

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI  
SUPERINTENDENT

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

**Date:** 02/04/2025

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Bill Title:** HB 1202 RELATING TO TEACHER COMPENSATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Promotes teacher retention by recognizing prior teaching experience at an equal salary rating for entering or reentering teachers into the Department of Education.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1202 relating to teacher compensation.

Currently, the Department credits up to 6 years of teaching experience towards initial salary classification because Article XX - Salaries, Section "I" of the Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) Unit 5 collective bargaining agreement states in part:

"Those teachers with prior experience shall be placed in the same step as in-service teachers with equivalent years of service. No more than six (6) years of verified non-DOE teaching experience may be credited as determined by the DOE."

While the Department acknowledges Hawai'i's pressing need to attract and retain teachers, it believes that employee compensation is best addressed through collective bargaining.

Should this bill move forward, the Department requests additional funding to adequately compensate current teachers with over six years of non-DOE teaching experience and any newly hired teachers. The Department asks that this additional funding not impact the current Governor-approved budget requests.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1202.

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:06:29 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andy Omer Gokce	Kulia Academy	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Honorable Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,**

My name is **Andy Omer Gokce**, and I submit this testimony on behalf of **Kūlia Academy**, a public charter school dedicated to providing high-quality education to Hawaii’s students. We **strongly support HB1202**, which seeks to ensure fair and equitable teacher compensation by recognizing prior teaching experience and military service when determining salary ratings for incoming or returning teachers.

At Kūlia Academy, we believe that **highly qualified and experienced educators are the foundation of student success**. However, **disparities in teacher salary recognition** have created challenges in recruiting and retaining experienced educators. By ensuring that all teachers, regardless of where they previously taught, receive salary ratings equivalent to their peers in Hawaii’s Department of Education, **HB1202 helps to attract and retain high-quality educators in our schools**.

Additionally, the recognition of military service in salary determinations **honors those who have served our country and wish to transition into education**. Many veterans bring valuable leadership, discipline, and real-world experience to the classroom, enriching the learning environment for students. Providing appropriate credit for their military service aligns with Hawaii’s commitment to supporting veterans in meaningful career opportunities.

This bill is **a crucial step toward addressing teacher shortages** and ensuring that all public schools—both traditional and charter—can offer competitive compensation to attract and retain top teaching talent. By passing **HB1202**, you will be investing in Hawaii’s students by ensuring they receive instruction from experienced and well-compensated educators.

We **respectfully urge** the Legislature to support **HB1202** to strengthen Hawaii’s education system. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Mahalo,**

**Andy Omer Gokce**

**Executive Director  
Kūlia Academy**

2340 Omilo Ln. Honolulu, HI 96819  
andy@kuliaacademy.org | (808) 551-1347

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 4:24:58 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Linda Morgan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a retired teacher, I strongly support HB1202. When I moved here from California in 2001, I took a \$20,000 pay cut from my elementary teaching position at Paradise Unified School District to teach at Ka'u High and Pahala Elementary because I was not given credit for all the years I taught before I came to Hawaii. I only taught for the Hawaii DOE for 2 years. Although my salary was not the only reason I quit teaching here, it certainly contributed to my decision. Honoring teachers' prior experience by giving them full credit on the salary schedule would help retain teachers and reduce the teacher shortage.

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 3:47:36 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ryan Samonte	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

Dear Members of the House of Representatives,

I am writing to voice my strong support for House Bill 1202, which proposes amendments to Section 302A-627 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes regarding teacher compensation. As an educator with 18 years of experience in Hawaii, I am directly impacted by the inequities in the current system that fails to acknowledge the full scope of teachers' professional backgrounds.

Hawaii is grappling with a severe teacher shortage, with the critical need for a qualified teacher in every classroom. We're seeing hundreds, if not thousands, of emergency hires throughout the state, underscoring the urgency to attract more educators. This legislation could significantly aid in filling these numerous vacancies, ensuring our students receive the education they deserve. The combination of a high cost of living and salaries that do not match the expertise of teachers, especially those with out-of-state experience, is a major barrier.

Currently, despite my extensive experience, I am paid at the same level as a teacher with only 8 years of service within the DOE. This situation is echoed by many of my peers, including one colleague with 29 years of teaching experience who is also placed on the salary step of an 8-year DOE veteran. The HSTA has testified that this affects around one thousand teachers.

HB 1202 would introduce fairness by ensuring that all teaching experience, regardless of where it was gained, is valued equally for salary purposes. This would greatly enhance teacher retention and morale, recognizing the dedication and expertise of our educators.

I propose that this bill also mandates a review of current employees' salaries to reflect their complete professional experience. A repricing would address ongoing inequities and help resolve the compensation issues comprehensively. There's no justification for differentiating between past and present teaching service in salary calculations.

By endorsing HB 1202, we would tackle the teacher shortage, foster equity, elevate teacher morale, and ultimately improve educational outcomes for Hawaii's students.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I urge you to support and broaden the scope of this bill to correct the disparities in teacher compensation.

Sincerely,  
David Reid  
Member HSTA  
Teacher at Maui Waena Intermediate School

TESTIMONY OF  
**LARRY S VERAY**

TO THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

***IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1202 WITH AMENDMENTS***

**RELATED TO TEACHER COMPENSATION**

February 2, 2025

Aloha, Chair Woodson and Vice Chair La Chica and committee members. I am Larry Veray, Chairman for the Pearl City Neighborhood Board No. 21. I am submitting this testimony as an individual and U.S. Navy Veteran. **I am in STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1202 with recommended amendments.**

I agree with this bill that allows by recognizing prior teaching experience at an equal salary rating for those entering or reentering teachers back into the Department of Education that will definitely promote teacher retention.

As a former U.S. Navy Veteran, I ask that you consider amending the bill to also include active military Reserve personnel to be given credit by the Department of Education for those reserve personnel with teachers experience in the determination of teacher's salary, eligibility for previous military leave and absence, and for other purposes of seniority. I am in agreement with the language in this bill.

**Please approve HB1202 with recommended amendments. Mahalo!**

*Larry S. Veray*

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:29:23 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Freudig	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

I fully support this bill as a way to retain our teachers. When I entered the Hawaii Department of Education, I had 14 years of prior teaching experience in another state and I took a large pay cut by accepting a teaching position on Kaua'i. If we want to recruit teachers from out of state, which we have been doing since I've worked here (the past 19 years), then we need to acknowledge that teachers coming in from other states are most likely taking a pay cut unless we compensate them for their years of service. Cost of living is not cheap in Hawaii, as you all know, and by passing this bill and allotting funding for this, we have a much better chance of recruiting and retaining teachers with years of teaching experience.

Mahalo,

Caroline Freudig

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:50:24 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Kramer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:56:28 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ryan Yoshizawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Thank you!

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:07:58 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kamuela Werner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha:

I strongly support HB1202.

Me ke aloha,

Kamuela Werner

Social Studies and Agriculture Teacher

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:30:44 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jen Scarborough	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Scarborough, I am a teacher at Waipahu Intermediate School in the Leeward District, on the island of O’ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB1202, which seeks to promote teacher retention by recognizing prior teaching experience at an equal salary rating for entering or reentering teachers into the Department of Education.

I have been working with English Learners for the past 13 years. I have worked as an English Learner program coordinator in Spain, served as the head instructor for an English Language school teaching Business English in Tokyo Japan, and over these last 4 years, I have been supporting English Learners here on O’ahu at Waipahu Intermediate School. In addition, I obtained a Master of Arts in Teaching, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MAT- TESOL) from the University of Southern California, and while I believe I am more than prepared, and qualified to teach English Learners, I struggle to make ends meet. When I began teaching at Waipahu Intermediate School, I was designated by the HTSB (Hawaii Teacher Standards Board) as a new teacher, which placed me at the absolute bottom of the teacher pay scale. As you might imagine, it is quite difficult to make ends meet, especially as a single mother in Hawaii in her 40s.

In 2022 I filed for divorce to escape the psychological & financial abuse I had been experiencing for the last 10 years. I quickly found out that because my income was so low, I would have an extremely difficult time finding an apartment that I could afford. I was constantly “beaten” by military personnel or someone else with a higher-paying job. I eventually found a place, unfortunately, that was infested with cockroaches, but it was all I could afford. I was paying 1500\$ per month + utilities, not to include food, gas to get to work or necessities. In total, I was looking at \$1800 per month which is more than 50% of my monthly take-home pay. I would love to say that things have improved for me financially, except they haven’t. There are times when I am unable to feed both of us, so I usually go without. I am frequently only a few days away from my electricity being turned off because I often need to choose between electricity and food. My vehicle is old and slowly falling apart, and I am unable to afford any repairs or regular maintenance, buying a used vehicle is just simply out of reach, even though I have excellent credit, I cannot afford to pay larger payments. I cannot afford to get a divorce because I cannot

afford to pay a lawyer, so I have been stuck, unable to collect the child support that my ex should be paying, which is adding to the daily struggle of just existing.

I am in support of HB1202, I know that it will not only help our huge community of teachers, it will also support teacher retention. Teachers need to make enough to survive in some level of comfort. We are better teachers when we aren't worried about where our next meal is going to come from, or if our electricity is going to be shut off. Or even if we might lose our job due to an inability to get to work due to vehicle repairs. We are expected to love and support other people's children no matter how they treat us and no matter what we are paid. What about us and our mental safety, how can we be expected to teach at 100% if there is so much unnecessary external stress? How can the state of Hawaii improve its school system if its teachers are living in abject poverty? How can you even expect Hawaii NOT to have a teacher shortage? No one wants to work here because you are always just a paycheck away from homelessness as a Hawaii teacher. We work too hard for such measly pay, and I would argue that teachers in general are one of the few professions out there that is expected to be constantly learning how to be better at their jobs, yet teacher pay is depressing in comparison to someone else in say, engineering with the same education and experience.

We need to do better for our teachers, I encourage you to please pass this bill. We cannot keep raising DoE district level and Admin salaries while teachers continue to struggle. Please feel free to contact me for any additional information.

Respectfully,

Jen Scarborough  
MAT-TESOL  
7th & 8th Grade ESOL & Newcomer Teacher  
Waipahu Intermediate School

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:39:03 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cindy R Ajimine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly SUPPORT this bill.

Teacher retention is a huge problem here - especially when combined with our high prices for housing, food, everything! Pay them what they're worth; especially if they stay.

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:01:08 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Judi Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am supporting this bill

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:23:05 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noelle Zimdahl	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I support and kindly request that you all pass HB1202 to be given pay commensurate with their experience in Hawai'i, other states, and military service. Hawaii continues to struggle to keep high quality educators and this adversely affects our keiki's education. Please support and pass HB1202 to show educators that they are highly valued by our state legislators. Mahalo for your time.

Regards,

Noelle Zimdahl

**LATE**

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:46:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Crossland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I STRONGLY SUPPORT** this Bill to improve teacher retention. I urge all members of the Committee to **VOTE YES** on this Bill.

**LATE**

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:54:52 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Charmaine T Doran	Pearl City NB	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for scheduling HB1202. For a longtime many educational related jobs have been short staffed. From bus drivers to teachers. This measure is a step in the right direction in addressing this dilemma. It will undoubtedly help to draw back former teachers into the teaching field. Along this line, I hope that this committee will also consider focusing these incentives towards former Hawai'i teachers and/or Hawai'i UH/HPU alumni. This will help to further support our local population and level the hiring field a bit. For far too long, we have looked outside for teachers to educate our keiki, only to watch many of these same teachers return home and vacancies to return.

Mahalo for working to put our children and our local teachers first.

**LATE**

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:32:16 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Woodson and Committee of Education,

I support HB 1202

Thank you,

Teri K Savaiinaea

District 45, Wai'anae Resident

**LATE**

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 6:11:58 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Rewarding teacher excellence is crucial to developing and keeping a talented workforce AND ensuring proper educational outcomes for students. I believe this type of rewards program can only HELP accomplish these objectives. I urge this Committee to SUPPORT this bill!

**LATE**

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:20:54 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tammy Holt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Committee on Education

Representative Justin H. Woodson

Chair

Dear Honorable Chair Woodson,

My name is Tammy Holt and I am a veteran teacher at Waikiki Elementary School. I am submitting this written testimony in support of House Bill 1202, relating to teachers. I am writing testimony in support of equitable recognition of prior teaching experience when determining a teacher’s salary placement.

Teachers who have served our local private schools and, teachers who have served in out of state schools should be recognized for their experience, instructional knowledge, and professional growth. Teachers, such as these, possess many expertise that will benefit our students. Hawaii has long faced challenges in maintaining a sufficient number of qualified teachers, Failure to acknowledge the efforts and experience of teachers will discourage talented teachers to join our department.

Fairly compensating teachers who want to transition to the HDOE will have a positive impact in filling vacant positions, ensuring that our keiki are receiving a quality education and will improve our local teaching communities as teachers share their knowledge with one another.

Your support of this bill will deeply benefit the future education of our keiki.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify on this important matter of statewide concern.

Sincerely,

Tammy Holt

Tammy8707@gmail.com

**LATE**

**HB-1202**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 2:19:12 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Arthur M Naeole Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a former math teacher, I know the challenges of retention within the profession exists. I know there are a variety of reasons why people leave. I still believe in the profession, and I believe in the importance of education and educators. Every effort should be made to help retain teachers in the profession who want to stay, and every effort should be made to help as many return to teaching who desire to do so. An acknowledgment of prior years of service and the maintenance of equal salary pay will help towards the end of retention and return of teachers.