



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1188, RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: Thursday, January 30, 2025 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Anne T. Horiuchi or Randall M. Wat, Deputy Attorneys General

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

The new section proposed to be added to chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), by section 2 of this bill establishes a Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program (Program) to support teacher retention at public and charter schools classified as rural and underserved; requires the Department of Education to provide annual reports to the Legislature; and appropriates funds for the Program.

Subsection (b)(2) of the proposed new section provides that one of the requirements for an individual to be eligible for stipend consideration is that the individual not own a residence "within commuting distance from the school at which" the individual is employed. Page 2, line 17, through page 3, line 2. The term "within commuting distance" is vague. The Department suggests that a distance in miles be included in this eligibility requirement.

The Department also suggests that additional wording regarding the repayment of stipends be included in the bill. We suggest revising subsection (e) of the proposed new section, on page 3, lines 15-19, of the bill, adding new subsections (f) through (i), as set forth below, and re-alphabetizing (f) (page 3, line 20, through page 4, line 3), as subsection (j):

(e) If the recipient fails to satisfy the work requirements in accordance with subsection (d), the recipient shall repay the total amount of stipend funds received as a loan repayable to the department. The repayment shall be subject to the terms and conditions set by the department~~[-]~~, **including circumstances under which recipients may be eligible for deferment or forgiveness due to hardship or inability to secure employment, as well as potential for fees for the collection of delinquent repayment.**

(f) Stipend funds repaid by a stipend recipient pursuant to subsection (e) shall be deposited into the [an appropriate fund should be designated here].

(g) The department may accept federal funds to support the teacher workforce housing stipend program.

(h) In accordance with chapter 103D, the department may enter into written contracts with collection agencies to collect delinquent repayment of stipends owed to the department pursuant to subsection (e). A collection agency that enters into a written contract with the department to collect delinquent stipend repayments pursuant to this section may collect a fee from the debtor in accordance with the terms of, and up to the amounts authorized in, the written contract.

(i) The department may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to implement and administer the stipend program, including the terms of repayment pursuant to subsection (e).

(Suggested changes are in bold.) The suggested wording is modeled after the repayment provisions of section 302L-9, HRS, relating to the Hawaii Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 01/30/2025

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 1188 RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program to support teacher retention at public and charter schools classified as rural and underserved. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony and comments regarding HB 1188, regarding teacher workforce housing.

The Department supports efforts to address Hawai'i's teacher recruitment and retention challenges. Our state's high cost of living and a shortage of affordable housing impact our ability to attract and retain qualified educators throughout our school system.

The Department seeks clarification on the bill's definition of "rural or underserved". The Department currently designates schools as hard-to-staff.

While the Department supports the intent of this measure, successful implementation would require dedicated staff resources to verify eligibility, process applications, and administer the stipend program. The Department appreciates the inclusion of funding in this proposal but asks that any additional funding or positions do not affect the Department's Board approved budget requests.

The Department remains committed to working with the Legislature to develop comprehensive solutions to our educator workforce challenges.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, Ed. D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR:	HB 1188 Relating to Teacher Housing
DATE:	January 30, 2025
TIME:	2:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE:	Committee on Education
ROOM:	Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
FROM:	Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director State Public Charter School Commission

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 1188 with Amendments** which establishes a teacher workforce housing stipend program to strengthen the teaching profession, support educational equity, and invest in the success of Hawaii’s students and schools.

The Commission appreciates the inclusion of public charter schools in this measure as charter schools and charter school teachers are a part of the public education system. The Commission offers the following amendment (in blue font) in Section 2 of this measure (Page 2, Lines 19-21) as it clarifies the inclusion of charter school teachers (who are employed by the charter school that the teacher works at):

302A- Teacher workforce housing; stipend program; rural and underserved schools.

- (a) There is established a teacher workforce housing stipend program to be administered by the department to support teacher retention at any public school designated as rural or in an underserved area.
- (b) An individual shall be eligible for stipend consideration if the individual:
 - (1) Is employed full-time by the department in a public school or by a public charter school in an area designated as rural or underserved; and

The Commission is available to work with this committee, the DOE, and our public charter schools in moving this legislation forward. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: HB 1188 – Relating to Immigration

Position: Support

Hearing: Thursday, January 30, 2025, 2:00 pm, Room 309

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) supports HB 1188, which would establish a much-needed Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program. Hawai'i's high cost of living, with homes costing 2.7 times the national average, poses a significant challenge to attracting and retaining qualified teachers, especially in rural and underserved communities. The ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) initiative reports that a family of four in Hawai'i needs to earn \$107,796 annually to afford basic necessities, a threshold many teachers and their families do not meet. This financial strain forces many educators to seek second jobs or leave the profession altogether, leading to high turnover rates and a reliance on emergency hires.

The Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program proposed in HB 1188 would provide crucial financial assistance to help teachers afford housing costs. This would not only alleviate some of the economic burden on educators but also serve as a powerful recruitment and retention tool. By enabling teachers to live closer to their schools and communities, we can foster stronger

relationships, improve teacher morale, and ultimately enhance the quality of education for our keiki.

We urge the committee to pass HB 1188 and invest in the well-being of our teachers. This program is a vital step towards ensuring that all students in Hawai'i have access to a quality education.

Mahalo.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The House of Representatives
Committee on Education
Committee of Health

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

January 30, 2025

H.B. 1188 – RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on H.B. 1188 which proposes to establish a Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program to support teacher retention at public and charter schools classified as rural and underserved.

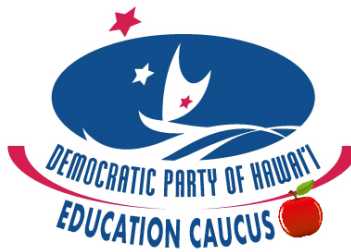
Under Act 172, SLH 2023, the legislature identified affordable housing as a key strategy for recruiting and retaining all educators, not just the teacher workforce. Hawaii's public-school workforce includes educational assistants, school security attendants, office assistants, account clerks, and school health assistants, just to name a few. The employees who hold these positions make less than a starting Hawaii teacher's salary but are just as important to retain, especially in our rural and underserved schools.

The legislature should consider providing a "workforce home stipend program" which would include other government employees such as the ones mentioned above and the thousands of others in non-teaching positions to be eligible for a stipend. They are just as committed to providing a high-quality learning environment to support Hawaii's public-school students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 1188.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



LATE

HOUSE BILL 1188, RELATING TO TEACHER WORKFORCE HOUSING

JANUARY 30, 2025 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1188, relating to teacher workforce housing, which establishes a Teacher Workforce Housing Stipend Program to support teacher retention at public and charter schools classified as rural and underserved.

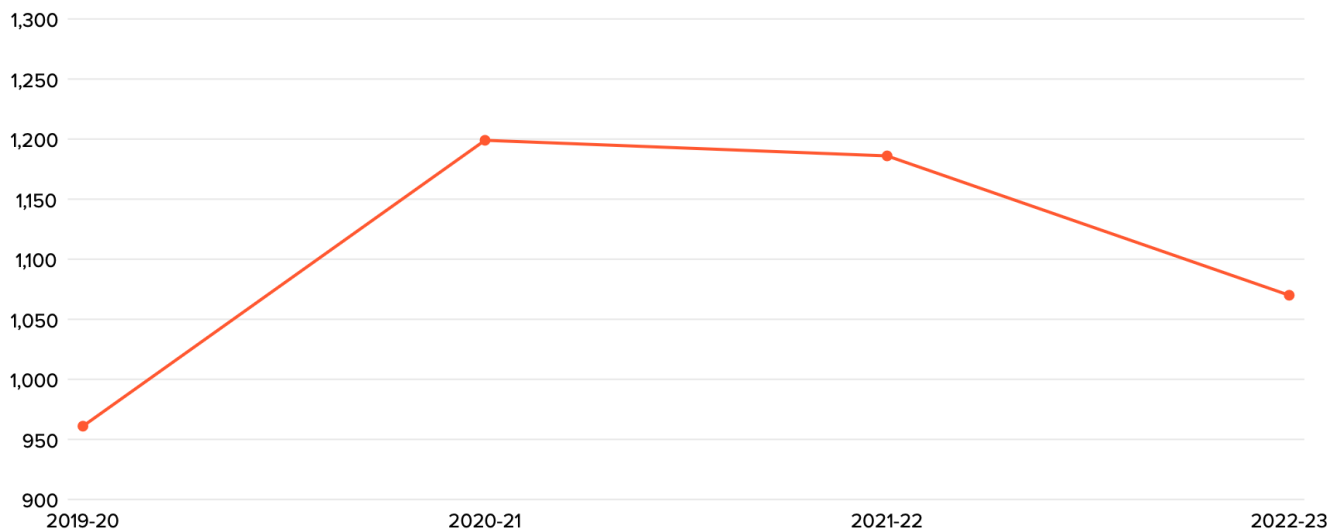
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education found that when compared with other high-cost geographic locations, Hawai'i teachers are paid \$7,700 to \$26,000 less than their peers in school districts with similar costs of living, depending on length of service.

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the State Legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. **Establishing programs to make housing affordable for teachers and other members of the education workforce would help offset the low wages experienced by Hawai'i's educators.**

A 2022 survey by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University placed Hawai'i among the 10 states with the lowest teacher-to-population ratio. Moreover, as *Honolulu Civil Beat* reported in August of last year, voluntary teacher separations remain high, at over 1,000 per year (see chart below).

Voluntary teacher separations, 2019 to 2023

The number of teachers annually leaving the DOE remains high but has started to decline following the pandemic.



DOE has not released data for the 2023-24 school year.

Chart: Megan Tagami/Civil Beat • Source: [Hawaii DOE](#)

These trends are further exacerbated by the aging teacher workforce. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association has repeatedly cautioned against being overly optimistic about positive teacher retention data, **with a wave of experienced educators expected to retire in the next few years.**

We need to find permanent solutions to address our state's ongoing teacher shortage.

Hawai'i residents face some of the highest housing costs in the nation, at more than twice the national average. Researchers who authored the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach 2024* report found that a full-time worker would need to earn \$44.60/hour—or \$92,768 per year—to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market value in our state, with Honolulu experiencing a 67 percent increase in fair market rent between 2005 and 2015. Average rent for a two-bedroom unit surpassed \$2,000 well before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

One out of every four households in Hawai'i report that they are “doubling up” or are three paychecks or less away from being homeless, per the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and

Economic Justice. Additionally, over 60 percent of households are severely cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, a number that rises to over 80 percent of extremely low-income households.

A recent survey conducted by the Holomua Collective found that 60 percent of residents face worries about not being able to pay a monthly bill and 63 percent face difficulties in saving money from their paychecks for future emergencies, retirement, or other expenses. A staggering 70 percent of middle-class respondents to Holomua's survey say they will—or are unsure if they will have to—relocate in the coming years. As Holomua Collective states in its report on the findings, “These are the very workers powering Hawai‘i’s economy, now on the brink of leaving their homes behind.” That population includes the teachers who are tasked with educating our keiki.

To deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we must recruit and retain qualified educators. Our children’s future depends on our ability to meet that challenge.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com

HB-1188

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 4:34:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keoni Shizuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee members of the House Committee on Education,

I am testifying in support of this bill.

Being a former teacher in the DOE system, I fully understand the challenges, especially when it comes to teaching in schools in rural and underserved areas. The commute and resources are an extra challenge for teachers who are very poorly paid for the amount of work that they put in to educate our next generation. This bill can help ease that burden and increase teacher retention. I know a stipend to help cover the costs of commuting or even workforce housing would have definitely been motivation to remain a teacher.

Please consider supporting this bill,

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1188

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 5:17:13 PM

Testimony for EDN on 1/30/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorena Martinez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please accept this testimony in support of HB1188. Our educators are burdened enough and our communities thrive in stability. This kind of bill passing alleviates major burden and continues to expand stability for our learners and caregivers.

Mahalo,

Lo Martinez - Resident of West Maui