



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

Date: 03/12/2025

Time: 03:00 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0961, HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on an island other than Oahu. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The proposed certified librarian positions would provide expert guidance and support to school library staff (especially those without certified librarians) to work in partnership with teachers, and ensure that materials are curated in alignment with the Department's library material selection guidelines. HB961, HD1, is supportive of Department goals and objectives including:

- Enhancing student achievement through improved literacy and research skills;
- Developing information literacy and critical thinking to prepare students for success in a digital world;
- Encouraging a love of reading by expanding access to diverse and engaging library materials;
- Supporting teachers and curriculum integration by incorporating research and media literacy into instruction; and
- Providing equitable access to print and online resources to ensure all students have the tools they need for academic success.

A challenge the Department may encounter if this bill passes, would be the ability to hire a certified librarian. The teacher transfer period occurs in the previous spring for the following school year. Therefore, hiring after the transfer period would likely be from a new hire list which may or may not have qualified teacher librarians.

While the Department appreciates the support of school libraries and the appropriation in this measure, we ask that it does not adversely affect the priorities identified in the Department's Governor-approved budget.

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

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:48:22 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Bess	Testifying for Bess Press	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha,

Aloha & thank you for taking my testimony on HB961 HD1.

My name is Benjamin “Buddy” Bess and I am the founder of Bess Press a Hawaii based book publishing company started in 1979. Bess Press publishes and/or distributes print and online books, maps, beginning & supplementary reading materials for preschool and K-12 public and private schools. Our publications are entirely Hawaii and Pacific focused with an increased focus on Micronesia and early childhood ed materials We have a virtual platform that schools can subscribe to for key textbooks (print or in e format) and almost all of our authors, illustrators and photographers are regional. . We also distribute books for Kamehameha Schools, Bishop Museum, UH Press and other non profits like aha Punana Leo, Keiki O ka a’ina and Partners in Development as well as others. We are based in Kaimuki where we host author events, school children’s books shops and as part of the building have a small independent bookstore called “da Shop.” In short we are all about the book for Hawaii.

After working in publishing in the early 70’s I moved to Hawaii in 1976. . In 1978 the con-con was convened and one of their main tenants was to mandate that Hawaiian history, language and culture to be integrated into the DOE curriculum. At that time I was selling books, etc. to schools and libraries for mainland publishers visiting educational accounts through Hawaii. As a result of educators (primarily school librarians) encouraging me I decided to start Bess Press in 1979 to develop and distribute Hawaiian history, language and cultural materials for public schools in Hawaii.

For 25 years I would anually visit every school on every island in Hawaii selling the few books I had published and/or distributed. My main contact and the person most knowledgeable about the students needs for reading, writing, research, budgets, etc.. was the school librarian. The school librarians were able to guide me in genre, title, readability, budgetary and “local” community needs, etc.. This personal one on one communication gave me foundational knowledge and confidence to find authors/artists who had content that the schools needed. Principles and classroom teachers were usually too busy to meet but I could always find a break to speak with school librarians one on one. They more than anybody had/have a grasp on the different classroom curriculum needs and their input guided me in developing and publishing materials in print, maps and now in digital formats. To see the decimation of Hawaii’s public schools librarians is untenable in my personal opinion.

Consider that almost all the private schools in Hawaii have multifocused "Learning Centers" which are in essence school libraries with real and digital offerings. In some cases the library is the only place that a student can do individual research and reflect on their studies. School libraries and school librarians are part of a well balanced school.

On a personal note I have had an amazingly gifted professional life which can be directly attributed to public schools librarians.

I would strongly urge senate and house members to consider passing bill HB961 and to provide future funding for all public schools to have a dedicated school librarian.

Sincerely/Mahalo,

Benjamin "Buddy" Bess

Publisher, The Bess Press



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB 961 HD 1 - Related to Education (Librarian Pilot)**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Hearing: **Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 3:00pm, Room 229**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association stands in strong support of HB 691 HD 1 which establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

Only 29% of the 258 Public Schools in Hawai'i have a licensed librarian. Our members have shared stories of under-utilized school libraries that lack true librarians. Many schools opt to hire an Educational Assistant to check-out books to students, but this doesn't keep a school's library resources up to date, provide research assistance to faculty and students, or help schools navigate the vast issues with technology, misinformation, and more.

The HSTA believes that school librarians are essential to a functioning democracy for many of the same reasons school libraries themselves are vital. Librarians are the key to unlocking the potential of those resources and maximizing their impact.

Here's why school librarians are so critical:

Expert Curators and Guides: Librarians are trained professionals who curate diverse and relevant collections of resources, including books, digital media, and databases. They help students navigate this wealth of information, finding what they need for their studies and sparking curiosity about new topics. This is crucial in a world of information overload, where the ability to discern credible sources is paramount.

Information Literacy Advocates: Librarians teach students how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively. They equip students with the critical thinking skills necessary to distinguish fact from opinion, identify bias, and understand the difference between reliable and unreliable sources. These skills are foundational for informed participation in a democratic society.

Champions of Intellectual Freedom: Librarians defend the right to access information and diverse perspectives, even those that might be controversial. They foster an environment where students can explore different ideas and develop their own informed opinions, which is essential for a healthy democracy.

Technology Integration Specialists: Librarians are often at the forefront of integrating technology into education. They help students develop digital literacy skills, including online research, digital citizenship, and responsible use of technology. These skills are increasingly important in the digital age and crucial for civic engagement.

Collaborative Partners: Librarians work with teachers to integrate library resources and information literacy skills into the curriculum. They collaborate with teachers to design research projects, provide targeted resources, and support student learning across all subjects.

Personalized Learning Support: Librarians provide individualized support to students, helping them find resources, develop research skills, and explore their interests. They create a welcoming and inclusive space where all students feel supported in their learning journey. This personalized attention can be especially beneficial for students from underserved communities.

Community Builders: School librarians often create programs and events that engage the wider school community, such as book clubs, author visits, and workshops. They foster a love of reading and learning, contributing to a more informed and engaged citizenry.

In short, school librarians are not just keepers of books; they are educators, information specialists, and advocates for intellectual freedom. They play a vital role in preparing students to be informed, engaged, and responsible citizens in a democracy.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

Bill: HB 961 - Relating to Education - School Librarian Pilot
Senate Committee on Education Hearing 3/12/2025
Submitted by: Meera Garud

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee:

I am in **support for HB961 HD1**, and respectfully offer suggestions for clarification.

All students and teachers benefit from having a certified school librarian:

- School librarians collaborate with teachers to create meaningful, project-based learning experiences where students learn lifelong skills like critical thinking, media literacy, information literacy, and problem solving.
- The 2020 Hawai'i State Literacy Plan recommends the state ensure that schools have school libraries and school librarians.
- The newest DOE Strategic Plan stresses the importance of ensuring that "all students" have access to high-quality learning and resources.

However, **only one in four schools has a certified school librarian** (see next page for data). This bill would help address this issue by appropriating funds for a two-year librarian pilot program, where the librarian would serve multiple schools in a complex. I am raising questions that I hope will be addressed if this bill passes.

Effectiveness: Students and teachers will have split attention from the librarian. Some schools have not had a librarian in several years and it would take tremendous effort to build a strong library program for several of these schools at once.

- How many schools would the librarian be expected to serve?
- What resources would the librarian have for replacing outdated materials?

Baseline data: The bill states that 75 schools have a librarian but I believe this includes non-certified librarians. The bill aims to increase schools with a certified librarian.

- Could this number be clarified?

Evaluation: The bill requires a program report within two years. Two years is a short time to see statistically significant impacts on formal metrics like test scores.

- What would be the program's evaluation criteria?
- Could it include surveys of parents, teachers, and students to understand the short-term impact of this program?

Recruitment: Program success depends on recruiting passionate, licensed school librarians who are willing to take a split appointment temporary position.

- Could funding be extended to at least three years to allow the individuals to establish tenure in the DOE?

Despite these questions, I hope this bill moves our state in the direction of every student and teacher having a school librarian at their campus. Our state needs to stand by its commitment to provide all students with the resources and support needed for their growth and success. Mahalo for considering this critical issue.

This spreadsheet was prepared by the Hawaii Association of School Librarians using data provided by the Hawaii State Department of Education in Fall 2023.

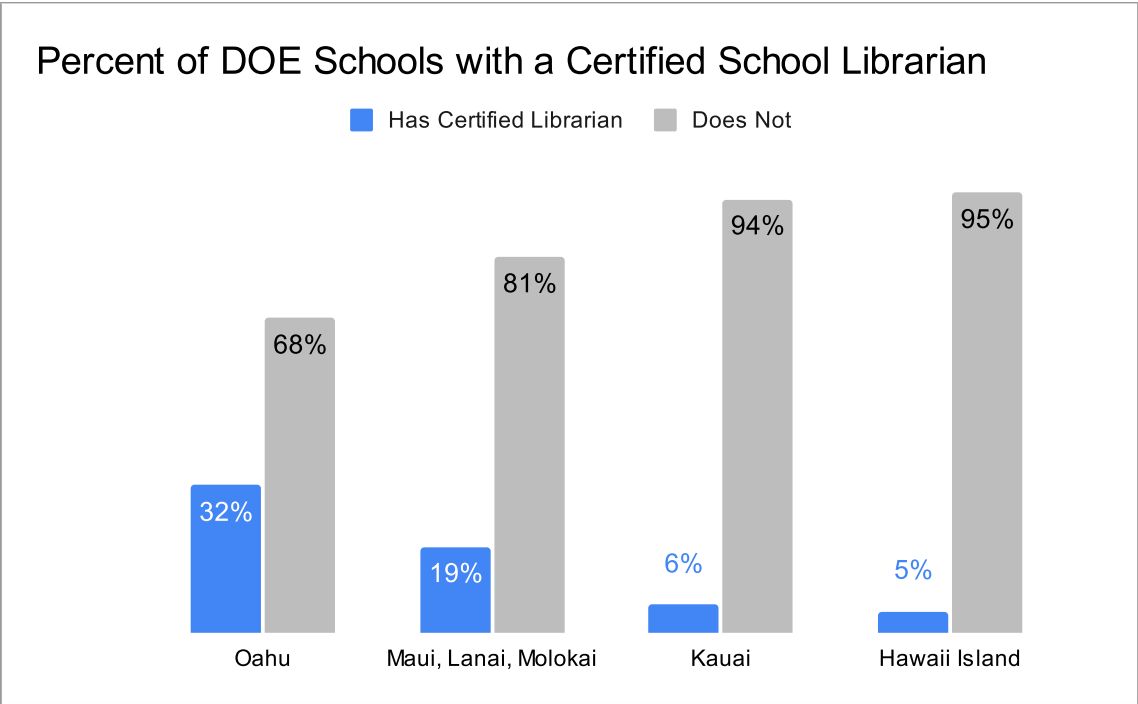
Questions? Contact: haslcontactus@gmail.com

Explanation of Data

["Percent of Schools with Librarians"](#) calculates the number of schools with one or two licensed school librarians as a percentage of the total number of schools. Staffing data is from DOE: see ["Original Data" tab](#)

["Student to Librarian Ratio"](#) compares the DOE staffing data with the DOE official enrollment count: <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/2023-24-Enrollment.aspx>

At a Glance



For a digital copy of this data use the following link or QR code: <https://bit.ly/3PecS4V>



School Type	Schools with Certified Librarian	Total Schools	% of Schools with Librarian
Public DOE Schools	63	258	24%
Public Charter Schools	0	37	0%

Island	Schools with Certified Librarian	Total DOE Schools	% of DOE Schools with Librarian
Kauai	1	16	6%
Hawaii Island	2	41	5%
Maui, Lanai, Molokai	6	32	19%
Oahu	54	169	32%

Geographic Complex Area	Schools with Certified Librarian	Total DOE Schools	% of DOE Schools with Librarian	Island
Kau-Keaau-Pahoa	0	9	0%	Hawaii Island
Honokaa-Kealahou-Kohala-Konawaena	1	19	5%	Hawaii Island
Kapaa-Kauai-Waimea	1	16	6%	Kauai
Hilo-Waiakea	1	13	8%	Hawaii Island
Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kulanihakoi-Maui	3	21	14%	Maui, Lanai, Molokai
Nanakuli-Waianae	2	9	22%	Oahu
Pearl City-Waipahu	4	17	24%	Oahu
Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt	7	28	25%	Oahu
Aiea-Moanalua-Radford	6	22	27%	Oahu
Hana-Lahainaluna-Lanai-Molokai	3	11	27%	Maui, Lanai, Molokai
Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani	8	25	32%	Oahu
Kailua-Kalaheo	5	14	36%	Oahu
Castle-Kahuku	6	16	38%	Oahu
Campbell-Kapolei	7	18	39%	Oahu
Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua	9	20	45%	Oahu



Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 3:00 PM

RE: **HB 961 HD1** Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Library Association (HLA) **strongly supports HB 961 HD1**, which establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O'ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

Licensed school librarians are highly skilled teachers who help students develop the critical thinking, information literacy, and media literacy skills needed to be effective and ethical community problem-solvers. At a time when social media content can be so misleading, skilled literacy instruction can train our students to be discerning consumers of information. School libraries are places where students can learn the digital technology skills they need to succeed academically, to be productive and responsible members of society, and become future contributors to our local workforce. School library programs managed by licensed school librarians are dynamic hubs of learning and literacy.

Unfortunately, student access to high quality school libraries is at its lowest with only 24% of DOE schools having a licensed school librarian. Access is also starkly inequitable: only 10% of schools on neighbor islands have library programs managed by licensed school librarians, compared to 32% of schools on O'ahu.

Students deserve access to school librarians and that access should not be determined by their zip code. This bill acknowledges the crucial role that school libraries and librarians play in preparing students for success in higher education and the workforce. We urge you to pass **HB 961 HD1** to demonstrate our state's commitment to providing all students with the resources and support needed for their growth and success.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Kelly Ann Deluna Campbell
President
Hawai'i Library Association



Hawai'i Association of School Librarians
HASLcontactus@gmail.com

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education
Thursday, March 12, 2025 3:00 PM

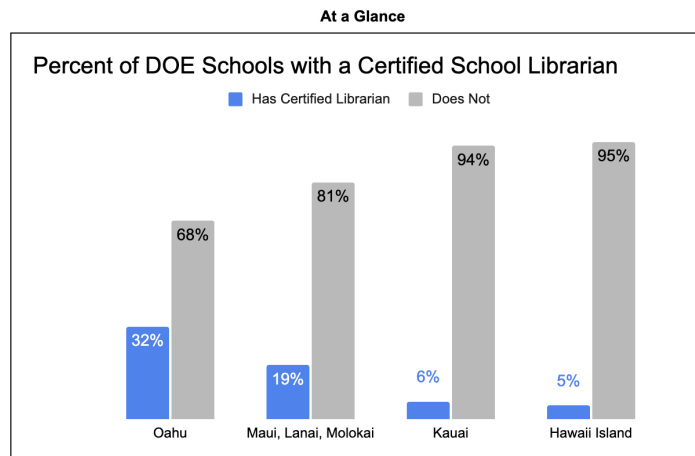
RE: **HB 961** Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year pilot program wherein a school librarian would serve multiple schools in a complex/area without school librarians, one on O'ahu and one on a neighbor island (TBD).

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

The Hawai'i Association of School Librarians (HASL) **supports HB 961**, to establish, administer, and appropriate funds for a two-year pilot program for 2 regional-based school librarians on O'ahu and a neighboring island. We hope this initiative will help re-establish certified school librarian support at hard-to-fill areas and will extend services where positions have not been available.

We know that licensed school librarians make a significant impact upon learning in K-12 schools, especially in developing reading fluency, information literacy, and media literacy skills essential to 21st Century learning. In 2025, these skills are even more vital to our students than ever..

Unfortunately, public schools in Hawai'i do not all have certified school librarians serving their students (see chart below, 2023), with especially low support on neighboring islands:



We at HASL believe that all students deserve access to fully funded library programs and certified school librarians, regardless of where they happen to attend school, and this bill makes significant progress towards that goal.

We urge you to pass **HB 961** in support of Hawai'i students.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Renea Ruark
President
Hawai'i Association of School Librarians

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 5:18:33 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Chair and Committee members,

As a retired school librarian who worked in a local school library for 19 years, I strongly support HB 961, to establish and appropriate funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O‘ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island. I hope this initiative, in conjunction with HB 962 or as a stand-alone, will help re-establish certified school librarian support at hard-to-fill areas and will extend services where positions have not been available.

Licensed school librarians make a significant impact upon learning in K-12 schools, especially in developing reading fluency, information literacy, and media literacy skills essential to 21st Century learning. In 2025, these skills are even more vital to our students than ever.

Mahalo,
Marcia Kemble
Makiki

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 12:28:52 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Omura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

As a Maui native, I am writing to express my unwavering **strong support for HB 961**. This bill, establishing a two-year librarian pilot program for school complexes on Oahu and a neighbor island, is a crucial step towards equitable education for all Hawai'i's students. To me, this is personal. Librarians don't just manage books; they shape lives.

In 6th grade, it was my school librarian who provided an extraordinary learning opportunity, empowering me and my friends to establish our school's first live, closed-circuit televised daily morning announcements. This librarian gave us free rein to create the video broadcast, teaching us to use two VHS Handycam camcorders, wired microphones with an audio mixer, and an Elmo document camera as a teleprompter. The hands-on experience in audio and video production set the course of my future in the film and media industry. My personal experience underscores a fundamental truth: librarians are not just caretakers of books, but vital guides through the evolving landscape of information and technology.

Historically, librarians have been at the forefront of navigating emerging technologies, from microfiche to the internet. Today, we face a new frontier with AI. Just as my librarian opened doors with televised broadcasting, today's librarians are essential in teaching students to critically evaluate, ethically utilize, and access AI, ensuring no child is left behind in this digital age.

Currently, a significant disparity exists in our public schools, with only a fraction having access to licensed librarians. This gap denies students the critical literacy, research, and digital citizenship skills they need to thrive. HB 961's pilot program is a vital first step, demonstrating the necessity of licensed librarians in fostering independent learning and intellectual curiosity.

Investing in school libraries is investing in our Keiki's future. By ensuring access to licensed librarians, we empower students to navigate higher education, the workforce, and society. Therefore, I urge the committee to pass HB 961 without delay. Let's provide all Hawai'i's students with the opportunities they deserve.

Respectfully,

Robert Omura

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 11:54:13 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caitlin Ramirez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I've been a school librarian with HDOE for 9 years. In that time, I've seen more and more school librarian positions cut or these positions filled with non-certificated staff. While I applaud the work these individuals do, they cannot fulfill the role at the same level of rigor and quality that a certificated school librarian can. This is particularly true of our rural schools, thus creating a situation of educational and literacy inequity between our rural and urban students. School librarians play a critical role in literacy for our keiki. School librarians curate library collections that engage readers and help them develop a life-long love of reading. We provide high-quality literacy instruction as well as instruction in digital citizenship and media literacy. We support teachers by collaborating to expand and enhance classroom instruction and provide access to essential information resources. I have empathy for our administrators who are trying to stretch their budgets to cover the needs of their schools and their students, but too often the library program is negatively impacted. This bill would help alleviate that impact for some of our rural schools. Please support this bill and make support educational equity in our state.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 12:54:37 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Otaguro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of this bill, in hopes that we will provide library services in more of our schools.

I am a former first grade teacher and have seen the impact that a school library with a certified librarian can have. A working library with a certified librarian helps our students to develop as learners and provides support for students in learning to read and analyze information and to do research into different topics. It is an important support for developing the skills for college and future work.

When I was teaching, we collaborated with our librarian in teaching reading, research, and analytical skills to my students. Our librarian managed our library collection and made sure that my students would have the books and resources to do reports. She also ran programs to encourage students to read, and found ways to put books into their hands, whether they were official library books or donated ones to make sure that all of our students would have access to resources.

A library on campus with a certified librarian helps the school, teachers, and students. Not all students have books at home or the ability to visit our state libraries, so it helps make up for the gaps that might exist. It also can provide a place for students to come to learn to enjoy reading and literacy.

Please support our librarians and libraries.

Sincerely,

Lynn Otaguro

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 2:48:08 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Kuniyoshi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! To the Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Kuniyoshi and I am a certified school librarian at Wahiawa Elementary School. I am writing in strong support of HB961, which establishes a two-year pilot program for certified librarians to provide rotating support services to schools in one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighbor island; and to appropriate funds for the positions.

Over the 30+ years as a public educator, I sincerely feel that it is my privilege to serve the many students who need a safe, positive environment, and that I get to instill the love the reading to the children. Through books, we share experiences and gain knowledge! Librarians are also the biggest advocates of multiple literacies; which everyone needs in today's world.

All private schools understand and know the importance of the certified school librarian in a student's education, and it is my hope that public schools can perform as well as or better than our local private schools. I implore you to please support HB961 so that many, many more students may have the well-rounded public school education that they deserve.

Thank you very much,

Stephanie Kuniyoshi

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 9:31:04 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laura Ginoza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB961

Chair Kidani and Committee Members,

My name is Laura Ginoza and I am a Librarian and EL teacher at Pearl City Elementary in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB961.

In addition to fostering a love of reading, school librarians play a crucial role in developing students' foundational skills for information literacy, digital citizenship, and critical thinking. School librarians teach --

Information Literacy - School librarians teach students how to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. We provide strategies for selecting print and digital resources, and help students to discover new ideas on important topics

Digital Citizenship – School Librarians teach our students legal, ethical, and safety issues that comes with the use of technology. We teach students the importance of creating strong passwords, taking into account personal online safety, and how to use technology in an ethical way.

Critical Thinking – School librarians lay the groundwork for students to critically evaluate news sources. We teach methods like the CARS (credibility, accuracy, reasonableness, and support) approach to assess information reliability. The students learn how to identify credible sources, verify information, and check on the credibility of authors. This skill is especially given the vast amount of fake news present in our world today.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of library positions and ensuring that our students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically. This bill will provide students with school librarians who will develop informed, critical, and responsible digital citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Laura Ginoza, Librarian, Pearl City Elementary School

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 8:57:38 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Goff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Nicole Goff, and I hope this is one of many testimonies shared with regards to this bill. I've worked as a school librarian in Hawai'i for nearly 15 years, and I cannot fathom how students manage to understand the world without the guide of a librarian. We are the purveyors of information literacy; we teach students the skills and provide access to resources that allow them to become capable, responsible citizens. We direct students to meaningful and enlightening literature (everything from Sonic the Hedgehog comic books to *The White House Transcripts*); we help them decode the bias behind news sources; we give them space to experiment with Ai and think critically about how to use what's generated ... if at all. :)

It is imperative that schools provide information literacy instruction to students. How to navigate, understand, and ethically engage with the world is everything that a librarian teaches. Please ensure that there are certified librarians at every school for our students. Thank you.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 10:52:55 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandy Domion	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a high school librarian, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that a well-equipped library and a skilled librarian can have on a student's educational journey. In today's rapidly evolving information landscape, it is more critical than ever that our students possess the skills necessary to navigate, evaluate, and utilize information effectively. These skills are not innate; they are learned, and librarians are the experts who can impart them.

Here's why access to librarians is essential:

- **Information Literacy:** Librarians teach students how to distinguish credible sources from misinformation, a crucial skill in the digital age. They guide students in research, helping them develop critical thinking and analytical abilities. I taught these skills in the elementary school and now at the high school I'm at.
- **Reading Promotion and Literacy Development:** Librarians foster a love of reading. They curate diverse collections, recommend books tailored to individual interests, and create engaging programs that encourage students to explore the world through literature. This directly impacts reading comprehension and overall academic success.
- **Equity and Access:** School libraries provide equal access to resources for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Librarians ensure that every child has the opportunity to discover new knowledge and pursue their interests.
- **Support for Teachers:** Librarians collaborate with teachers to integrate library resources into classroom instruction. They provide valuable support in curriculum development and resource selection.
- **Building a Community of Learners:** School libraries serve as hubs for learning and collaboration. Librarians create welcoming environments where students can explore, discover, and connect with their peers. At my high school, the library provides a safe space for all students to foster a sense of belonging.

The absence of qualified librarians in many of our schools creates a significant gap in our students' education. We are depriving them of the tools they need to succeed in college, careers, and life.

Investing in school libraries and librarians is an investment in our students' future. It is an investment in a more informed, engaged, and equitable society.

I urge you to support this bill and ensure that every student in Hawaii has access to the invaluable resources and expertise that a school librarian provides.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 11:31:36 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dianne Pang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB961. My name is Dianne Pang, and I have served the Hawaii Department of Education for over 35 years, including 26 years as a school librarian. My extensive experience has shown me firsthand the critical role librarians play in student success.

While I appreciate the value of data, I believe my direct observations are equally compelling. Instead of reiterating well-established research, I want to address the persistent misconceptions hindering our students' access to essential resources.

The Need: A Complex Librarian Position

Many schools within our complex lack certified librarians, leaving students and teachers without vital support. This deficiency is not due to a lack of need, but a lack of resources. A complex librarian position would address this gap, ensuring equitable access to library services and resources across multiple schools.

Addressing Misconceptions:

- Misconception 1: We don't need a library because students can read online.
 - While HIDOE's eBook platform SORA is valuable, its effective use relies on librarian expertise. Librarians promote SORA, curate its content, and teach its use. Moreover, many students benefit from and prefer the tactile experience of physical books, which also minimize digital distractions. A comprehensive library program requires both.
- Misconception 2: Teachers alone can promote reading.
 - Teachers are essential, but librarians provide specialized expertise. Librarians are experts in book selection, circulation, and promotion. They create engaging programs like author visits and reading challenges, fostering a school-wide culture of literacy. Furthermore, librarians ensure equitable access to resources for all students, regardless of individual classroom libraries.
- Misconception 3: Students can find credible information online without guidance.
 - In the age of AI, social media, and misinformation, information literacy is crucial. Librarians teach students to evaluate sources, use academic databases, and question online content. This skill is essential for navigating the complex information landscape.

The Urgent Need for Resource Accessibility:

Our schools already invest in valuable resources like SORA (eBooks), and online databases as they are a bundled purchase with LS2 (circulation software). However, without librarians, these resources often go unused. I am consistently shocked and disheartened by the number of educators from schools without librarians that are unaware of the tools at their disposal.

- **Resource Optimization:** Schools are already paying for valuable resources like LS2, SORA, and online databases. A complex librarian would ensure these resources are utilized effectively, maximizing taxpayer investment.
- **Targeted Training and Support:** Currently, training opportunities often go untapped due to staffing limitations. A complex librarian would:
 - Proactively reach out to schools, building relationships with staff.
 - Assess individual school needs and provide customized training on needed areas of library resources.
- **Equitable Access:** This position would level the playing field, ensuring all students, regardless of their school's resources, have access to essential library services.

In conclusion, HB961 is not just about adding a position; it's about maximizing the resources we already have and ensuring every student has the tools they need to succeed. I urge you to support this vital investment in our students' future.

Thank you for allowing me to testify.

Dianne Pang

Librarian, Kaimuki Middle School

Email and phone number on file

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 12:50:44 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clarissa Sin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 961 as it increases helping students to learn and encourage reading for all.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:21:36 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen-Rae Cachola	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Senator Donna Mercado Kim, and all other members of the Committee on Education,

Please support HB 961 to establish and appropriate funds for a two-year librarian program to serve one school complex on Oahu, and one school complex in another neighbor island.

I think it is prudent to conduct a pilot program led by certified librarians, and managed by the Department of Education, to conduct research on the needs of school librarians across the state. School Librarians have been reduced to only 29% of Hawaii's K-12 public schools. We need to find out what caused this decrease in investment in school librarians and what needs to be done to ensure our schools bring them back.

There is a need for investment in school librarians to support information literacy of our children.

In addition to supporting teachers, school librarians manage collections of books and resources to expose students to different view points on various subjects.

School Librarians are not just shelving books, but they are creating a culture of serendipitous exploration based on children's own questions and wonder. As a former school library staff and as a university instructor, I can tell you that there is no other place in the school campus that provides this kind of common, shared space where any student, staff, or faculty can wander in, and browse the shelves to find the language to help them understand what they are feeling and thinking inside.

In today's complex, political climate, our young people need to be exposed to libraries, to help them understand themselves and the world they live in. They need school librarians to manage neutral spaces where they are encouraged to read not just for class work requirements. But to pick up reading and to visit libraries as a personal habit for self-development and problem solving.

Please support HB 961. Please continue to invest in full-time school library positions as they are crucial in developing the love of learning within our children.

Sincerely,

Ellen-Rae Cachola

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:35:43 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sabrina Nicole Thomas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee,

I have three children in public schools on Oahu. As a mom, I highly support this bill. Librarians increase the literacy rates of children, further, they increase children's love of reading. I believe this bill should be supported and passed. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to email me at sabrinareidthomas@gmail.com

Best,

Sabrina

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 5:48:18 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Duncklee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Certified school librarians are needed in our schools to provide current information literacy education. I support this bill.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 6:37:44 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sunyeen Pai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear esteemed members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am a retired community college librarian and work with both 4-year universities and 2-year community colleges and I have observed that our high school graduates are struggling to adjust to college-level learning. Community colleges accept all students, but many arrive underprepared for college courses. As a result, they often need to take remedial classes—at their own expense—which don't count toward their degree or certificate. This can be costly and discouraging, causing many to drop out.

School librarians can train students to study better and successfully pass college entrance and qualification exams, highlighting the vital role librarians play in student preparedness. School librarians can significantly impact students' reading and math skills, which are crucial for entering the workforce or pursuing higher education. Community colleges are already working to prepare high school students for college through dual-credit programs, and school librarians can play a critical role in helping students develop the research, writing, and critical thinking skills necessary to succeed.

Many of us are concerned about the increasing spread of social media bias and misinformation. With the rise of AI, we need school librarians back in schools to teach students how to evaluate and critically analyze the information they find online. Librarians do this by helping students process their emotional responses to social media and providing guidance on how to evaluate the agendas of the social media posts before the students take actions recommended by such posts.

Beyond academics, school librarians offer a safe space for students, identifying those who may be feeling isolated or disconnected. Instructors often don't have the time to monitor every student, but school libraries offer an essential, supportive learning environment outside the classroom.

There has been a severe decline in school librarian positions across the state over the last few decades, and research indicates that this is having an impact on our students' academic abilities and workforce readiness. This is a big problem for rural and underserved areas, where there are far fewer school librarians available to students as there are in wealthier and urban O'ahu communities.

Regarding this bill, I do have concerns about the workload that may result in individual librarians serving multiple schools and I strongly advise that they are given needed resources to provide their valuable services. Please support restoring this invaluable service to all members of our community.

Please support restoring this invaluable service to all members of our community.

With Hope and Gratitude,

Sunyeen (Sunny) Pai, PhD

Retired Professor and Librarian, Kapi‘olani Community College

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 2:56:10 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Carlson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Michelle Carlson and I'm writing to you in support of HB 961 HD1.

I have been a librarian at Daniel K. Inouye Elementary School since 2005. Under the guidance of Principal Jan Iwase, I was hired to create a library program that promoted literacy, integrated information literacy into grade level project based learning units and develop after school family events that provided our students and families fun opportunities to explore and learn together.

Our library program has evolved since 2005 to integrate technology and to provide more hands-on learning experiences. These changes have been carefully implemented to support students' learning and teachers' instruction. This can only be done if the school has a certified school librarian who knows community needs, invests in age-appropriate print and digital resources to support the curriculum, who inspires and supports reading, who cultivates community partnerships, and who empowers students as creators.

While many people think the library is antiquated, my students know our library is a place of ideas. They find ideas in books, via technology and from each other. Our library is a hands-on space where students tell stories at the shadow puppet theater or via structures they build at the giant lego station. They work together to solve problems at the marble run station or grow their imaginations at the drawing table. Or maybe they grab a book from the student author bin and cuddle up with the giant bear on the window bench. Students bring their lunches to "Lunch time Pop-ups" where students teach other students how to fold origami animals, create lego transformers, speak spanish or code in Scratch.

Technology has brought the world into our library and classrooms. Students zoom with authors to ask questions about their books and the writing process. We compared Hawaiian volcanoes to the volcanoes in Mexico with a 4th grade class. A computer programmer who tracks the migration of orcas joined us during the Hour of Code Week and a combat engineer shared her personal journey describing how her passions of childhood led her to pursue a career with the army. Students need opportunities to connect with experts in their fields and peers beyond the walls of the school.

Magic like this happens when a school has a librarian who creates a flexible, inviting, information rich space that promotes inquiry, creativity, collaboration and community. Every child in Hawaii deserves opportunities like these.

Thank you for considering HB 961 HD1.

Michelle Carlson

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 1:47:04 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jan Iwase	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Senator Kidani and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing in strong support of HB961 HD1 which establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex area on O`ahu and one school complex on an island other than O`ahu.

I believe that school librarians are essential to our students, especially in this, the Age of Information and the Age of Artificial Intelligence. Librarians are specially-trained to assist and support teachers and students in information and media literacy which is defined as “an expanded conceptualization of literacy that includes the ability to access and analyze media messages, as well as create, reflect, and take action - using the power of information and communication - to make a difference in the world.” (Wikipedia)

As schools explore ways to save money, many have chosen to eliminate the librarian position. In fact, less than 30% of public schools in Hawai`i have a licensed school librarian. A prevailing thought is that libraries are outdated and that purchasing books does not make sense when it is so easy to get information via the Internet. There are those who claim that students can access information electronically so libraries and print material are no longer necessary. I disagree. Just because information is readily available via the Internet or AI tools does not mean that students or teachers know how to ask the right questions, how to choose the right resource, how to determine whether the information is accurate, how to take notes and organize them in a meaningful way, and how to summarize and share that information with others especially to make a difference in our world. That is something a certified school librarian can help with.

Besides helping schools manage resources and services, a complex area librarian could collaborate with teachers to support student learning and to share resources that cultivate a love for reading and research. A complex area librarian could help teachers integrate literary skills into their curriculum. They can lead lessons for faculties, students, and parents on digital citizenship and responsible on-line behavior. In this rapidly-changing world, a complex area librarian could have an important impact on the entire community, and I ask for your favorable consideration of HB961 HD1.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 11:35:13 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daphne Miyashiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support for HB961 HD1. All students and teachers benefit from having a school library AND certified school librarian. Librarians collaborate with teachers to create meaningful, project-based learning experiences where students learn lifelong skills like critical thinking, media literacy, information literacy, and problem solving.

With the rise of misinformation spread across social media platforms and increasing popularity of using generative AI, we need school librarians to teach students how to evaluate and critically analyze the information found online. Thus, media literacy and information literacy are crucial skills students (and adults) should be learning.

In 2020, the Hawaii State Literacy Plan was published to help coordinate efforts, increase partnerships, build knowledge of best practices and learning opportunities, and ultimately increase literacy and reading outcomes for Hawaii. Acknowledging that expanding literacy directly supports our state's tradition of improving equity and access for all of Hawaii's people. In this plan, the top recommendation to improve literacy resources in school is to ensure schools have school libraries and school librarians.

Although I am a certified school librarian at a public high school on Oahu, the high school where I live (my alma mater) does not. My children are currently attending a public elementary school that has a school librarian, but that cannot be said for many students across the state. As a parent, I would like to have my children have access to a school library and school librarian throughout their entire public education experience.

My only recommendation regarding this bill would be to increase the duration of the pilot program from 2 years to 4 years in order to give the librarian time to settle into this new role of a school complex librarian and to collect adequate data, such as test scores.

Thank you for your time and your consideration for HB961 HD1.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 9:01:35 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rich Gazan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members. I wish to express enthusiastic support for HB961. As Director of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library & Information Science Program and a faculty member for 18 years, school libraries provide the earliest foundation for informed citizens, lifelong learning and resilient community members who can locate, evaluate and share information. The proposed pilot program will provide needed incentives to hire school librarians who are essential to carry out this work, and will serve as a valuable proof of concept for future efforts. Mahalo for considering HB961, and for supporting Hawai‘i school libraries.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:41:29 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Selena Mobbs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony Prepared Collaboratively with Waiahole Elementary School students:

Now that we have a school librarian, we are able to check out books, learn how to find reliable information, discover stories that inspire us, and participate in reading and learning events. Our library has become a place where we can be creative, curious, and excited about learning. We believe that every student in Hawaii should have the same opportunity to grow with the support of a school librarian.

We support this bill because it is a step toward ensuring that all students have access to a librarian, no matter what school they attend. School librarians help us become better readers, researchers, and problem-solvers. They teach us about digital citizenship, help us find books that reflect our culture and interests, and support our teachers in making learning more fun and meaningful. A pilot program is a great start, but we hope it will lead to every school in Hawaii having a full-time librarian. Please support this bill to help students across Hawaii succeed. Mahalo!

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:41:29 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tai Arakawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education**Wednesday, March 12, 2025 3:00PM****RE: HB 961 Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighboring island.**

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support HB 961 as a private individual who has a background in academic librarianship. The decline in both school libraries and degreed School and Media specialists (Master's in Library Science, with a school library specialization) has had a ripple effect on the students we are seeing in our colleges and universities. Over the last decade or so, more undergraduates are attending university lacking information literacy skills that they should have begun learning at the elementary school level. This includes the ability to locate and evaluate reliable sources of information, understand if the information is relevant to their needs, and incorporate it into their assignments. Reading comprehension and the ability to write are also affected. This applies to students across the board, and STEM students need to know how to access peer-reviewed resources in particular. Consider the fact that these are the young people that will be in charge of designing our infrastructure and healthcare, and also consider the fact that most of the time the first place they consult for information is Google, NOT GoogleScholar which will at least limit the results to academic journals if not screen them for quality.

In their post-library instruction/information literacy class evaluations, there are usually several remarks from first year students about not knowing the campus library had a website where they can do their research. It is very worrying - and telling - that university-level students do not know or do not know to look for the campus library webpage when they need to do research for their assignments. This indicates an underlying habit of not turning to their library and librarians for help with their information needs.

While there is a lot of discussion about encouraging our children to attend college, we as a community are not helping them achieve this goal by reducing access to libraries and qualified librarians. Librarians, unlike teachers who are assigned to work in the library, know what age-

appropriate resources are available. I had a teacher walk into my place of work asking for help putting together an ebook list for her school, per her principal's request - when her school already had access to ebooks. Neither she nor her principal knew that they had access, as the previous librarian had retired and was not replaced by a licensed individual. Nor did the teacher know how to access the school's collection, as the library website had been taken down and the link to the search box was buried under another heading, making access extremely difficult.

Access to libraries and qualified librarians is important regardless of whether a child intends to go to college or not. Information and media literacy are skills that everyone can use both inside the classroom and outside. Part of a functioning democratic society is having a population that has ready access to information and the skills to sort through and understand that information so that they can make informed decisions for themselves.

That said, it is also important that the qualified librarians that fill these positions have a living wage. Librarians, like teachers, are called to their service-oriented careers out of a love of the job. Being able to fulfill their duties to their communities without having to worry about being able to pay rent or bills means that they can focus their time and energy on their students. HB 961, if funded appropriately, would help give both children and licensed librarians the foundation for their own agencies.

Thank you,
Tai Arakawa

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:44:18 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordan Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Jordan Miller, I am a military spouse, a mother of two children enrolled in Hawaii public schools, and an employee at Daniel K. Inouye Elementary School. In regards to Bill # HB961 relating to education and the establishment of a pilot program for certified school librarians, I am writing in support of the measure. The school I work for is fortunate to have a certified librarian on staff to support the literacy needs of our students. Our librarian supports teacher's curriculums, implements digital literacy lessons for our students, and curates print and online resources that pertain to the needs of our students and their families. In my opinion this pilot program would assist many public schools, enriching our school communities, without creating a large burden on the state budget. Oahu has the greatest ratio of schools with a certified librarian compared to other islands but that ratio is still extremely low at 32%. I encourage you to vote yes on HB961 and invest in our schools.

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:55:41 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Morganne Kaahaaina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

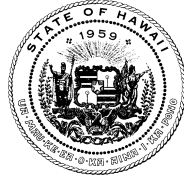
Comments:

Aloha Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am submitting testimony today to you all in support of HB961 HD1. Although it has been many years since I myself have been a student in a public school, I of course remember being read to by the school librarian. But I also distinctly remember class visits to the library that would fill in knowledge gaps in worldly topics, introduce the usage of new technology, and guide us on finding reliable primary research resources. As our society is permeated by agendas and ideals fueled by fabrications and we increasingly rely on AI generated materials, the upcoming generations needs the guidance of school librarians now more than ever. Every school should have a dedicated librarian on staff, and this pilot program is a promising start.

Me ka mahalo,

Morganne Kaahaaina



LATE

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
'OIHANA HALE WAIHONA PUKE AUPUNI O KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE STATE LIBRARIAN
44 MERCHANT STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

3:00 pm

Conference Room 229

**By Stacey A. Aldrich
State Librarian**

H.B. 961 HD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION

To: Sen. Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Sen. Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) **supports H.B. 961 HD1**, which establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on an island other than Oahu.

School libraries and school librarians are a vital part of educational support for all students from K-12. School librarians are certified teachers who also hold a master's degree in library science, qualifying them to work with classroom teachers on lessons plans, support literacy, teach research skills and digital literacy skills. Our students are in, and will continue to be, a part of a complex world of information and disinformation. School librarians are vital for the development of the information skills needed to thrive now and in the future.

While it is optimal to have a school librarian in each school, this bill would pilot the idea of a rotating school librarian within a Department of Education complex to ensure that all teachers and students would have access to the expertise of a school librarian to enhance the development of curriculum and build students' reading, information research and digital skills.

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

LATE

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:41:31 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

State of Hawaii Public Libraries are being "underutilized" and is under the DOE, therefor the DOE should be UTILIZING THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES STATEWIDE.

I believe Kapolei Public Library is being utilized by its neighboring private school.

LATE

HB-961-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2025 10:28:48 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/12/2025 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Strongly support.