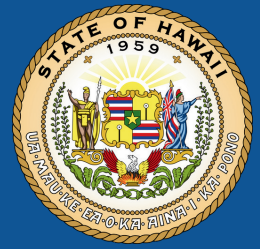


# COMMUNITY REPORT

## SENATE DISTRICT 18 | FEBRUARY 2024

Serving Mililani Town, Waipi'o Gentry, Crestview, Waikele, portion of Waipahu, Village Park, Royal Kunia



Michelle  
**KIDANI**

**Senate Vice  
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### *Aloha Friends and Neighbors,*

As we near the two-month mark of the session, there are several bills where important changes have been made to improve the lives on our residents. With the progress of bills changing quickly in recent weeks, I encourage you to follow the Hawai'i Senate Democrats [Facebook page](#) as well as the Hawai'i State Legislature [Website](#) for additional updates and resources that I hope you may find helpful. Here are some of the bills that have passed second reading in their respective committees and have been referred to the Ways and Means committee as we approach the second half of the 2024 session:

#### [SB2069: RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION](#)

Ka Papahana Kaiapuni schools of the Hawai'i State Department of Education provide students with Hawaiian bicultural and bilingual education. Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in demand for Hawaiian language immersion education. Currently, there are 22 Ka Papahana Kaiapuni schools offering Hawaiian language immersion education, but there is a growing need for more teachers and resources to meet the demand and ensure quality education. This measure aims to ensure sufficient staff for both new and existing Ka Papahana Kaiapuni schools by appropriating funds to DOE for the establishment of 3 curriculum specialist II positions and 10 classroom teacher positions for Ka Papahana Kaiapuni schools.

#### [SB2071: RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION](#)

This measure aims to appropriate funds to DOE to enhance their mobile platforms that provide student mental health and social-emotional health support. It will minimize barriers to social-emotional, academic, and mental health services for Hawai'i's young students to ensure their educational success.

#### [SB2475 SD1: RELATING TO EDUCATION](#)

It is important for our keiki to receive education in a safe and secure environment. However, there has been a rise in the number of people who, despite being accused of harming children, are able to secure employment at other educational institutions. This raises concerns for the safety of children and school communities across the state. To ensure safer learning environments and hold accountable those who have committed egregious actions, this measure establishes a Harm to Students Registry, creating an additional safeguard for all Hawai'i schools.

#### [SB2943 SD1: RELATING TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT](#)

This measure aims to establish a working group within the Department of Transportation to address the workforce shortage of commercial drivers license (CDL) drivers in the State. This scarcity in the number of CDL drivers directly impacts the State's education system, where over 200 additional CDL drivers are required to fully cover school bus routes statewide, causing some students to ride public transit. Due to the critical role that CDL drivers play in the State's infrastructure, this measure will establish a working group to address the scarcity and availability of CDL drivers.

Each of these bills represents a snapshot of our collective efforts to enhance education and address critical workforce development needs. I am dedicated to supporting and promoting the social-emotional and academic achievements of our keiki and their families.

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## 2024 State of the State Address

Legislators, former governors, state and city and county officials, and community members gathered as Governor Green delivered the 2024 State of the State address. It was a somber occasion as we paid tribute to those we lost on Maui and honored the firefighters and first responders who bravely battled the wildfires. Governor Green highlighted last year's educational achievements and outlined education priorities for the upcoming year. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues to sustain our progress, which includes addressing the shortage of teachers, ensuring safe and supportive learning environments, and increasing access to early education.



*Above L-R: Sen. Hashimoto, Sen. Moriwaki, myself, Lahaina community leader Archie Kalepa, Sen. DeCoite, Maui firefighters Koa Bonnell and Keahi Ho, and Sen. Kim; myself with Hakim Ouansafi, Hawai'i Public Housing Authority Executive Director and Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness, John Mizuno.*

## Fukuoka Prefecture Assembly Delegation

As Vice President of the Senate, it was a privilege to join Senate President Ronald D. Kouchi, Senator Lee, and our colleagues in the House to extend a warm aloha to the Fukuoka Prefecture Assembly Delegation, led by the distinguished Chair Katsuji Kohara. Our meeting highlighted the cultural and legislative connections that flourish between our regions and embodies the deep respect and ongoing partnership that Hawai'i cherishes with Fukuoka, Japan.



## Wahiawā Value-Added Product Development Center

Senator Dela Cruz and I had an inspiring evening during our pre-opening visit to the Wahiawā Value-Added Product Development Center (WVAPDC). In partnership with Leeward Community College and the State of Hawai'i, this 33,000 square-foot facility is a hub for food entrepreneurship, education, and manufacturing. The center offers an array of services including product development consultation, lab testing, and production kitchens. As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I am excited for the center's launch. This significant milestone provides relevant and high-quality educational training and workshops for Hawai'i's producers, processors, entrepreneurs, farmers, and students.



*Above L-R: WVAPDC Operations Coordinator Naomi Bluesummers and I; exploring the production kitchens of the facility with Senator Dela Cruz and Operations Coordinator Bluesummers.*



## Mililani HS Boys Varsity Soccer Team HHSAA Division 1 State Champions

**CONGRATULATIONS** Mililani High School Boys Varsity Soccer Team! They are the Division 1 Soccer State Champs. It was a pleasure to celebrate with Principal Fred Murphy on the field with team members Parker Patterson, center back #22, and Maumausolo Uiagalelei, outside back #21. What an awesome game!

## Secondary Student Conference

Student delegates from across Hawai'i gathered at the State Capitol for the Hawai'i State Student Council's (HSSC) annual Secondary Student Conference. For over 50 years, this conference has continued to empower our youth, offering an excellent opportunity for students to identify issues, learn about the legislative process, and gain advocacy experience by proposing solutions to those issues.

This year's conference theme, "Oath to Growth," signifies a commitment to persevere through life's challenges and adversities to become the best version of oneself. I was happy to welcome student delegates from various high schools, including Mililani and Waiākea in my office. Our discussions covered their career aspirations, civic involvement, and insights on legislative matters.

The students participated remarkably in committee hearings, providing oral testimonies and showcasing their research. I commend these students, their teachers and staff for their dedication to education, their participation in the conference, and their vibrant visit. Mahalo nui to Danielle Castro of Mililani High School for organizing this impactful event at the State Capitol annually.



*Top row, L-R: With ambitious students of Mililani High School (MHS) and their advisor Janet Ward; With talented students of Waiākea High School and their advisor Patti Nishimoto. Bottom row, L-R: MHS students sharing their insights; HSSC Vice Chair for Operations Lotus Yasuda; Motivated students from various high schools after our productive breakout session.*

## Waipahu High School Students Attain Seal of Biliteracy

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given to high school graduates who have shown proficiency in both English and one or more additional languages. I was thrilled to join Senator Aquino in congratulating students of Waipahu High School's English Learning Program, who will be graduating with the Seal of Biliteracy.

During their visit to my office, these Waipahu HS students also shared a copy of their recently published book, "Rising From Our Roots." The book is a collection of stories documenting folktales, legends, and immigration experiences of multilingual students of Waipahu High school. It celebrates the languages and cultures that enrich our community, including those from the Philippines, the Marshall Islands, Chuuk, Samoa, and Tonga. I am immensely impressed with our students, their teachers, and community members who worked tirelessly to support this project until its publication.



*Above L-R: Senator Aquino and I with Principal Sheets, Complex Area Superintendent Richard Fajardo, Waipahu High School (WHS) Seal of Biliteracy students and faculty; creative students of WHS showcasing their newly published book in my office.*

## Certificate Presentations

### Recognizing Nick & Nate Herbig of the Pittsburgh Steelers

It was a pleasure to recognize Pittsburgh Steelers guard Nate Herbig and linebacker Nick Herbig earlier this month. Their commitment to enriching Hawai'i's youth through sharing their experiences and insights in sports is commendable. The Herbig brothers have dedicated themselves to offering young athletes opportunities for high-performance training, showcasing their passion for nurturing the next generation of talent.



### Recognizing Former Senator Gil Keith-Agaran

My colleagues and I celebrated the remarkable contributions of former Senator Keith-Agaran, whose leadership as Vice Chair of the Ways and Means Committee left a lasting legacy on Hawai'i's fiscal landscape. In honor of his unwavering dedication and impact, we proudly presented him with a Senate certificate of recognition. We extend our deepest gratitude to Senator Keith-Agaran for his exemplary service and wish him success in his future endeavors. Congratulations and mahalo, Senator Keith-Agaran!



### Agricultural Awareness Day at the Capitol

Engaging with farmers, government agencies, and local businesses from all over our state during Agriculture Awareness Day was a truly enriching experience. The event was sponsored by the Hawai'i Farm Bureau and co-hosted by Senator Gabbard, Senator Richards, Representative Gates, and Representative Kahaloa. It was an opportunity to connect with the organizations and individuals that contribute to our local products, and to taste a diverse range of high-quality value-added goods.



### Moment of Contemplation

One of the recent highlights of the month was the insightful Moment of Contemplation speech delivered on the Senate floor by my legislative aide, Malachi Burrows. Malachi shared that while our experiences in life can vary greatly, we can learn to understand one another through the act of perspective-taking. Here are a few words from his speech:

*"Perhaps however, we can take the time to learn about those who are different from us; those that stand in opposition to us. We can ask questions, analyze, and reflect. Perhaps we can come to a point where we are able to place ourselves in the shoes of someone else and come to some understanding of why they think the way they do or why they feel the way they do."*

— Malachi Burrows, Legislative Aide

