funds for the incentive program.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides the following comments on HB 625, which establishes a nationally certified school psychologist incentive program and appropriates funds.

The Department appreciates that HB 625 assists our goal of incentivizing the recruitment and retention of school psychologists who provide critical school psychology services to students in need. However, the Department recommends that employee compensation is best addressed through collective bargaining.

The Department appreciates this proposal and the inclusion of funding and positions but asks that any additional funding does not affect the Department's Board approved budget requests.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 625.



**Testimony to the House Joint Committee on Education and Health
Thursday, January 30, 2025; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 0625, RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Woodson, Chair Takayama, 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, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

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 appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for fiscal year 2025-2026, and the same amount for fiscal year 2026-2027 to offer incentive pay for the nationally certified school psychologist program

This bill would take effect on July 1, 2025.

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.

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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 work force development for the health care industry. It is hoped that by establishing an incentive program for nationally certified school psychologists, additional qualified health care providers will enter Hawaii's work force to address our ever-growing needs.

For that reason, 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@hawaiiipca.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
House of Representatives
Committee on Education
Committee on Health

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

January 30, 2024

H.B. 625 — RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 625 which establishes a nationally certified school psychologist incentive program.

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. Incentivizing School Psychologists to receive and maintain national certifications would increase the level of service and care they ultimately provide to Hawaii's youth. Providing additional compensation for School Psychologists serving in hard to fill areas will increase employees and the level of care keiki receive in rural communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 625.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

LATE



January 31, 2025
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

HB625, School Psychologist National Certification Incentive Program

Aloha Chair Woodson and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists supports HB1649 in amending Chapter 302A of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes to establish within the department a school psychologist national certification incentive program. Mental and behavioral health experts are needed in schools now more than ever. This proposed amendment will support the recruitment and retention of highly qualified school psychologists, who are mental and behavioral health experts.

The Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) is comparable to, or more rigorous than, many national certifications across other school professionals, such as teachers, school counselors, speech and language pathologists, and occupational therapists. The credential promotes excellence in the field of school psychology through rigorous standards of graduate preparation, ethical practice, and competency. Additionally, nationally certified school psychologists must engage in activities designed to maintain, expand, and extend their professional training and skills. Recertification is required every 3 years, with no less than 75 hours of continuing professional development activities.

Recruiting and retaining school psychologists with an NCSP, and encouraging eligible school psychologists to obtain an NCSP, will benefit keiki and their 'Ohana. First and foremost, it will support the State's ongoing efforts to address critical staffing shortages. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1 school psychologist to every 500 students; however, many school psychologists in the State have more than 1,500 students. Equitably allocating stipends for nationally certified staff across all educators will help address this shortage, and with additional federal funds available for schools, it is a good time to expand the Hawai'i Revised Statutes to include school psychologists. Second, a school psychologist who is nationally certified is legally and ethically required to follow uniform national standards guiding the practice of school psychology, which includes providing keiki and youth with high quality, evidence-based practices in the areas of academic achievement, mental and behavioral health, school and community safety, family-school partnerships, and due process protection against malpractice.

In closing, The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists appreciates this opportunity to testify on HB625. We are dedicated to maintain, expand, and extend the profession of school psychology, and support the State's efforts to recruit and retain high quality educators. We are available to provide additional information at the Legislature's request.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leslie Baunach, NCSP
HASP Legislative Chair
Email: hasp808@gmail.com

Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
House Committee on Education

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Support for H.B. 625, Relating to Education

As a current medical student and former special education teacher, I strongly support H.B. No. 625, Relating to Education, which establishes a nationally certified school psychologist incentive program.

During my time working in public education, I witnessed the need for supporting students with diverse learning needs, behavioral challenges, and mental health concerns. Access to qualified school psychologists is essential for ensuring that students receive timely interventions, appropriate assessments, and individualized support to thrive academically and socially.

Hawaii continues to face a shortage of school psychologists, leaving many students without the specialized care and guidance they need. By providing incentives for national certification, H.B. 625 will help attract and retain highly qualified professionals, ultimately improving student outcomes and strengthening the education system as a whole.

As a future pediatrician, I recognize the long-term impact that early intervention and mental health support have on a child's overall well-being. Investing in school psychologists contributes to healthier communities by addressing social-emotional challenges early on.

I urge the committee to pass H.B. 625. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Kerri Niino

HB-625

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 3:40:13 AM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alec Marentic	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB625, which establishes a nationally certified school psychologist incentive program and appropriates necessary funds for its implementation. This bill is a crucial step in addressing the severe shortage of school psychologists in Hawai'i and ensuring that our keiki receive the comprehensive mental health and educational support they need.

School psychologists in Hawai'i currently face a more than 40% vacancy rate, a crisis that significantly impacts our ability to provide students with the services they deserve. These vacancies are being filled in part by contracting agencies that perform only a fraction of the responsibilities that school psychologists are trained to handle, specifically assessments, and yet they are being paid as much as three times more than school psychologists employed by HIDOE. This disparity highlights an urgent need for competitive compensation to attract and retain school psychologists in our public schools.

The incentive program proposed in HB625 is consistent with what nationally certified teachers and counselors already receive. It rewards those school psychologists who have met the rigorous standards required to achieve national certification, ensuring that those who maintain the highest standard of practice are recognized and compensated appropriately. National certification reflects advanced knowledge and skill in addressing the academic, behavioral, and mental health needs of students, and it is critical that our state incentivizes school psychologists to achieve and maintain this certification.

By establishing this incentive program, Hawai'i can begin to close the significant wage gap between our state and others with comparable costs of living. Currently, Hawai'i's compensation for school psychologists severely lags behind that of other states, making it difficult to attract

professionals to our schools and retain those already employed. With an incentive for nationally certified school psychologists, we can make our state more competitive, addressing the current shortage and helping to ensure that students have access to the full range of services school psychologists provide, from assessment to counseling, consultation, and intervention.

Passing HB625 will not only help to address the critical shortage of school psychologists in Hawai'i but also ensure that our schools are staffed with highly trained professionals who meet the highest standards of their field. I urge you to support this important measure for the future of our students and our schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB625.

Sincerely,

Alec Marentic,

Nationally Certified School Psychologist

HIDOE

HB-625

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:05:42 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayla Doherty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Kayla Doherty and I earnestly support HB-625. I believe attracting qualified school psychs should be a priority for HIDOE and that addressing current shortages through additional funding as part of an incentive program is necessary. I'm a Hawai'i Island resident who has been following this and related bills for several years and I urge this Committee to consider the many hats school psychs wear in supporting our keiki and caring for our communities: they provide crisis-intervention; they train teachers and support staff; and they assess students and help implement academic interventions, among *many* other duties. There are many professions which overlap and can do *some* of this (for example, teachers assess students & administrators provide training & of clinical psychs also respond to crises), but school psychs are thoroughly trained to excel in *all* of this in our schools.

School psychs in Hawai'i currently face a more than 40% vacancy rate, a crisis that significantly impacts our ability to provide students with the services they deserve. These vacancies are being filled in part by contracting agencies that perform only a fraction of the responsibilities that school psychs are trained to handle, specifically assessments, and yet they are being paid as much as three times more than school psychs employed by HIDOE. This disparity highlights an urgent need for competitive compensation to attract and retain school psychs in our public schools. I believe we should compensate them fairly for their roles as education specialists. Thank you.

LATE

HB-625

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 4:24:40 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keri Anacker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Keri Anacker

1/29/25

I am writing in support of HB625. Maintaining a National Certification demonstrates continued professional excellence. For a School Psychologist to hold and maintain their NCSP status, documentation of 75 Professional Development hours must be obtained every 3 years. This makes sure that the School Psychologist remains informed on current best practices and new research/programs in the field. In our state, we recognize exemplary **teachers** who have achieved national board certification. Through the passing of this bill, we will **also be able to recognize School Psychologists** who hold national certification. Additionally, the passing of this bill will have a positive influence on recruitment and retainment of highly qualified mental health professionals in our schools. Speaking from personal experience, many of my friends who used to work here have left the state to seek employment on the mainland where they **are** incentivized to obtain a National Certification. It is imperative that we follow suit, here.

I am also speaking as the Student & Early Career Committee Chair for the Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists and I am always fielding emails from possible new-hires who have a desire to work here. However, in answering their many questions, it pains me to continuously respond that our state does not offer any bonus for holding a National Cert. This fact disappoints many, and is a contributing factor in why we have a hard time recruiting School Psychologists to our state. We should provide equitable incentives for all DOE employees. Thank you for your time.