



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 0626 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Department's Ho'ākea Program.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) strongly supports HB 626.

In collaboration with many of our community partners, the Department started a statewide education initiative called "Ho'ākea: Mauka to Makai Navigating our Future."

Coming out of the pandemic, it was crucial that our students feel connected to their communities. Grounded in the rich history and traditions of Hawaiian voyaging, Ho'ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase 'āina and wa'a and powerful learning platforms that support classroom learning objectives. Ho'ākea activities include connecting students with their community's wa'a and local 'āina organizations by bringing canoes to students to teach Hawaiian navigation and voyaging, mo'olelo, and history.

Over the past two years, Ho'ākea has now expanded beyond just the culminating Ho'ākea event, and now includes professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. The program has reached over 3,200 students, over 1,500 families, nearly 1,300 teachers, and engaged more than 50 organizations across the state.

The \$3,500,000 will allow the Department to pay for Ho'ākea events for students in our seven districts (Central, Hawaii Island, Honolulu, Kauai, Leeward, Maui Nui, and Windward) to attend, as well as provide teacher focused learning opportunities and other student-focused learning experiences. The teacher focused learning opportunities will strengthen teacher practices in connecting classrooms and 'āina by observing and developing 'āina-based units and workshops to teach mo'olelo and history.

The student focused learning experiences are grounded in aloha 'āina and HĀ, that occur in spaces outside the formal classroom setting and time (e.g., summer, spring and winter breaks, after school) and continue to engage students in learning and aloha 'āina.

These funds are critical to support the Department's vision for students to be globally competitive and locally committed and to support the larger mission of igniting 10 million "planetary navigators" to pursue critical and inspiring voyages to ensure a better future for the earth.

Through hand-on learning stations, the mission of Ho'ākea is to inspire students to embrace the "Navigator Mindset" and become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. By providing opportunities for students to touch their wa'a, and through experiences that perpetuate foundational values and perspectives of the canoe (and those who came before us), we strengthen the connections between classroom and our place, and, in so doing, work together to nurture students who are globally competitive and locally committed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 626.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



William V. Brillhante, Jr.
Managing Director

Merrick Nishimoto
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i ~ Office of the Mayor

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 2603 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 • Phone (808) 961-8211 • Fax (808) 961-6553
KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
Phone (808) 323-4444 • Fax (808) 323-4440

Department: Education
Person Testifying: C. Kimo Alameda, PhD
Mayor, County of Hawaii
Regarding: H.B. No. 626
Report Title: Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation
Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho'ākea Program

January 29, 2025

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am C. Kimo Alameda, Mayor of Hawaii County. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

Ho'ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase 'āina and wa'a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa'a and 'āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

Teaching these issues are critical for the economic and environmental future of our Hawai'i. Teaching these issues through 'āina and wa'a are critical to build the "Navigator's Mindset" in our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. **Experiences like those provided through the Ho'ākea program are how we ensure our students are globally competitive and locally committed.**

Our schools want these kinds of experiences. Our teachers exemplify research-based best practices when they connect students' learning to who they are and where they come from. And our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai'i is, while experiencing how special Hawai'i is.

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

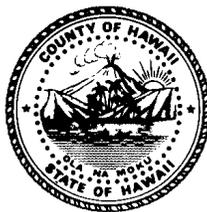
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Kimo Alameda', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

C. Kimo Alameda, PhD



HEATHER L. KIMBALL
COUNCIL DISTRICT 1
(North Hilo, Hāmākua, and portion of
Waimea)



Phone: (808) 961-8828
Fax: (808) 961-8912
Email: Heather.Kimball@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

25 Aupuni Street, Ste. 1402.
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

January 29, 2025

House Committee on Education
Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Honorable Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Submission via online testimony only

RE: **Support of HB 626**

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

As the sitting Council Member for Council District 1, I thank you for the opportunity to submit **testimony in SUPPORT of HB 626**, relating to the appropriation of funds to the Hawai'i Department of Education (HDOE) for the Department's Ho'ākea program, which ensures students and teachers the opportunity to access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

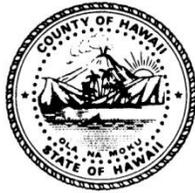
Through foundational values and perspectives of wa'a and 'āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues we experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, and community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core HDOE subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn. The Ho'ākea program yields a better understanding of the critical economic and environmental issues Hawai'i faces for both the teacher and the student. This appropriation provides the opportunity to build what is called a "Navigator's Mindset" for our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers to navigate us into a better future for Hawai'i and beyond.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to encourage the appropriation in HB 626 for HDOE's Ho'ākea program. If you would like to discuss my knowledge of this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

HEATHER L. KIMBALL

C. Kimo Alameda Ph.D.
Mayor



Clayton Honma
Director

Melissa Samura
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

101 Pauahi Street, Suite 6 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

(808) 961-8311 • Fax (808) 961-8411

Email: cohparcs@hawaiicounty.gov

<http://www.hawaiicounty.gov/parks-and-recreation/>

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kalani Kahalioumi
Recreation Division County of Hawaii

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho'ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am Kalani Kahalioumi Recreation Division County of Hawaii. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

Ho'ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase 'āina and wa'a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa'a and 'āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

Teaching these issues are critical for the economic and environmental future of our Hawai'i. Teaching these issues through 'āina and wa'a are critical to build the "Navigator's Mindset" in our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. Experiences like those provided through the Ho'ākea program are how we ensure our students are globally competitive and locally committed.

Our schools want these kinds of experiences. Our teachers exemplify research-based best practices when they connect students' learning to who they are and where they come from. And our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai'i is, while experiencing how special Hawai'i is.

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. *Kalani Kahalioumi*

KINGDOM PATHWAYS



Re: Testimony in **Strong Support of H.B. No. 626**

report Title: Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho'ākea Program

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

I am Carmen Guzman-Simpliciano, Director of Kingdom Pathways. I am writing to express my **strong support of HB 464**, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

Ho'ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase 'āina and wa'a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa'a and 'āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

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We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Carmen Guzman-Simpliciano
Director of Kingdom Pathways



Mālama
Learning
Center

Mālama Learning Center is a non-profit organization based in West Oahu. Our mission is to inspire communities to care for Hawai'i by perpetuating conservation, culture, and sustainability through education.

The Honorable Representative Woodson
The Honorable Members of the Committee of Education

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 626
Relating to Education

Hearing Date: January 30, 2025 at 2:00 pm
Conference Room 309 Via Videoconference

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha Kākou. My name is Pauline Sato and I serve as the Executive Director of the Mālama Learning Center, a private, non-profit environmental education organization primarily serving schools and communities in West O'ahu. I am testifying in strong support of HB 626. This bill will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

Ho'ākea started as an outdoor learning lab, demonstrating how the land ('āina) and canoes (wa'a) can enhance classroom learning. Due to its popularity, the program now offers professional development for teachers and student activities outside of school hours. Since the inception of the Ho'ākea Leeward Program, Mālama Learning Center has been a committed partner, witnessing firsthand the immense benefits it brings to our youth and educators on the Leeward Coast.

Grounded in the values and perspectives of wa'a and 'āina, students explore and address real-world challenges like coastal erosion, food and water security, emergency preparedness, and community resilience. Addressing these critical issues is vital for Hawai'i's economic and environmental well-being.

Using 'āina and wa'a as learning tools is crucial for developing a "Navigator's Mindset" in our students, empowering them to become the future leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers who can guide us toward a brighter future. By connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies, Ho'ākea ignites students' natural curiosity and love of learning. This is supported by research from over 100 studies suggesting this way of learning is a powerful way to teach students, providing transformative learning opportunities and instilling a passion for learning among students of all levels.

We strongly support the Hawai'i Department of Education's ongoing efforts to innovate teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, community, and the future of our beloved Hawai'i. These funds are essential to support their important work.

I urge your respective committees to pass this bill and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Aloha,

Pauline M. Sato

Mālama Learning Center
P.O. Box 1662, Honolulu, Hawai'i 967806
www.malamalearningcenter.org

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Alison Masutani
President and CEO, Mālama ‘Āina Foundation

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho‘ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho‘ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha mai kākou, on behalf of Mālama ‘Āina Foundation, I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Ho‘ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE’s students (and teachers) can access ‘āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai‘i.

Ho‘ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase ‘āina and wa‘a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa‘a and ‘āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

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We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet’s and Hawai‘i’s future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,



Department: Education

Person Testifying: Pā'anaakalā Baybayan Tanaka
Non-profit organization

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the
Ho'ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Ke aloha nui iā kākou, my name is Pā'anaakalā Baybayan Tanaka and I am the Education Director for the Hui O Wa'a Kaulua. We are a Maui based Hawaiian Oceanic voyaging organization. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

Ho'ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase 'āina and wa'a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa'a and 'āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

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On Maui, we received overwhelming positive feedback from teachers praising this unprecedented event because it provided the opportunity for students and teachers to engage with and learn from a network of Hawaiian culturally grounded and 'āina based organizations rooted within their community and across the pae 'āina of Hawai'i. Our teachers exemplify research-based best practices when they connect students' learning to who they are and where they come from. And our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai'i is, while experiencing how special Hawai'i is.

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Na'u nō me ke aloha a me ka oia'i'o,



Pā'anaakalā Tanaka

HB-626

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 10:23:43 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgette Stevens	Kaʻala Farm	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Georgette Nohea Stevens, Kaʻala Farm

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Hoʻākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Hoʻākea Program

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

I am Georgette Nohea Stevens with Kaʻala Farm. I am writing to express our strong *kakoʻo* (support) of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawaiʻi Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Hoʻākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE’s students (and teachers) can access *ʻāina*-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawaiʻi.

Hoʻākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase *ʻāina* and *waʻa* as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of *waʻa* and *ʻāina*, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

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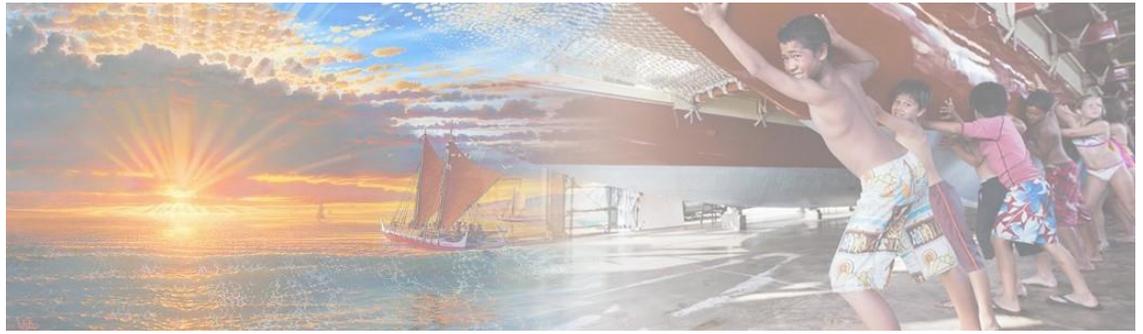
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our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai‘i is, while experiencing how special Hawai‘i is.

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet’s and Hawai‘i’s future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Georgette Nohea Stevens



2025 Board of Directors

January 29, 2025

President

Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom

Vice President

Brad Scott

Secretary / Cultural Advisor

Micah Kamohoali'i

Treasurer

Clifford Libed

Directors

Cole Slater
Wayne Moniz

Cultural Advisors (Directors)

Clifford Naeole
Micah Kamohoali'i
Makalapua Kanuha

Captain

Timi Gilliom

Education Director

Kala Tanaka

Executive Director

Beth Montalvo

Address:

PO Box 330258
Kahului HI 96733-0258
808.205.7412
www.huiowaa.org
huiowaaoffice@gmail.com

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Beth Montalvo – Hui O Wa'a Kaulua - Executive Director
H.B. No. 626

Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation
Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho'ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee,

Aloha, I am Beth Montalvo – Hui O Wa'a Kaulua - Executive Director, I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

Ho'ākea began as an outdoor based classroom to showcase 'āina and wa'a as learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers & student programs during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa'a and 'āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water & food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, & history to core subjects like math, science, & social studies engages their natural curiosity & excitement to learn.

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We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Beth Montalvo
Executive Director



2025 Board of Directors

January 29, 2025

President

Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom – Hui O Wa'a Kaulua - President

H.B. No. 626

Vice President

Brad Scott

Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation

Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho'ākea Program

**Secretary /
Cultural Advisor**

Micah Kamohoali'i

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee,

Treasurer

Clifford Libed

Aloha, I am Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom and am writing this on behalf of the board of directors for Hui O Wa'a Kaulua (on the left) to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

Directors

Cole Slater
Wayne Moniz

**Cultural Advisors
(Directors)**

Clifford Naeole
Micah Kamohoali'i
Makalapua Kanuha

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Captain

Timi Gilliom

Education Director

Kala Tanaka

Teaching these issues are critical for the economic & environmental future of our Hawai'i. Teaching these issues through 'āina and wa'a are critical to build the "Navigator's Mindset" in our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. **Experiences like those provided through the Ho'ākea program are how we ensure our students are globally competitive and locally committed.**

Executive Director

Beth Montalvo

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Address:

PO Box 330258
Kahului HI 96733-0258
808.205.7412
www.huiowaa.org
huiowaaoffice@gmail.com

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom
President

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kuleana Coral Restoration (non-profit organization)

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program;
Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for
the Ho'ākea Program



Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am submitting testimony on behalf of Kuleana Coral Restoration, a west O'ahu based non-profit organization that focuses on restoring and caring for our coral reefs. **We are writing to express our strong support of HB 464**, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access 'āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai'i.

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Teaching these issues are critical for the economic and environmental future of our Hawai'i. Teaching these issues through 'āina and wa'a are critical to build the "Navigator's Mindset" in

our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. **The platform this event offers our organization has been instrumental in sharing progress at our restoration sites at Pōka'i bay, helping us inform community members of all ages and backgrounds about the importance of corals reefs as well as what we can do to get involved and help support them.**

As a participating organization, we have seen the positive impact of this program first hand and how engaging it has been for students and community members alike. Having the opportunity to bring participating organizations together to network and learn from each other continues to strengthen the overall community. Our schools want these kinds of experiences. Our teachers exemplify research-based best practices when they connect students' learning to who they are and where they come from. And our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai'i is, while experiencing how special Hawai'i is.

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community - and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alike Garcia', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alike Garcia

Executive Director

LATE

HB-626

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 2:15:27 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nohea Farmer	Hui O Waa Kaulua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Nohea Farmer

Education Coordinator, Instructor, and Sailing Crew Member for

Hui O Wa`a Kaulua, 501c3

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho`ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho`ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am Nohea Farmer, and work for the non-profit, Hui O Wa`a Kaulua on Maui. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai`i Department of Education`s (HIDOE) Ho`ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE`s students (and teachers) can access `āina-based, and wa`a based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai`i.

This past year in September of 2024 I had to honor to help plan, and coordinate the Mauka to Makai- Ho`ākea program here on Maui. This week-long event was able to bring the students of Maui district, including Molokai and Hana, together in a way that I have never seen before. This program which combined many of Hawaii`s organizations proved make a successful impact to our community as we are still getting responses from our students, teachers, and parents to this day.

It is evident how this program is much needed for our schools during this time where many families and teachers within our communities are already feeling the pressure to relocate to other

states. The Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program helps to also provide a sense of connection and pride to our community, and cultures.

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet's and Hawai'i's future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Nohea Farmer

LATE

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Macie Tawata
Maui Huliau Foundation - Project Manager

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho‘ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho‘ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am Macie Tawata representing Maui Huliau Foundation. I am writing to express my **strong support** of HB 626, which will set aside funds for the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Ho‘ākea program. These funds are essential in ensuring that HIDOE’s students (and teachers) can access ‘āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai‘i.

As an organization dedicated to environmental education for our youth, we have seen firsthand the profound impact of ‘āina-based experiences on students across Hawai‘i. Programs like Ho‘ākea not only enhance academic learning, but also foster a deep aloha and understanding of our ‘āina, culture, and communities that sustain us. These experiences empower students to become stewards of this place, instilling a sense of responsibility to ensure its continuation for generations after them.

Maui Huliau was honored to be a part of the core planning team for Ho‘ākea Maui, working alongside the DOE, ‘āina-based educators, wa‘a organizations, community members, and teachers to help create these incredible learning opportunities for students that were rooted in Hawai‘i. We have witnessed how these experiences can inspire and deepen student’s understanding of not only this place, but the world around them. Through engagement with ‘āina and wa‘a educators, students not only gained knowledge about traditional and foundational values like mālama ‘āina and mālama kai, but were also encouraged to investigate modern day issues like climate change impacts, food security, and land & water rights. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages students’ natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

By funding the Ho‘ākea program, the state is making a vital investment in our youth and ensuring that both students and teachers have equitable access to meaningful, place-based learning opportunities that support academic achievement and the development of future environmental stewards.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 626 to support the continued growth and success of the Ho‘ākea program.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.



HB-626

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 3:17:25 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rebecca Inaba	Laʻiʻōpua 2020	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Rebecca Kawehi Inaba, and I am the Executive Director of Laʻiʻōpua 2020. I am writing to express Laʻiʻōpua 2020’s strong support for HB 626, which seeks to provide funding to the Hawaiʻi Department of Education (HIDOE) for the Hoʻākea Program. This funding is essential to expanding opportunities for students and teachers to engage in ʻāina-based learning that is deeply rooted in Hawaiian culture and values.

At its core, the Hoʻākea Program provides unique learning experiences that connect students to their environment and community while integrating important classroom concepts. What began as an outdoor learning lab has grown to include professional development for teachers and extracurricular opportunities for students. Through hands-on activities grounded in the values of waʻa and ʻāina, students explore critical issues such as food and water security, coastal erosion, emergency preparedness, and community resilience. These experiences not only engage students in STEM learning but also inspire them to think critically about the challenges our communities face today.

Hawaiʻi’s future depends on how well we prepare our students to lead. By connecting classroom learning to place, history, and culture, Hoʻākea provides a pathway for our keiki to develop leadership skills, stewardship values, and innovative thinking. Programs like this are how we ensure students are well-prepared to thrive both globally and locally while staying committed to Hawaiʻi’s unique identity.

As a community organization, Laʻiʻōpua 2020 sees the tremendous value of these programs. Teachers who incorporate ʻāina-based approaches inspire students to engage with learning in ways that are meaningful and transformative. Families value these opportunities because they allow children to explore and appreciate the richness of Hawaiʻi’s culture and environment—something no other program offers.

Investing in this program through HB 626 is a step toward ensuring that HIDOE can continue to provide these critical learning experiences for students and teachers across the state. These funds will help sustain and grow this program, which is vital for Hawaiʻi’s educational future.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share our support for this important initiative.

HB-626

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 7:56:51 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Spencer	Laiopua 2020	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Diane Spencer, retired principal, currently working for non profit La‘iopua 2020

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho‘ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho‘ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am Diane Spencer, retired teacher and administrator for 33 years with the DOE. I am currently working with La‘i‘opua 2020 as a support person to help set up Ho‘akea and ‘āina-based education activities in the school. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Ho‘ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE’s students (and teachers) can access ‘āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai‘i.

Ho‘ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase ‘āina and wa‘a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa‘a and ‘āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

Teaching these issues are critical for the economic and environmental future of our Hawai‘i. Teaching these issues through ‘āina and wa‘a are critical to build the “Navigator’s Mindset” in our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. Experiences like those provided through the Ho‘ākea program are how we ensure our students are globally competitive and locally committed.

Our schools want these kinds of experiences. Our teachers exemplify research-based best practices when they connect students’ learning to who they are and where they come from. And our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai‘i is, while experiencing how special Hawai‘i is.

We stand behind the HDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet’s and Hawai‘i’s future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Diane Spencer

HB-626

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 10:03:15 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ʻIhilani Garcia	Hui O Waʻa Kaulua	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Department: Education

Person Testifying: ʻIhilani Garcia Education Coordinator for Hui O Waʻa Kaulua

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Hoʻākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Hoʻākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha I am ʻIhilani Garcia an Education Coordinator with Hui O Waʻa Kaulua from Maui. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawaiʻi Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Hoʻākea program. Funding that will provide learning experiences for teachers, students and community members to have access to ʻāina and waʻa based learning, critical for the economic and enviornmental future of Hawaiʻi. Connecting students and community to their heritage, culture and identity as Hawaiians living in Hawaiʻi.

This past September of 2024 we were able to reach 1,250 students from all over Maui Nui with *Hoʻākea Mauka to Makai: Navigating our future*. Here students and teachers were able to experience ʻāina and waʻa based ways of learning that gave them a sense of identity and how they were able to bring these teachings back into their classrooms, or how they can help contribute to their community. Here they learned about our watersheds, coastal erosion, native birds, traditional navigation and so much more. Connecting place, sense of self and culture, back to their cores that they are learning in the classroom like math, science, social studies and language. Teaching students and community that these practices and issues are critical for our enviornment and people here in Hawaiʻi. Experiences like these provided through the Hoʻākea program are how we ensure our students are going to be good stewards and leaders, ensuring that they can "Navigate" themselves and Hawaiʻi into a better future. Our students and teachers are yearning for these kind of experiences and teachings as it is not taught regularly in the

classrooms, they have no space to learn about how special Hawai‘i is, not just as a place but as a people as well.

We stand behind the HODOE as they continue to innovate ways of teaching and learning that contribute to community, students, teachers and the environment of our planet and Hawai‘i. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

‘Ihilani Garcia

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Mieko Māhealani Treaster
Program Director, Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho‘ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho‘ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, my name is Māhealani Treaster, project director at Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy and one of the community partners who works with the DOE through the Ho‘ākea initiative. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Ho‘ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE’s students (and teachers) can access ‘āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai‘i.

Micronesian Master Navigator Mau Piailug taught us that the canoe is our mother and that when we are on the wa‘a, or canoe, we are family. The family values we foster on the wa‘a are a powerful tool in education, teaching all who touch the wa‘a about the power of relationships. The relationships formed through Ho‘ākea programming help students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, and community resilience. When students learn core subjects like math, science, and social studies through something they have a relationship with, like place, culture, and history, they are more likely to engage in the content with a natural curiosity and an excitement to learn.

Relationships with each other and with ‘āina, or Hawai‘i, are critical for the economic and environmental future of our home. Students must care about Hawai‘i and each other to become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. **Experiences like those provided through Ho‘ākea are how we ensure our students are globally competitive and locally committed.**

Our schools want these kinds of experiences. In a survey to the teachers, staff, and chaperones, from one of our most recent Ho‘ākea events, one thing that resonated with participants was , “how engaged the students were with the different organizations and what they had to share with our students. It is always nice to be able to have hands-on and tangible experiences that our students can connect with who they are and the community in which they live.”

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet’s and Hawai‘i’s future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mieko Māhealani Treaster

Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kahanu Keawe
Ho‘ākea Kaua‘i Coordinator

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho‘ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the Ho‘ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee:

Aloha, ‘O wau ‘o Kahanu Keawe, Ho‘ākea Kaua‘i Coordinator.

Support create impactful life changing experiences that inspire our keiki and community. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Ho‘ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE’s students (and teachers) can access ‘āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai‘i.

Ho‘ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase ‘āina and wa‘a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa‘a and ‘āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engages their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

Teaching these issues are critical for the economic and environmental future of our Hawai‘i. Teaching these issues through ‘āina and wa‘a are critical to build the “Navigator’s Mindset” in our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers" that can navigate us into a better future. **Experiences like those provided through the Ho‘ākea program are how we ensure our students are globally competitive and locally committed.**

Our schools want these kinds of experiences. Our teachers exemplify research-based best practices when they connect students’ learning to who they are and where they come from. And our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai‘i is, while experiencing how special Hawai‘i is.

We stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet’s and Hawai‘i’s future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony. Kahanu Keawe



Department: Education

Person Testifying: A. Iwalani Harris
District Educational Specialist,

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho‘ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriate funds to the Department of Education for the Ho‘ākea Program

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am, Iwalani Harris. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s (HIDOE) Ho‘ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE’s students (and teachers) can access ‘āina-based experiences that connect our students to the land, community, and culture of Hawai‘i.

Ho‘ākea began as an outdoor learning lab to showcase ‘āina and wa‘a as powerful learning platforms that deepen understanding of classroom learning objectives. Due to demand, the program has expanded to include professional learning opportunities for teachers and student programming during non-school hours. Using foundational values and perspectives of wa‘a and ‘āina, students learn about, explore, and troubleshoot contemporary issues they experience daily – like coastal erosion, water and food security, emergency preparedness, and community resilience. Connecting place, culture, and history to core subjects like math, science, and social studies engage their natural curiosity and excitement to learn.

Teaching these issues is critical for the economic and environmental future of our Hawai‘i. Teaching these issues through ‘āina and wa‘a is critical to building the “Navigator’s Mindset” in our students as they become the leaders, stewards, and critical thinkers” that can navigate us into a better future. **Experiences like those provided through the Ho‘ākea program are how we ensure our students are globally competitive and locally committed.**

Our schools want these kinds of experiences. Our teachers exemplify research-based best practices when they connect students’ learning to who they are and where they come from. Our families value these opportunities because there is nowhere else where their child can learn about how special Hawai‘i is while experiencing how special Hawai‘i is.

I have worked alongside State leads and community partners to support Hō‘ākea and have personally seen keiki engaged in these events. I stand behind the HIDOE as they continue to innovate their teaching and learning to meet the needs of our students, families, and community – and our planet’s and Hawai‘i’s future. Appropriating these funds is a critical step towards supporting them in doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Department: Education

Person Testifying: Michele Ebersole
Community member

Regarding: H.B. No. 626

Report Title: Department of Education; Ho'ākea Program; Appropriation

Purpose: Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for the
Ho'ākea Program



Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee:

Aloha, I am Michele Ebersole, community member and educator. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 464, which will set aside funds for the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE) Ho'ākea program. These funds will help ensure that HIDOE's students (and teachers) can access learning experiences that connect our students to the land, community and culture of Hawai'i.

In my role as an education professor at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, I have witnessed the powerful impact and the benefits that learning about place, land, community and culture of Hawai'i can have upon students. I have been an educator for over thirty years and have worked for the Hawai'i Department of Education and the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Over the years, I have taught and worked with many teachers on curriculum delivery, instructional methods, and pedagogical skills; however, it is my firm belief that through 'āina-based programs like Ho'ākea deep and transformational learning can occur.

I have visited the outdoor learning lab where the Ho'ākea program is housed with university education students a number of times and have been very impressed with the how organizers have taken content from different disciplines and carefully integrated it into a meaningful experience for students and teachers. It is exciting to see how the knowledge base, wisdom and stories from volunteers from the community are also highlighted along with traditional content information. Teachers are given knowledge, information, and skills to be able to implement curriculum that is relevant and impactful for learners. Ho'ākea showcases how to deliver instruction in ways that help our youth learn to develop a deep sense of responsibility and care for Hawai'i's future.

There are many places where teachers can take students to learn about the natural environment, but the Ho'ākea Program offers an unparalleled wealth of resources for public school educators in our community. It is critical for teachers in Hawai'i's public schools to have access and resource support to engage and inspire their students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.