



MidWeek

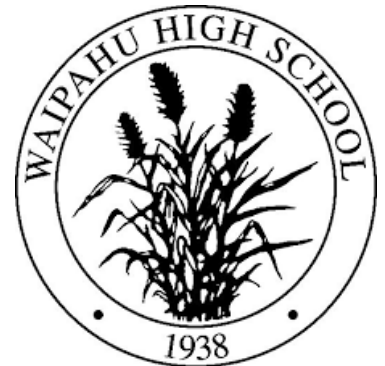
This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in the MidWeek **WEST VOICE** section on Wednesday, January 24, 2018.

2018 session underway

Since early December, we have held informational briefings with all state departments as we look at the second year of the two-year budget we approved last year to make sure priorities are being addressed and to adjust allocations to programs as necessary. As chair of the Senate's Committee on Education, I will continue to focus on ways to make sure schools can best support our students and teachers as they adapt to 21st century learning environments.

Close to home, I have been visiting the Waipahu High School campus regularly to meet with Principal Keith Hayashi's leadership team for some very preliminary discussions about a new science and technology building. The school's Academy of Health and Sciences and the Academy of Natural Resources are fully accredited by the National Career Academy Coalition as Model Academies, and a new science classroom and lab building would provide even more opportunities for students to excel in STEM studies.

This legacy high school will be planning activities to commemorate 80 years as a point of pride for the Waipahu community since its founding in 1938. Watch for information about celebrating this milestone!



A heartwarming success

It is always gratifying to see the tangible results of my legislative work, especially when those results happen quickly. I came up with a new approach to dealing with the critical shortage of qualified, licensed teachers for our public school classrooms, especially at hard-to-staff campuses. I wanted to support folks already in the DOE system – Substitute Teachers, Emergency Hires and Education Assistants – who were ready to take a next step and earn their teacher licenses. I pushed for scholarship funds which were allocated in the budget we approved in the 2017 legislative session, and the UH College of Education under Dean Donald Young moved quickly to develop an online and after-hours class schedule to accommodate these working professionals.

The beginning of this semester's Grow Our Own instructional program for working education professionals seeking teacher licenses.

I plan to advocate for additional funding to support this important initiative.



Continued next page . . .

Earlier this month, I was on the UH Manoa campus for orientation of the first group of more than 50 individuals who enrolled in the **Grow Our Own** program. It was an emotional and heartwarming moment – not only for me, but also for the new students. Many of them approached me, some with tears in their eyes, to let me know that they were so grateful for this opportunity for professional improvement. I could feel their passion for education, and for the students in their schools and classrooms, and I am so pleased to have been a part of this innovative approach to increasing and improving our corps of dedicated teachers.

I should note that in this first group of teacher-students five are from the Waipahu area. The College of Education says there is already a waiting list for the next group's sessions. I plan to aggressively advocate for additional funding to support the **Grow Our Own** initiative.



Happy New Year!

In just a couple of weeks, we will welcome the Year of the Dog in the Asian lunar calendar cycle. According to one interpretive source, the Dog is the symbol of intelligence and protection, and 2018 should be a good time for lifestyle changes and for the start of new business ventures. That sends a message of hope, and perhaps that's a good watchword for our work as lawmakers as our session begins. Kung Hee Fat Choy!