



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 0962 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Department of Education to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. Appropriates funds.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of HB 962 and respectfully offers comments.

A certified librarian has the background and expertise to provide quality library services and 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 for schools 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 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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**Osa Tui, Jr.**  
President

**Logan Okita**  
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## TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB 962 - RELATING TO EDUCATION - SCHOOL LIBRARIAN PILOT FUNDING**

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 692 which requires the Department of Education to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians and appropriate funds.

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 962** Requires the Department of Education to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. Appropriates funds.

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

The Hawai'i Library Association (HLA) **strongly supports HB 962**, which requires the Department of Education to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. This appropriates funds.

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 962** 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

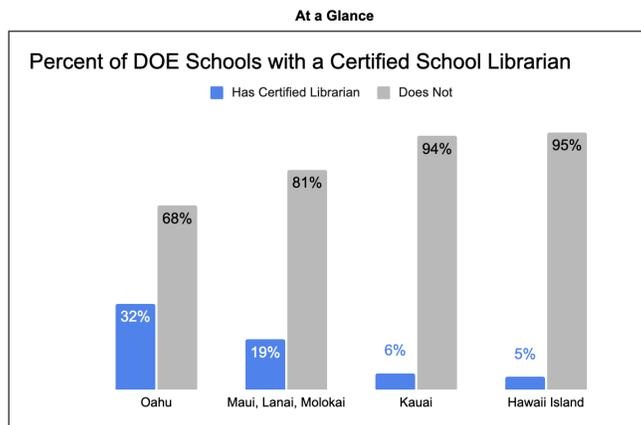
RE: **HB 962** Requires the Department of Education to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. Appropriates funds.

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

The Hawai'i Association of School Librarians (HASL) **strongly supports HB 962**, to establish, administer, and appropriate funds for a two-year pilot program for schools across the state to hire certified school librarians. We hope this initiative, in conjunction with **HB 961** 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, and this bill makes significant progress towards that goal. We urge you to pass **HB 962** in support of Hawai'i students.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Renea Ruark  
President  
Hawai'i Association of School Librarians

February 4, 2025

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT FOR H.B. NO.962 - 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. 962, which seeks to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. As an academic librarian with over a decade of experience in the K-12 setting in Hawai'i, I have seen firsthand the invaluable impact that a full-time, qualified school librarian has on student achievement and lifelong learning.

School librarians are more than just keepers of books; they are educators who foster literacy, research skills, and critical thinking. These are foundational abilities that empower students to succeed academically and in their future careers. In my years working in K-12 schools, I saw the difference a dedicated librarian made in improving student engagement, increasing access to reliable resources, and guiding students in developing information literacy and critical thinking skills in an era of digital misinformation.

The current state of school libraries in Hawai'i is alarming. With only 24% of public schools staffed by school librarians, too many students, particularly those in neighbor island schools, are deprived of equitable access to library services. Research consistently shows that strong school library programs with qualified librarians lead to improved reading comprehension, critical analysis skills, and overall academic performance. This bill provides a critical opportunity to address these disparities by ensuring schools have the financial support to hire professional librarians.

H.B. No. 962 is a necessary investment in Hawai'i's students, ensuring that all learners, regardless of geographic location, have access to a high-quality school library program. I urge you to pass this bill and support efforts to reintegrate librarians into our public schools. Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Me ka ha'aha'a,



Cynthia Texeira, MLISc  
Hawai'i Resources Specialist Librarian

**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:03:11 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 HB962, which establishes a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians.**

**I wholeheartedly agree with the legislature's finding that a well-equipped and staffed library is essential for student success. The research is clear: strong school library programs, led by licensed school librarians, demonstrably improve student academic achievement. The fact that only 24% of Hawaii's public schools have licensed librarians, with even fewer on neighbor islands, is a glaring inequity that this bill seeks to address.**

**As a certified school librarian, I can attest to the invaluable training and knowledge gained through my library studies. My library education provided me with a unique perspective on information literacy, research methodologies, and the ethical considerations surrounding information access. These skills are not easily acquired elsewhere and are critical for empowering students to navigate the complexities of the modern information landscape. My library training has directly translated into my effectiveness as a librarian, enabling me to better serve my students and school community.**

**I particularly appreciate that this bill incentivizes schools to maintain and support their existing library programs by supplementing their current resources. This ensures that schools with existing librarian positions and library budgets can further enhance their services and expand their reach. This supplemental funding will be instrumental in allowing librarians to develop innovative programs, update collections, and provide support to students and teachers.**

**This pilot program is a vital step towards ensuring that all students in Hawai'i have access or continued access to the expertise of a qualified school librarian. I strongly urge the committee to favorably consider HB962] and invest in our students' futures by supporting this crucial legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.**

**Sincerely,**

**Tara Nakata**



**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:34:36 AM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ellen-Rae Cachola	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Education Committee,

Please support HB 962 Relating to Education to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. It outlines how the librarian salary should be used and defines the goals of the work of those in the position.

If enacted, this would provide good opportunity for school librarian professionals to collect data on the need and impact of increasing school librarians and literacy skills at the K-12 level.

Basic textual 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 younger generations. 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.

Sincerely,  
Ellen-Rae Cachola

## **NO.962 - RELATING TO EDUCATION**

February 4, 2025

Aloha Committee on Education,

As a student in a dual master's program at the University of Hawai'i, I strongly support H.B. No. 962, which seeks to establish a two-year pilot program for school librarians in Hawai'i's public schools. Research consistently shows that students in schools with librarians achieve higher academic success, yet only 75 of Hawai'i's 258 public schools have a librarian.

Throughout my own educational journey, school librarians were instrumental in shaping my academic skills and fostering my love of learning. They not only introduced me to research and critical thinking but also provided a supportive space where I could explore new ideas and develop confidence in navigating information. Their guidance prepared me for higher education and continues to influence my success today.

School librarians play a critical role in fostering literacy, research skills, and digital citizenship which prepare students for college and the workforce. This bill provides a vital step toward ensuring equitable access to library services for all students. **I urge you to support this initiative.**

Mahalo nui loa,

Aulani Wagner

My name is Angela Ramey and I am in support of HB 962. I am the certified school librarian at Ho'okele Elementary School in Kapolei. Thank you for allowing testimony for HB 962, 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 962. 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-962**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 5:37:22 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
RE: HB962

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Laura Ginoza and I am an EL teacher and Librarian 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-962**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:10:06 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Paul McDonald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

School libraries need qualified and dedicated school librarians so that students can benefit from those resources for their education.

**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 10:24:21 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Stephanie Kuniyoshi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of HB962

My name is Stephanie Kuniyoshi, and I am a certified school librarian at Wahiawa Elementary School, and I have worked with HIDOE for over 30 years. I write you today to express my fervent support for this vital bill, HB962, which establishes a two-year school librarian pilot program. I implore you to consider the profound impact this funding will have on our students and the future of our communities.

As a school librarian, I am far more than a keeper of books. I am a teacher, a technology integrator, a literacy advocate, a research guide, and a vital partner in every student's educational journey. I teach students crucial information literacy skills, empowering them to navigate the complex digital landscape and discern credible sources from misinformation. In an era where access to information is ubiquitous but the ability to evaluate it is not, these skills are more critical than ever.

Beyond digital literacy, I foster a love of reading. I connect students with books that ignite their imaginations, broaden their horizons, and nurture their empathy. I create a welcoming space where students can explore different genres, discover new authors, and develop a lifelong passion for reading. This love of reading is directly linked to improved academic performance across all subjects, from language arts to science and math. Studies consistently demonstrate a correlation between strong library programs and higher student achievement.

Furthermore, I collaborate with teachers across all disciplines, providing resources and support for curriculum development. I help students conduct research, access databases, and develop critical thinking skills necessary for success in college and careers. I am a resource for both students and teachers, ensuring they have the tools they need to excel.

The unfortunate reality is that many schools, are facing severe budget constraints. Librarians, often seen as a "luxury," are frequently among the first positions to be cut. This shortsighted approach deprives our students of essential skills and resources they need to thrive. Cutting library programs is not a cost-saving measure; it's a disservice to our children, and exacerbates existing inequities and deprives our most vulnerable students of crucial resources.

This pilot program offers a crucial lifeline. It provides a tangible opportunity to demonstrate the undeniable value of school librarians. It allows us to gather data and showcase the positive

impact that a fully staffed and supported library program has on student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and the overall school climate. This data will be invaluable in making a compelling case for sustained funding in the future.

I understand the fiscal challenges 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 investing in our students' futures. It's about ensuring they have the skills and resources they need to succeed in the 21st century.

I urge you to support HB962. Support our students! Support our teachers! Support the future of our community! Thank you very much.

Stephanie Kuniyoshi

Certified School Librarian

**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 11:22:11 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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-962**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 7:18:02 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malia Pimentel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of HB962**

Committee on Education

Hearing Date: February 6, 2025

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Conference Room 309 & Via Videoconference

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

My name is Malia Pimentel, and I am a concerned citizen and advocate for literacy in our schools. I am writing in strong support of HB962, which seeks funding for a certified librarian at our small school and other schools around the state. After a decade without one, our school was finally able to hire a librarian this year, and the difference has been incredible.

I have personally seen a major increase in young children’s excitement about books and reading. Preschoolers now get to visit the library twice a week, borrow books, and develop early literacy skills that will set them up for success. Families have also benefited—many parents sharing how much they appreciate being able to visit the library after school and how their children’s ability to choose books has helped them stay accountable for reading together as a family. Because of this, we’ve seen a noticeable increase in family engagement with reading.

A school library is more than just a room with books—it is a gateway to learning, imagination, and academic success. Without continued funding, our small school and students could potentially lose an essential resource that has already made a lasting impact in less than a year. I urge you to support HB962 and ensure that our students continue to have access to a certified librarian who can foster a lifelong love of reading and help support literacy skills at every grade level.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Malia Pimentel

**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 8:10:50 AM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gwen Sinclair	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB 962. 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 962 will create a path to employing them in all of our public schools. I strongly support HB 962.

Gwen Sinclair

1930 Alewa Dr.

Honolulu, HI 96817

**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:43:22 AM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Rudd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As the adage goes, 'reading is fundamental', and school librarians are the magicians, coaches, teachers and professionals that make reading proficiency happen. I need only to point to Selena Mobbs, librarian at the Waihole school on the Windward side of Oahu, who has motivated students not only to read but to enjoy reading. Not every school on Oahu has a librarian and this bill will provide funds to correct that deficiency. Please consider voting for this bill.

**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 11:54:56 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 962**, which appropriates funds for a two-year librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians.

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>)

I appreciate that the bill requires a program report. I wondered what would be the program's evaluation criteria? Two years is a short time to see statistically significant impacts on formal metrics like test scores. I think it will be valuable to survey parents, teachers, and students to understand the short-term impact of this program.

The funding is specifically for salaries and benefits and the bill states: "Schools with existing librarian positions and library budgets shall receive funds from the school librarian pilot program as a supplement to, and not as a replacement for, existing resources." Would it be possible to hear examples of allowable expenses that the funds would cover if a school already has a librarian?

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.

**HB-962**

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

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tai Arakawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony to the House Committee on Education**

**Thursday, February 6, 2025 2:00 PM**

**RE: HB 962 Requires the Department of Education to establish and administer a two-year school librarian pilot program to provide funding for qualifying schools to hire librarians. Appropriates funds.**

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

**I am writing to support HB 962 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 962 would help give children the foundation for their own agency.**

**Thank you,**

**Tai Arakawa**

**HB-962**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 1:55:21 PM

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

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sunyeen Pai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB 962, Relating to Education.

Dear members of the Education Committee:

I am in full support of HB 962 and hope that this esteemed committee will choose to implement this pilot program with qualifying schools, hoping that this will keep in mind the inequitable distribution of school librarian positions throughout the state.

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, Kapi'olani Community College