

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 1088

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 14 2025

RE: H.B. No. 620
H.D. 1
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Education, to which was referred H.B. No. 620, H.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Establish a state policy to promote braille literacy for eligible blind students;
- (2) Require the individualized education programs and section 504 plans of eligible blind students to include the assessment and evaluation of eligible blind students' reading and writing abilities, instruction of braille, and provision of braille instructional materials under certain circumstances;
- (3) Require the Department of Education to establish a Braille Literacy Resource Center; and
- (4) Appropriate funds.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Education, Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission, National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, and seven individuals.



Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Human Services and Department of the Attorney General.

Your Committee finds that reading and writing skills are essential for all students to become literate and prepared for future academic, professional, and life goals. Braille, a tactile language, allows low vision or blind students to develop literacy skills that are essential for participating in equal educational opportunities. However, certain eligible students who may qualify for braille literacy services are not actively learning braille, putting the student at risk of falling behind their peers. As participation in educational activities increase life satisfaction and self-esteem, offering enhanced support for blind and low vision students through braille literacy will increase independence, inclusion, and diversity within the State's educational communities. Therefore, this measure is a proactive braille literacy approach that ensures all low vision or blind students can achieve academic success through a high quality education.

Your Committee notes that S.B. No. 530, S.D. 1 (Regular Session of 2025), which was previously heard by your Committee, is a substantially similar measure that establishes the Hawaii Braille Literacy Education Act. S.B. No. 530, S.D. 1, establishes a state policy to promote braille, requires braille educational services for students with low vision or blindness to assess individual student abilities and needs, and establishes a Braille Literacy Resource Center. Your Committee concludes that the language in S.B. 530, S.D. 1, is preferable because it is fully inclusive and accurately reflects all students who are eligible for braille literacy services and also incorporates various amendments from stakeholders to ensure accessibility and equity for blind or low vision students who require braille literacy resources.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Deleting its contents and inserting the contents of S.B. 530, S.D. 1, a substantially similar measure, which:



- (A) Establishes braille literacy as a policy of the State;
 - (B) Requires section 504 plans or individualized education programs to provide low vision or blind students the opportunity to receive braille educational services and administer literacy assessments for eligible low vision and blind students to include braille instruction and the use of braille;
 - (C) Establishes the Braille Literacy Resource Center; and
 - (D) Appropriates funds for the establishment of the Braille Literacy Resource Center; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Education that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 620, H.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 620, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

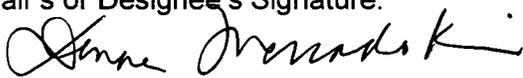
Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Education,


MICHELLE N. KIDANI, Chair



The Senate
 Thirty-Third Legislature
 State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Education
EDU

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:		
HB 620, HD1	EDU, WAM	3/10/2025		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____				
The Recommendation is: <input type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311 <input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
KIDANI, Michelle N. (C)	/			
KIM, Donna Mercado (VC)	/			
HASHIMOTO, Troy N.	/			
KANUHA, Dru Mamo	/			
DECORTE, Samantha	/			
TOTAL	5			
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
Distribution: Original Yellow Pink Goldenrod File with Committee Report Clerk's Office Drafting Agency Committee File Copy				

*Only one measure per Record of Votes