



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

Date: 02/06/2025

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0961 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 a neighbor island.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of HB 961 and respectfully offers comments.

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.

HB 961 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.



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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB 961 - RELATING TO EDUCATION - SCHOOL LIBRARIAN PILOT**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Hearing: **2/6/2025, Conference Room 309, 2:00pm**

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

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association stands in strong support of HB 691 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.



Testimony to the House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 6, 2025 2:00 PM

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 neighbor island.

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

The Hawai'i Library Association (HLA) **strongly supports HB 961**, 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** 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

LATE

Testimony to the House Committee on Education
Thursday, February 6, 2025 2:00 PM

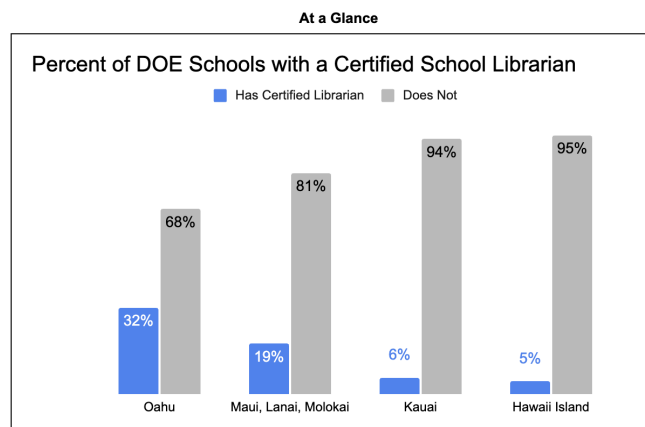
RE: **HB 961** Establishes and appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to serve one school complex on O'ahu and one school complex on a neighbor island.

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 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. We 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.

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).



We at HASL believe that all students deserve access to fully funded library programs and certified school librarians to ensure equity of access, regardless of where they happen to live. We hope you will vote 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

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 8:44:57 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tara Nakata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Members of the Committee,

My name is Tara Nakata and I am the librarian at Lahainaluna High School. I am writing in strong support of HB961, which establishes a two-year pilot program to provide rotating librarian support services to schools in one O‘ahu school complex and one neighbor island school complex.

The current shortage of librarians in our public schools is deeply concerning. As the bill notes, only 75 out of 258 schools have filled librarian positions. This lack of access to qualified library professionals severely impacts our students' educational opportunities. Libraries are not just repositories of books; they are dynamic learning hubs where students develop critical thinking skills, cultivate a love of reading, and learn to become informed citizens.

I want to highlight that the need for librarian support extends beyond schools without any library staff. During a recent librarians' meeting on Maui, I got to meet several dedicated individuals working in school libraries who, while passionate and skilled, expressed a need for additional support. These educators are not traditional librarians but are working in library spaces. They would benefit from assistance with fundamental library tasks to ensure they can effectively meet the diverse needs of their students. They would benefit from training and mentorship to maximize their impact. The pilot program proposed in this bill offers a crucial opportunity to address this gap and provide targeted support to these invaluable members of our school communities.

This pilot program is a crucial first step towards ensuring all students have access to their library resources. By providing rotating librarian support services, we can bridge the gap in library access and provide valuable assistance to existing library staff. This will not only benefit students in the selected school complexes but also provide valuable data and insights to inform future statewide initiatives. The reports required by the bill will be essential in evaluating the program's effectiveness and determining the best way to expand access to library services across the state.

I urge the committee to favorably consider HB961 and invest in the future of our students by supporting this important initiative. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tara Nakata

February 4, 2025

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT FOR H.B. NO. 961 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

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

I am writing to express my strong support for H.B. No. 961, which seeks to establish a two-year pilot program for certified librarians in Hawaii's public schools. As an academic librarian in Hawai'i with over a decade of experience in the K-12 setting, I have seen firsthand the critical role school librarians play in student success.

School librarians are essential educators who cultivate literacy, research skills, and critical thinking; skills that are fundamental to academic achievement and lifelong learning. In my time working in Hawai'i K-12 schools, I witnessed how a well-staffed library transformed student engagement. Librarians do not merely manage books; they provide instruction in information literacy, digital citizenship, and research strategies that prepare students for higher education and the workforce.

Without school librarians, students lose access to specialized support that strengthens their ability to navigate an increasingly complex information landscape. The fact that only seventy-five of Hawai'i's 258 public schools currently have a librarian is deeply concerning. The absence of librarians limits equitable access to resources that foster independent learning and intellectual curiosity.

This bill is a step in the right direction, providing essential support to students through the establishment of a pilot program. By placing qualified librarians in select school complexes, the Legislature has an opportunity to collect meaningful data and demonstrate the tangible benefits of school library programs. This initiative will not only bridge gaps in literacy and research education but also highlight the necessity of expanding library services to all public schools in Hawai'i.

I urge you to pass H.B. No. 961 and take the first step toward restoring equitable access to quality library services for Hawai'i's students. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Texeira', with a horizontal line above the name.

Cynthia Texeira, MLISc
Hawai'i Resources Specialist Librarian

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:24:24 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Dear Education Committee,

Please support HB 961 to establish a pilot program for two certified libraries for one school complex on Oahu and one school complex on a neighbor island; and to appropriate funds for these positions.

This is an important initial step to start investing and strengthening school librarianship in our state. School Libraries are crucial for increasing literacy and life long learning within our children, when their minds are being developed to acquire good reading comprehension and concentration habits that will help them into adulthood.

Basic reading skills are decreasing due to the rise of technology and social media fostering more visual and auditory literacies, but not necessarily the skills of fact checking and realizing multiple points of view, that good reading and reflection skills that school librarians and school libraries can foster at younger ages.

As a library staff in university level, I do notice the lack of reading and fact checking that is happening with undergraduates. This means that by investing in school libraries, it will increase the success of people as they are prepared to acquire the more complex literacy skills needed to navigate higher levels of work, society, and education

The pilot program will be a good opportunity to start investing in school library professionals to observe and collect data on the need to further grow school librarians in our school systems.

Sincerely,
Ellen-Rae Cachola

My name is Angela Ramey and I am in support of HB 961. I am the certified school librarian at Ho'okele Elementary School in Kapolei. Thank you for allowing testimony for HB 961, and I fully support this bill. Our school library offers a rich, innovative, and collaborative space that is created to inspire, support, and strengthen teaching and learning for our students, teachers and staff, as well as our entire school community. This is my 30th year as an educator and my fourth year as the school librarian at Ho'okele Elementary, and reaching every single student and their families has been the honor of my lifetime. Librarians in school libraries aren't a luxury. We are critical for student learning. We are essential for student success. We are necessary for student well-being and our existence means we bridge the gap between technology and resources for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Students who have access to a licensed librarian and current library resources simply perform better in school and are better prepared for college, career and life. Libraries enable all learners, each and every one of them, to see themselves and learn about others, to think critically, and have access to the high quality tools that enhance learning and expand their opportunities.

I put together a table of all schools in the Leeward District: whether they had a school librarian or not and what their ELA proficiency score was on the most recent StriveHI reports that I had access to. Leeward schools that did not have fully functioning school libraries with a licensed school librarian had ELA proficiency scores ranging from 18%-53%. The Leeward schools with certified school librarians and fully functioning libraries ranged from 50+%-83% proficiency. It's really staggering the impact a properly staffed school library has on every single person in the school community. Libraries are not archaic remnants of the past, and anyone who thinks this is misinformed. They are spaces that have an immediate positive impact on students, teachers and families. Without them, these same stakeholders suffer. For many students, their school library is the only source of reading material and technology access.

Every child in Hawai'i should have equitable access to a school library with a certified librarian, and the fact that 75% of them do not have access to them is a serious crisis. Please support HB 961. In doing so, you are supporting the very basic needs of students in Hawai'i. Thank you for your consideration.

Angie Ramey, MAT, MATLCC, MASLS
School Librarian
Ho'okele Elementary School
511 Kunehi St., Kapolei, HI 96707

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 5:39:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 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 to 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

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 6:17:39 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eden Peart	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kakou,

This legislation has the potential to be exceedingly impactful in the lives of Hawai'i residents for generations to come. School libraries, when adequately funded and staffed by certificated teacher-librarians have been shown to correlate with not only improved student achievement; they are places that are inclusive, cultivate curiosity and wonder.

With this measure, Hawaii makes a first step toward restoring school libraries, and providing students and their communities with the unique empowerment of access to a library, that our children deserve.

Education committee members - thank you for supporting and launching this very important legislation.

Very truly yours,

Eden Marie Peart

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 8:59:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB961

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

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 HB962.

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

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:06:35 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paul McDonald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Librarians improve the lives of our citizens and school librarians, in particular, can have a tremendous positive impact on the education of our keiki. They are an invaluable resource.

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 10:33:24 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of HB961

My name is Stephanie Kuniyoshi, and I am a certified school librarian with over 30 years of experience serving the students of Hawaii. I write to you today to advocate for the passage of this crucial bill, which establishes and funds a two-year librarian pilot program for one school complex on Oahu and one on a neighbor island.

For three decades, I've witnessed firsthand the transformative power of a strong school library program. I've seen struggling readers discover the magic of books, hesitant researchers develop critical thinking skills, and shy students find their voice through creative expression. I've collaborated with teachers to integrate information literacy into every subject, from science to social studies, and I've provided a safe and welcoming space for all students to explore, learn, and grow.

My experience has taught me that a school library is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It is the heart of the school, a hub of learning and discovery. A qualified school librarian is not just a keeper of books; we are educators, technology specialists, and literacy advocates. We teach students how to navigate the ever-expanding world of information, how to distinguish fact from fiction, and how to use technology effectively and responsibly. These are not just skills for school; they are essential skills for life in the 21st century.

Unfortunately, the reality is that school library programs are often underfunded and undervalued. In these challenging economic times, librarians are often the first to be cut, depriving our students of vital resources and support. This shortsighted approach has devastating consequences. Studies consistently show a direct correlation between strong school library programs and improved student achievement, particularly in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and research skills.

This pilot program offers hope. By strategically investing in two school complexes, one on Oahu and one on a neighbor island, this bill will provide concrete evidence of the profound impact that a fully staffed and supported library program can have on student success. It will allow us to gather data, showcase best practices, and demonstrate the return on investment in school libraries. This data will be invaluable in advocating for sustained funding for school libraries statewide.

I understand the fiscal constraints you face. However, I firmly believe that investing in our children's education is the most important investment we can make. This pilot program is about ensuring that all students, regardless of their zip code, have access to the resources and support they need to thrive. It's about building a brighter future for Hawaii.

I urge you to support HB961. Support our students! Support our teachers. Support the future of our communities! Thank you very much.

Stephanie Kuniyoshi

Certified School Librarian

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 11:21:42 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jade Santos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because of the importance of having school librarians at every school! School librarians are vital to helping students improve literacy! They are impactful resources for teachers and staff! Librarians are specialized educators that help to provide learning opportunities and keep resources up to date for their schools! These are specialized services that only librarians are trained to do! This is an essential position and one that I absolutely advocate for every school to have!

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 8:10:03 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gwen Sinclair	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing **in strong support of HB 961**. Credentialed school librarians are essential partners in preparing students to find, evaluate, and use information in order to function effectively in the world. They do this by teaching information and digital literacy and providing instruction in the ethical and appropriate use of technologies like generative artificial intelligence. Schools need credentialed school librarians, and HB 961 will create a path to employing them in all of our public schools. **I strongly support HB 961.**

Gwen Sinclair

1930 Alewa Dr.

Honolulu, HI 96817

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:44:46 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meera Garud	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in **strong support for HB 961**, which 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 a critical part of a vibrant school community. Librarians collaborate with teachers to create meaningful, project-based learning experiences where students learn lifelong skills like critical thinking and problem solving. All students and teachers benefit from having a librarian.

Unfortunately, data provided by the DOE in 2023 showed only 1 in 4 schools had a licensed school librarian. Students on neighbor islands are much less likely to have a school librarian, with just two school librarians on Hawai‘i Island. (Data: <https://bit.ly/3PecS4V>)

The success of this program will require carefully considering community needs and resources. It also depends on the ability to recruit passionate, licensed school librarians who are willing to take a split appointment temporary position. I hope the DOE will work with a range of stakeholders to identify the participating schools, the goals, and evaluation criteria.

In particular, I wondered how many schools would the librarian serve? The students and teachers who participate in this program will have split attention from the librarian, and the librarian will need to spend extra time to plan schedules, instruction, and travel between schools.

Despite these questions, I am confident this program will help. Educators in Hawai‘i have already recognized the important role of school libraries and librarians. The 2020 Hawai‘i State Literacy Plan recommends that the state improve literacy resources in schools and 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. Last April, the House adopted HR 168, a resolution urging the DOE to ensure that school libraries are staffed with licensed school librarians.

Our state needs to stand by its commitment to providing all students with the resources and support needed for their growth and success. This bill is an important step toward addressing this. Mahalo for considering this critical issue.

5 February 2025

House Committee on Education
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 405
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair, Representative Woodson, Vice Chair Rep. Trish La Chica, and Honorable HCE Members Representatives Evslin, Garrett, Kila, Olds, Sayama, Muraoka, and Souza:

I am writing to you in **very strong support** of **HCR961** and **HCR962**. As you know these bills would 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 and Require DOE “to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. Appropriates funds.”

I’m writing to you as a librarian, professor of Library and Information Studies, and as a concerned citizen. I’m sure you serve on the Committee on Education because you know our keiki are the key to our future. Countless studies show the importance of licensed school library media specialists on raising test scores. As you just read last week, there remain issues in 4th and 8th grade literacy scores [as the recent news made clear](#) here in Hawai‘i and the nation, but much more could and should be done to help our keiki to be better learners and critical thinkers.

Good principals recognize this and recruit school library media specialists who become leaders on their campus in shaping innovative curricula that bring together disparate fields and help keiki see connections between disciplines like sciences and traditional arts. They also foster a recreational love of reading that encourages people to self-discovery and citizenship.

I wasn’t fortunate enough to grow up in Hawai‘i, but was fortunate that all of my public schools in suburban Minneapolis had amazing librarians who helped me to go beyond the curriculum. They fostered my discovery of different literatures, arts, histories, and even helped me find a safe place when my own family was falling apart. These experiences helped give me empathy and global and local understanding that made me who I am today – perhaps much more than my regular classroom instructors who had to take care of large classes, which included students who were gifted to

those who were struggling academically. Good school library media specialists also assist teachers and counselors to help students recover from challenges like coping with the fires in Maui that are impacting young people there.

I imagine that your committee might feel some hesitations to dictate to the DOE, but I believe that the resolution you have in front of you is a fine expression of your concern and hope that principals will have the resources available to maintain a licensed school library media specialist at each campus.

As an educator of future librarians and school library media specialists, I've seen amazing graduate students enter this field. The new generation of school library media specialists are helping our keiki deal with emotions and trauma (like the disaster on Maui) to the complexities of sorting out information from disinformation that surrounds them during their waking hours online. They've also helped them to connect with literature from the host culture and their own ethnic experience in ways that are deeply healing and liberating.

However, I've been concerned that few of our graduate LIS students stay in the School Library Media pathway because they worry about future employment, so instead they become public librarians, academic librarians, or add to the brain drain leaving the state. Passing this resolution will be an important step in also encouraging students to invest in the education needed to be an engaged school librarian who can help transform our schools to generate future-oriented learners who can think about science and the host culture, or discover innovative connections that will guide our future.

As a proud Democrat, I should add that this echoes the PLATFORM OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII (As Adopted at the 2022 State Convention, May 28, 2022, p3):

*We support establishing a dedicated funding source to deliver a **quality public education and library services to every student, regardless of learning capacity or ability to pay, in an environment conducive to the learning process. These resources shall be made available at every level, from preschool through higher education, including life-long learning.***

Before I conclude, I should point out that these views don't necessarily represent the views of my employer, but I would be remiss if I didn't express my personal and professional conviction that this is one of the most critical issues facing our state, and that your support of this resolution is critical to help make sure we can recruit and retain the best school library media specialists for our keiki. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at my personal email drew.wertheimer@gmail.com. Thank you again for considering my very strong support for this resolution.

Yours with Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew B. Wertheimer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew B. Wertheimer, MLS, Ph.D.

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 1:25:15 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony to the House Committee on Education**Thursday, February 6, 2025 2:00 PM****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 neighbor island.****Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, 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 reliable sources of information, evaluate if information is reliable, and incorporate this information into their assignments. Reading comprehension and the ability to write are also affected.

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. Information and media literacy are skills that everyone can use both inside the classroom and in the real world. 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. HB 961 would help give children the foundation for their own agency.

Thank you,

Tai Arakawa

HB-961

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 1:50:25 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB 961, Relating to Education.

Dear members of the 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 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 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, but librarians play a critical role in helping students develop the research, writing, and critical thinking skills necessary to succeed.

We are also 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 also help students process their emotional responses to social media, providing guidance before they take action. 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 may be having an impact on our students' academic abilities and workforce readiness. This is particularly noticeable in rural and underserved areas, where there are far fewer school librarians available to students as there are in wealthier and urban O'ahu communities.

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

With Hope and Gratitude,

Sunyeen (Sunny) Pai, PhD

Retired Professor, Kapiʻolani Community College