



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

Date: 02/04/2025

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0637 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literary instruction.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 637 which provides a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to improving literacy outcomes. This bill mandates the use of universal screeners in early grades (kindergarten through grade 3) to ensure early identification of students with dyslexia and other language and literacy challenges. Early identification, paired with targeted interventions, can significantly impact a child's future by providing the necessary support to build a strong foundation in literacy.

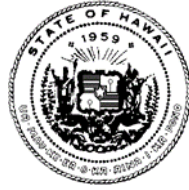
Through Hawai'i's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (HMTSS), the bill ensures that instruction and interventions are evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, focused, and targeted. Additionally, it strengthens professional development by equipping educators with effective, evidence-based structured literacy strategies. The bill also enhances teacher preparation programs in Hawai'i, ensuring that future educators are trained in evidence-based reading methods and have monitored experience demonstrating their effectiveness in implementing these approaches.

To successfully implement these initiatives, the Department respectfully requests \$750,000 in recurring funds to support mandated dyslexia sensitive universal screeners. This investment is critical to identifying literacy challenges early, closing literacy gaps, and ensuring that all students, especially those with dyslexia and other language-based learning difficulties, receive the targeted interventions needed for success. Every student deserves the opportunity to become a proficient

reader, and HB 637 is a vital step toward making that a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWE LAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 3, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 637 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309 & Videoconferencing, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure, provides comments, and defers to the Department of Education.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Act is to support students with dyslexia and students with language and literacy challenges by:

- (1) Requiring schools to administer Department of Education-approved dyslexia-sensitive universal screening as a part of the universal screening process;
- (2) Implement evidence-based interventions for students who are identified as having dyslexia and students who are flagged as having language and literacy challenges through the Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports;
- (3) Provide professional development for teachers to increase the implementation of structured literacy instruction; and
- (4) Support pre-service teacher programs in training their general and special education teacher candidates in structured literacy instruction.

The DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) recognizes the importance of early identification and intervention in addressing literacy challenges and appreciates the intent of this bill to strengthen the support systems available to students. Ensuring that all students,

regardless of learning differences, have access to the tools they need to succeed is a shared priority.

As an agency dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving meaningful employment and independence, DVR acknowledges the long-term benefits of strong literacy skills. We appreciate the bill's focus on universal screening, evidence-based interventions, and professional development, which align with broader efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students.

We defer to the Department of Education's expertise in determining the best approaches for implementation. We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Department and the Legislature in addressing the diverse needs of Hawaii's students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Woodson, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB637 Relating to Education

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB637**, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literary instruction.

The historical literacy rates in Hawaii once positioned the state as one of the most literate nations in the world, with 81% of the population speaking at least two languages and reading proficiently. However, as of 2024, only about half of Hawaii's students are proficient in reading. Research consistently shows that students who do not achieve reading proficiency by third grade face significantly reduced academic and career opportunities. This bill directly addresses these challenges by mandating the use of dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners, ensuring early identification of at-risk students and timely, evidence-based interventions.

Students with intellectual and or developmental disabilities (I/DD), who often face challenges in language processing, memory, and comprehension, will benefit significantly from HB 637 as often people can have co-occurring disabilities Early identification through dyslexia-sensitive universal screening will allow for timely and targeted interventions, preventing them from falling behind due to undiagnosed reading difficulties.. Additionally, professional development for educators will ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills to support students with diverse learning needs. Future educators will also receive structured literacy training as part of their teacher preparation programs, ensuring they enter classrooms ready to provide effective literacy instruction for all students in Hawaii's public school system.

As Hawaii remains the only state without dyslexia-specific legislation, this bill is essential in closing the achievement gap, promoting equity, and ensuring that all students receive the literacy instruction and support they need to succeed academically and beyond.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 637**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

January 31, 2025

Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson,
Chair, House Committee on Education

Honorable Representative Trish La Chica,
Vice Chair, House Committee on Education

Regarding: **Support for HB637 Relating to Education**

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

Please accept this testimony in strong support of HB637, which requires all public schools to implement universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities, and mandates the provision of professional learning opportunities to support the implementation of structured literacy instruction.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawai'i has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

Over two thirds of Hawai'i's students do not read at a proficiently,¹ yet there are insufficient early detection policies and standardized assessment regulations in Hawai'i to address students at risk of having dyslexia. Hawai'i is the only state without dyslexia-specific laws related to student support.² This void is allowing many students in Hawai'i to fall behind, as their needs are not being accurately identified and supported.

Research underscores that students who are not proficient readers by third grade face long-term academic and career challenges. Students who are not identified as struggling before grade three and brought up to proficiency have significantly lower rates of success in the future, are four times more likely not to graduate from high school on time and have higher rates of future incarceration and other negative outcomes.³⁻⁴ Students need proper intervention methods that are scientifically based as early as possible to ensure their success. Many states have already seen the need to adopt policies that address students with dyslexia, which makes up one in five

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\), 1998–2024 Reading Assessments](#) Hawaii Snapshot

² National Council on Teacher Quality: [Hawaii: Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation of the Science of Reading](#)

³ Study: [Third Grade Reading Predicts Later High School Graduation](#)

⁴ Governors Early Literacy Connection: [Early Literacy Connection to Incarceration](#)



students.⁵ It is imperative that Hawai'i takes steps to identify our struggling readers and help our keiki achieve better outcomes.

This bill addresses these issues head-on, moving schools away from the “wait to fail” method, whereby students with dyslexia are not identified until they have experienced prolonged reading failure. Research has shown that the wait to fail framework is problematic for multiple reasons, including the negative impact reading challenges can have on the emotional well-being of struggling students and the difficulty students face in meeting grade-level expectations when reading interventions are initiated in later elementary school.⁶

HB637 also codifies the elements of a scientifically-based assessment tool, including core elements such as phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding and encoding skills, and rapid naming. Using an appropriately comprehensive tool will ensure the creation of a holistic profile of our students in Hawai'i, equipping teachers to address their specific needs.

Finally, by requiring professional learning opportunities around supporting students with dyslexia for educators and pre-service educators, HB637 ensures that teachers will be equipped to understand and respond to students' needs in a way that aligns with evidence-based practices.

HawaiiKidsCAN has the following recommendation for an amendment:

- **Implementation of Data Collection and Reporting Protocols:** Include that schools “establish a system for collecting data on students with dyslexia, regularly report on the effectiveness of dyslexia interventions and programs, and conduct a periodic review of policies and practices.” Schools should also “include dyslexia-specific interventions in Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and ensure that students with dyslexia receive appropriate accommodations and support.”

By passing HB637, Hawai'i can ensure that all students, including those with dyslexia and other literacy challenges, are supported in realizing their human right to literacy.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Erica Nakanishi-Stanis
Advocacy Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

⁵ University of Michigan: [Debunking the Myths about Dyslexia](#)

⁶ [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines](#), Massachusetts Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education

Renaissance

See Every Student.

February 3, 2025

The Honorable Justin Woodson
Chair, House Education Committee

The Honorable Trish La Chica
Member, House Education Committee

Written Testimony in Support for HB637
Screening for Risk of Dyslexia

Dear Chairman Woodson and Representative La Chica,

My name is Scott Montgomery, Vice President for Government Affairs for Renaissance Learning. We write today in support of HB637 and the adoption of universal screening tools for students in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade to identify and support students at risk of Dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Renaissance Learning agrees that universal screenings should be considered part of a state's comprehensive instructional strategy and should be used by educators like other types of formative and summative assessments to inform individualized instruction, measure a pupil's progress, identify pupil learning needs, and enable parents and educators to discuss pupil needs in a more informed way.

Our own Renaissance research and other early literacy research is clear and unequivocal—early identification and interventions are critical in addressing and preventing reading problems (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Screening tools support efforts to accurately identify students who are at risk for developing reading difficulties and interventions with evidence-based early literacy instructional strategies and materials improves literacy outcomes for pupils at risk of, and with, reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Dyslexia is the most common learning disability; however, many pupils on the dyslexia spectrum struggle every day to read without proper identification and support. By screening all pupils for risk of reading difficulties early, the State of Hawaii can help families and educators achieve the best learning and life outcomes for all pupils and close academic achievement gaps.

Screening tools like Renaissance's Star Early Literacy Suite of assessments - brief standards-based assessments (completed by students, on average, in less than 10 minutes) - measure student performance throughout grades K–3 and provides teachers with valuable information about early skill acquisition along a continuum of expectations.

Additionally, data from the Star Early Literacy suite helps teachers intervene at the start of a student's formal learning, which is especially helpful for students who enter schooling lacking the literacy experiences and foundational skills that help to ensure early literacy development takes root.

Across the country, states, school districts, and local schools have benefited from the data and actionable information provided by early diagnostic assessments like Star. We believe HB637 provides those same opportunities for Hawaiian students by ensuring that all public schools will conduct such screenings and therefore identify students at risk of having a specific learning disability, such as Dyslexia, to provide for identification of and support for these students.

Renaissance Learning supports the Legislature's desired outcome of providing such screenings to the students Hawaii and stands ready to support your work in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Scott Montgomery
Vice President, Government Affairs
Renaissance Learning
scott.montgomery@renaissance.com
Phone: 319.400.6468



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

February 4, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB637: Relating to Education

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

From: Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick, Co-chairs, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii

Date: February 4, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

Re: HB637: Relating to Education

Position: Strong Support

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

We, Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick, Co-chairs of the Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii, strongly support HB637, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literary instruction.

Key Points of HB637:

1. **Dyslexia-Sensitive Universal Screenings:** Mandates the implementation of universal screenings that are sensitive to dyslexia.
2. **Evidence-Based Interventions:** Requires the use of evidence-based interventions to support students with dyslexia.
3. **Professional Development:** Offers professional development for teachers on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions.
4. **Support for Pre-Teacher Programs:** Supports pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literary instruction.

Arguments in Support:

1. **Early Identification and Support:** Implementing dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings ensures early identification of students with dyslexia, allowing for timely and effective interventions. This early support is crucial for the academic success and well-being of these students.

2. **Evidence-Based Interventions:** Utilizing evidence-based interventions ensures that students with dyslexia receive the most effective support possible. These interventions are grounded in research and have been proven to improve literacy outcomes for students with dyslexia.
3. **Professional Development for Teachers:** Providing professional development on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions equips teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively support students with dyslexia. This investment in teacher training ultimately benefits all students.
4. **Support for Pre-Teacher Programs:** Supporting pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction ensures that future educators are well-prepared to address the needs of students with dyslexia. This proactive approach helps build a strong foundation for literacy education in Hawaii.

In conclusion, we urge the Committee to pass HB637. This bill represents a significant and necessary step towards supporting students with dyslexia and ensuring that all students have access to the resources they need for a quality education. We believe that with the implementation of HB637, Hawaii can lead the way in providing a supportive and effective educational environment for our students.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick

Co-chairs, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii



Date: February 3, 2025

To: House Committee on Education
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
And members of the Committee

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for HB637, which would implement a Department of Education approved dyslexia-sensitive universal screener

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS strongly supports passage of HB637, which would support students with dyslexia and students with language and literacy challenges.

Currently, just over half of Hawaii's students are reading proficiently. To improve student reading proficiency, it is necessary to address the root causes that contribute to the present levels of poor reading proficiency rates. A proactive and systematic approach is required to achieve high literacy rates for all students. Presently, the department of education is striving to address poor reading proficiency rates by administering a universal screener at the beginning, middle, and end of the year for all students from kindergarten to grade nine. The purpose of this universal screening is to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulty or failure, and to provide evidence-based interventions to support these students, in addition to core-structured literacy instruction. However, not all universal screeners are able to detect or identify students who may have certain underlying language challenges that impact learning. This is problematic because students with dyslexia or other developmental language disorders may need more intensive support or a more individualized intervention program to address the causes of their reading challenges. Unfortunately, Hawaii is the only state in the country that lacks dyslexia-specific laws to support students in this area.

Evidence shows that students who are not identified and brought to reading proficiency by third grade face significantly greater challenges to succeeding in the future. At the same time, a substantial body of evidence indicates that, with effective assessment and instruction, almost all students can learn to read. This includes students with language and literacy challenges and students who have dyslexia.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HB 637** which would support students with dyslexia and students with language and literacy challenges.

LATE

HB-637

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:48:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lourdes Vergara Marcelo	Lou's Quality Home Health Care Services, LLC , Advanced Care Training, LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB 637 , Relating to Education.

I firmly support the HB by Representative Trish La Chica of District 37.

As a parent, we have heard of children or child being ostracized ior teased because he or she is lagging in school can not read , " slow," mental (retarded) , stupid , moron ."

Sensitive screening, finding the cause of the " slow reading ,speech impediments , of a chld may lead to the early diagnosis of Dyslexia. Dyslexia , which is caractereized by slow talking, unable to learn new words or just slow in reading . I firmly believe a child will benefit from an early diagnosis , screening, with the 110 % support of the parents , teachers or guardians . Success stories after courses of therapy by specialized instructors or teachers will happen . Please have the Sensitive Screenign process in the public school for Dyslexia .

I support HB 637 .

Thank you .

Lourdes Vergara Marcelo, RN

Mililani, Hawaii

Tel: 808 623 7109

HB-637

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 7:32:40 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Kawasaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I had 2 children who had learning disabilities and suspected dyslexia. But without definitive testing it was difficult to obtain the special education they needed.

HB-637

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:32:13 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Veray	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I totally support this bill and the language.

HB-637

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:33:20 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rick Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this important legislation. This will ensure those youth with dyslexia are not left behind. Mahalo, Rick Collins

HB-637

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:24:04 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rita Kama-Kimura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

... support!