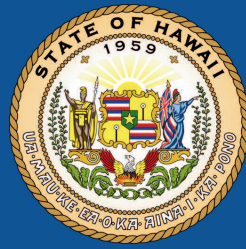


SENATE DISTRICT 18

COMMUNITY REPORT



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



Michelle
KIDANI

**Senate Vice
President**

Chair
Committee on
Education

Vice Chair
Committee on
Higher Education

Member
Committee on
Ways and Means

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Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

Our hearts cannot ignore the recent Maui wildfire and its devastating impact. The damage inflicted on schools and the surrounding areas underscores the pressing need for accessible education, resources, and a path to rebuild. The heart-wrenching loss of life and properties exacted by the wildfire serves as a stark reminder of nature's force, but one that is matched by our unyielding spirit of resilience and unity. As we confront the challenges ahead, I am inspired by the aloha for one another, as we always have in times of trial.

Immense aloha was present on August 19th as we joined forces to host a donation drive benefiting Maui. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my daughter, Malia Cook, and her Whitmore Economic Development Group for spearheading this event. Also collaborating was Senator Donovan Dela Cruz and Mililani High School. The volunteers were surprised by a visit by our Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke, as well as Senator Lynn DeCoite who represents part of Maui County. We ended the day with **38 pallets** packed with vital supplies for Maui and almost **\$10,000 cash donations** for Hawai'i Community Foundation-Maui Strong Fund and the American Red Cross!

The legislative session has winded down, yet there is much to do over the interim. During the legislative session, we've tackled some significant issues, and I'm happy to report that several new bills related to education have been signed into law. These laws are all about empowering our educators and students, ensuring that everyone has access to quality education along with increasing our early childhood workforce. I truly believe that investing in education is investing in our future, and I'm excited to see how these changes will positively impact our communities.

As we move forward into the next phase of the year, my commitment remains unwavering in advocating for increased funding and resources for our schools, cultivating the best possible learning environment and healing for our students.



L-R: My daughter and Mililani High School Alumna Malia Cook, Lt. Gov. Luke, Sen. DeCoite, and Mililani High School Principal Fred Murphy.

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Ways and Means: Maui & Moloka'i Visit

Before the devastating Maui wildfire, I had the opportunity to visit multiple sites on Maui and Moloka'i as a member of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means (WAM) in July. State officials and community members provided tours and presentations on a range of priorities including economic and workforce development, investments in infrastructure, the formation of a food and product innovation network, the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission, and the future of Kalaupapa. Kalaupapa has only four leprosy residents remaining. Discussions have begun as to what the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands will do with this property once these residents pass on. Site visits like these, especially on the neighbor islands and rural areas, allow me to learn about various State programs and projects, engage in discussion with leaders from public and private sectors, and learn from those working first-hand within our communities. Lt. Gov. Luke, representatives from the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation, the Department of Accounting and General Services, and the Transit-Oriented Development Council shared plans for workforce housing and preschools developing across Maui County.



Top: Members of the WAM Committee with Lt. Gov. Luke, Rep. Woodson, and Rep. Hashimoto at the Haggai International Institute in Kihei. Bottom L-R: Sen. Dela Cruz, Sen. DeCoite, Sen. Moriwaki and I at Father Damien's memorial in Kalaupapa; Park Ranger Sakurada, Sen. DeCoite, and I taking a group photo; WAM Committee members on a tour of Maui Nui Venison facility.

Maui Wildfire Relief Donation Drive



Organized by Deputy Sergeant-At-Arms Park Kaleiwahea and my colleagues, the Maui Wildfire Relief Donation Drive at the State Capitol on August 10 and 11 was an incredible effort to support our 'ohana in Maui. The overwhelming success of the donation drive resulted in over 10,000 pounds of toiletries, diapers, baby formula, toys, clothing, bedding, household goods, and non-perishable food delivered to Maui. I am sincerely thankful for all our neighbors for their donations, our volunteers for organizing and packaging much-needed goods, and the donations of food and supplies in support of our volunteers. Witnessing the O'ahu community unite in such a significant manner to stand by our Maui 'ohana is truly inspiring and is an uplifting reminder of the collective strength that Hawai'i embodies.



ALPSS Summer Student Summit

Senator Dela Cruz, Senator Richards, and I had an inspiring day at the HIDOE's Alternative Learning Programs, Supports and Services (ALPSS) Summer Student Summit at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. ALPSS empowers at-promise high school students with innovative instructional strategies, reigniting their passion for learning. I had the pleasure to witness the students' presentations in their chosen pathway of leadership, student empowerment, and media production, which showcased their tremendous talent. As Chair of the Senate Education Committee, this event reaffirmed why we are committed to supporting initiatives that prioritize the educational needs of all students. I am grateful to the HIDOE's Alternative Learning Branch, UH Mānoa, and community partners for making this event possible.



L-R: Sen. Dela Cruz and I; Sen. Richards and I with students participating in this year's showcase.

Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program

We celebrated the launch of the Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program, which received a significant allocation of \$660,000 from the state budget. This initiative aims to support UH students enrolled in early childhood education programs by providing tuition stipends. As a collaborative effort between the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL), the University of Hawai'i (UH) system, and through generous donations from the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation, the program reflects a shared commitment to nurturing the early childhood workforce and fostering the growth of young minds. I am grateful to our legislative partners, including Lt. Gov. Luke and Rep. Woodson, for recognizing the importance of well-trained educators in expanding preschool access.



Education Initiatives Bill Signing

Governor Green recently signed a set of education bills aimed at improving early childhood education, workforce development, teacher housing, and funding for school facilities. Notably, Senate Bill 941 allocated \$170 million for teacher housing at three high schools. Other bills established a Child Care Accreditation Program to assist childcare providers in obtaining accreditation and expanded the Preschool Open Doors Program, providing better access to high-quality preschool education. These measures reflect the Legislature's strong commitment to enhancing early learning and education and the successful collaboration between our public and private agencies; our collective efforts play a crucial role in meeting critical educational needs and creating a nurturing environment for every child while providing teachers the necessary tools to succeed.



L-R: BOE Chairperson Haruki, Lt. Gov. Luke, Superintendent Hayashi, Rep. Perruso, Rep. Woodson and I with Governor Green.

Riding the Skyline

Honolulu's rail system, Skyline, recently opened its doors to the public. My colleagues and I had the chance to explore the nine stations stretching from Kapolei to Aloha Stadium. The site visit allowed us to experience first-hand the seamless operations of the rail and the array of thoughtful amenities provided for various types of riders. I was impressed by the swift 22-minute journey from East Kapolei to Halawa. The successful operationalization of this phase of the rail was the result of concerted efforts from numerous dedicated individuals. I am thrilled for residents and visitors to benefit from the convenience and accessibility that Skyline offers.



L-R: Being the conductor of the train, "all aboard!"; former staff Gerri Kaneshiro, Deputy Sergeant-At-Arms Park Kaleiwahea, and DOE Branch Director of Policy, Innovation, Planning and Evaluation Ken Kakesako joined Superintendent Hayashi, DOE Chief of Staff Camille Masutomi, and I at the fare gates of the Aloha Stadium Station; intern Hailey Oh, Sen. Dela Cruz, my committee clerk Lisa Barnett, and I on the Skyline.

30th Annual Nagasaki Peace Ceremony

I had the opportunity to speak at the 30th Annual Nagasaki Peace Ceremony and was invited, alongside Mayor Rick Blangiardi and my fellow community leaders, to ring the Nagasaki Peace Bell in remembrance of those affected by the bombings of August 1945. In the moments leading to the ringing of the Nagasaki Peace Bell, I renewed my commitment to forgiveness and understanding and was inspired by the gathering to continue forging ahead with hearts united in the pursuit of a peaceful tomorrow.

L-R: Rev. Takamasa Yamamura, Mayor Blangiardi and I; the three of us ringing the Nagasaki Peace Bell.



In Memoriam: Darrell Thomas Young

President, Waikele Community Association



We say a fond aloha to Darrell Thomas Young, 60, who passed away on July 5, 2023 surrounded by family and friends. He was a dedicated individual whose life was marked by selflessness and devotion to community service. Graduating in 1981 from Kamehameha Schools and

obtaining a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame, Darrell was a results-driven and team-oriented professional serving in various state, city, private, and community positions. Most recently, Darrell served as the City and County of Honolulu's Program Administrator for the Department of Community Services, where he fought to help individuals experiencing homelessness. Survived by his wife Jamie, sons Carson and Zachary, mother Marjorie, and brother Kevin (Carolyn), Darrell leaves behind a legacy of service, musical passion, and love.

BOE Student Member 2022-2023



Maverick Yasuda, a senior at Waipahu High School, served as the 32nd Student Member of the Hawai'i State Board of Education, representing 170,000 public school students statewide. He maintained a 4.0 GPA and graduated with honors. Maverick shared with me during an office visit that he will be attending Harvard University in the fall, and he hopes to become an individual who affects change on a local, national and global level as an environmental advocate, politician and businessperson. Thank you, Maverick, for being the voice for our students this past year! We are so proud of you!