

JOSH GREEN, M. D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



WILBERT S. HOLCK
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of
WILBERT S. HOLCK
Chief Negotiator, Office of Collective Bargaining

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Tuesday, February 4, 2025
2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
HB 621, Relating to Education

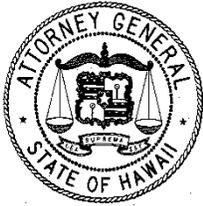
(WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY)

Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica and the members of the committee.

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) respectfully opposes HB 621, which requires and appropriates funds to pay salary differentials to English language educators as an incentive to attract and retain these educators.

Wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment are subject to negotiations as provided in Hawaii Revised Statutes, §89-9.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



**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. 621, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

BEFORE THE:
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or Amanda Donlin, Deputy Attorney General, or Fiamma Rago, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

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

The stated purpose of this bill is to require and fund pay differentials for English learner educators (page 1, lines 13-14). However, the bill may conflict with section 89-9(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), because the Hawaii Labor Relations Board has previously determined that differentials are considered to be a part of "wages" and therefore subject to mandatory collective bargaining negotiations. *See Haw. Gov. Empl. Assoc. et al.*, HI LRB Case No. CE-13-368, Decision No. 416, June 29, 2000 (<https://labor.hawaii.gov/hlr/ files/2018/12/Decision-No-416.pdf>). Furthermore, section 89-19, HRS, provides that chapter 89 shall take precedence over any conflicting statutes regarding collective bargaining negotiations, preempting any contrary legislation.

To ensure consistency with chapter 89, HRS, the Department recommends that, in the proposed section 302A- (a) on page 2, line 2, the following wording be inserted immediately after "Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary": "if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement pursuant to section 89-9,"

Additionally, this bill seeks to provide the differential to educators, but the term "educator" is not defined in chapter 302A, HRS. Replacing "educator" with the term "teacher" may ensure greater clarity and consistency.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

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 0621 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires and appropriates funds to pay salary differentials to English language educators as an incentive to attract and retain these educators. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) provides comments supporting the intent of HB 621's salary differentials for licensed English Language (EL) educators, recognizing their vital role in helping multilingual students develop essential communication skills.

The Department can work with appropriate parties to develop criteria for identifying qualified EL teachers. However, we believe compensation decisions may be better addressed through collective bargaining.

Should this bill move forward, the Department requests additional funding to compensate EL teachers and any newly hired teachers adequately. The Department asks that this additional funding be recurring in the base budget for the Department to recruit EL teachers and that it does not impact our current Governor-approved budget requests.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 621.

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 621 Relating to Education
DATE: February 4, 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 with **COMMENTS on HB 621** which is to require and pay differentials for English learner educators.

The Commission supports the intent of the measure which addresses a critical teacher shortage area; however, at this time, the Commission has not collected or compiled information on the number of English Learner teachers in the charter school system. As a result, the Commission is unsure of the severity of English learner teacher shortages in the charter school system and the subsequent funding that would be needed to pay the differentials.

The Commission is available to work with this committee, the DOE, and our public charter schools on gathering and compiling the necessary information needed to move this legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 3:23:33 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
London Isbell	On behalf of the secondary student conference student achievement committee.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

ELL teachers are vital to our schools in Hawaii. We are one of the most culturally diverse states in America and every student deserves an equal chance at success in school.

Through this program, I started from zero and became something more. Hawaii is facing a teacher shortage crisis, especially for unique teachers like ELL teachers. Although undocumented immigration presents challenges, we must always provide opportunities for those who are here and willing to contribute.

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
RE: HB 621**

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Barbara Tom. I am the Director of the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Center, and we work closely with English Language Teachers in Waipahu, Hawaii. Our Center offers after school tutoring to Migrant and Immigrant students from Waipahu Elementary School. Currently we have two part-time teachers, and we are aware of the need to retain qualified teacher with this special skill. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

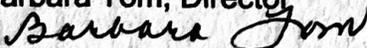
By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Barbara Tom, Director



Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center

94-420 Farrington Hwy., Waipahu HI 96797 (nationsofmicronesia@gmail.com)



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819
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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: HB 621 – Relating to Education

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, February 4, 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 621, which requires and appropriates funds to pay salary differentials to English language educators as an incentive to attract and retain these educators.

HB 621 addresses the urgent need to attract and retain skilled educators to support our English language learners. By incentivizing these crucial positions, we can ensure that all students in Hawai'i, regardless of their native language, have access to a high-quality education.

As many know, pay differentials are a proven strategy to recruit and retain teachers and will help ensure that our English language learners receive the support they need to succeed academically. Investing in our educators is an investment in the future of our keiki.

We strongly recommend the committee pass HB 621.

Mahalo.

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:48:04 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB 621 submitted by

Amy Agbayani and Patricia McManaman, co-chairs Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights

Filipino students (local born and immigrants) are the largest ethnic group in the public schools. Immigrants from the Philippines represent the largest country of origin group, making up nearly half—or 45.8 percent—of all immigrants in Hawai'i. Currently there are 32,044 (10%) English language students in the public schools with 10,588 elementary students who are active non-proficient in English students. These students are native speakers of languages other than English and need assistance to learn English.

The teachers of English as a second language have additional certification for teaching these limited English proficient students. They perform a valuable educational responsibility that impacts all aspects of the immigrant child's educational success and access to education. These teachers deserve a salary differential similar to special education teachers.

Please HB 621 for salary differential for teachers of English language students.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

Testimony of Liza Ryan-Gill in SUPPORT of HB621
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Representative Justin Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 4th, 2025

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) submits this testimony in strong support of HB621, which provides salary differentials for English Language (EL) educators as a necessary step to support our multilingual students and immigrant communities.

At HCIR, our mission is to advance the rights and well-being of immigrants in Hawai'i by advocating for policies that promote equity, language access, and full participation in society. Language access is not just about communication—it is about opportunity, dignity, and success. For many immigrant families, the ability of their children to thrive in school is directly tied to the availability of qualified, culturally competent educators who can bridge linguistic and cultural gaps.

Hawai'i has a large and growing immigrant population, with over 15,000 English Learners (ELs) in our public school system. These students come from diverse backgrounds, including Filipino, Pacific Islander, Micronesian, and other communities. Many arrive with limited English proficiency and face systemic barriers to academic achievement. The presence of trained EL educators who understand not only the language but also the cultural context of their students is crucial in ensuring that immigrant children do not fall behind.

Without this support, the challenges faced by EL students are profound. Studies show that students who lack sufficient language assistance experience higher dropout rates, lower academic performance, and greater difficulty transitioning into higher education or the workforce. Teachers who can provide culturally responsive instruction play an essential role in helping these students build confidence, succeed academically, and fully engage in their communities.

However, Hawai'i is facing a severe shortage of EL educators. The complexity of teaching English Learners—combined with the already demanding nature of the profession—means that many qualified teachers leave for better-paying jobs or different career opportunities. Without adequate compensation, we cannot recruit and retain the educators needed to serve our students. This bill ensures that our commitment to education includes every student, regardless of language or background.

As an organization dedicated to immigrant rights, HCIR sees firsthand the barriers to education that many immigrant families face. Passing HB621 is an investment in equity, education, and the future of Hawai'i's diverse communities. We urge the committee to support this bill and ensure that language is never a barrier to success for our keiki.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Liza Ryan-Gill
Executive Director
Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

LATE

To: Committee on Education
Re: HB 621 Relating to Education
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 309 & Via Videoconference
Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 2:00PM

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Committee Members,

On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in support of HB 621, Relating to education. This bill requires and appropriates funds to pay salary differentials to English language educators as an incentive to attract and retain these educators. Appropriates funds. This bill is essential for the future of education in Hawai'i, as it directly impacts the success and well-being of thousands of students from immigrant and multilingual backgrounds.

Hawai'i's classrooms reflect the diversity of our islands, with many students coming from homes where English is not their primary language. Currently, over 15,000 students in our public schools are identified as English Learners (ELs), and this number continues to grow. These students face unique challenges in academic achievement, social integration, and cultural adaptation. Without sufficient support, they struggle to keep pace with their peers, limiting their opportunities for future success.

One of the most effective ways to support these students is by ensuring they have highly qualified educators who not only teach English but also understand their cultural backgrounds and the challenges they face. When students see themselves reflected in their teachers—whether through language, lived experience, or cultural empathy—they gain confidence, feel valued, and engage more actively in their education. Studies have shown that culturally responsive teaching improves academic performance, attendance, and social development.

Unfortunately, Hawai'i faces a critical shortage of EL educators who have the skills and experience to meet these needs. Many qualified teachers leave the profession due to low pay and the demanding nature of the work. The lack of financial incentives makes it difficult to attract and retain these educators, especially in high-need areas. Without action, this shortage will continue to widen the achievement gap for immigrant and multilingual students. When students feel understood, they thrive—not just academically, but socially and emotionally. This bill is an investment in our keiki and in the future of Hawai'i.

I urge the committee to pass HB621 and ensure that EL educators receive the compensation they deserve. By doing so, we strengthen our education system, empower our students, and uphold our commitment to equity and inclusion for all.

I urge you to support this bill. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 621**.

Sincerely,
Noreen Kohl, Ph.D.
Policy Researcher and Advocate

To Whom It May Concern;

I am writing to express my strong support for HB621, which seeks to provide salary differentials to English Language (EL) educators as an incentive to attract and retain these essential professionals. As an EL District Resource Teacher on Maui serving 21 schools in Baldwin Kekaulike Kulanihako'i Maui Complex, I witness firsthand the immense dedication and specialized skill set required to effectively support multilingual learners. Providing EL educators with a salary differential is not just a matter of fairness—it is an investment in equity, student success, and the future of education in Hawai'i.

EL educators take on a large caseload, often serving dozens of students across multiple grade levels. They provide individualized support that extends beyond academics, fostering social-emotional growth and ensuring that English learners can thrive in a school environment that was not originally designed for their linguistic needs. Unlike classroom teachers who primarily instruct within a single grade level, EL educators must adapt their instructional strategies to meet the needs of students ranging from newcomers with no English proficiency to long-term English learners requiring targeted intervention.

Additionally, EL educators face an overwhelming administrative burden due to the extensive documentation and compliance requirements associated with federally funded programs such as Title III under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Many of these educators not only service students but also meticulously track student progress, complete Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs), ensure timely assessments, and submit detailed reports that meet federal and state guidelines—all while delivering high-quality instruction. This additional workload makes recruitment and retention in this field particularly challenging.

Providing a salary differential for EL educators would recognize the complexity and critical nature of their work. It would help mitigate the chronic staffing shortages that leave English learners underserved and ensure that our schools can attract and retain highly qualified EL specialists. Without this investment, we risk exacerbating inequities in our education system, as EL students—who already face significant linguistic and socio-economic barriers—will suffer from inconsistent or inadequate support.

I urge you to pass HB621 to ensure that English Language educators receive the compensation they deserve for their specialized expertise and dedication. Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue. I appreciate your leadership in advocating for policies that support both our educators and our multilingual learners.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Amanda Shim

BKKM EL District RT

HB-621

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:30:46 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Linde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure. In Hawaii, we are proud of our diversity. Currently, we are not doing our EL students justice by leave EL teacher positions unfilled and teachers overwhelmed. Attracting and retaining highly qualified EL teachers is very important for supporting our wonderfully diverse population and all students in our classrooms.

HB-621

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 11:40:13 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Kluesner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
RE: HB621

Chair Senate-Kidani and Members of the Committee,

I am John Kluesner, a teacher and the English-language Learner (ELL) Teacher and Coordinator at King Kekaulike High School on Maui. I submit testimony in strong support of HB-621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English-language learners (ELLs).

After spending a decade as an 11th-grade ELA teacher and Department Head at HP Baldwin High School, I moved closer to home and accepted a position as ELL teacher at King Kekaulike High School. Although I believed my extensive experience would be a great asset, I quickly realized that my skills, despite being honed over the years, were insufficient in the face of a lack of curriculum, a transient student population, and excessive bureaucratic hurdles. Nevertheless, we pressed on.

In the first year, students expressed frustrations about inconsistent teaching, transient learning spaces, and ineffective curricula. School, for many, was not a place where they could practice their right to learn language. Data from Lei Kuia highlights that 32 of the 45 KKHS ELL students have taken seven or more WIDA assessments, marking them as long-term ELL learners. This signals a systemic failure to provide consistent support for these students.

As a second-year ELL teacher and coordinator, I am proud to say that we are seeing progress. The learning climate has shifted from a deficit model to an asset-based approach. The ELL classroom—now known as "The Language Lab"—has become a welcoming and respected space for students. It is no longer seen as a "special" room but as a place that honors students' heritage while meeting academic standards. Using a dedicated curriculum, I have witnessed improvements in student achievement, including gains in Panorama scores, and have equipped students with the skills and strategies necessary to succeed on the WIDA ACCESS Assessment.

However, there is still much work to be done. These students need an advocate who understands their unique needs. While I currently lack the TESOL certification required to earn a differential, I am committed to providing them with high-quality instruction. These multilingual students face challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research

consistently shows that well-trained teachers are crucial in closing the achievement gap for these learners. Unfortunately, the ongoing shortage of qualified teachers makes it difficult to offer consistent, effective support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will help attract and retain skilled teachers in this vital field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise necessary to support English learners, ultimately leading to better teacher retention and reduced turnover. This investment in teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed salary differentials. Doing so will ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve while strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive, effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

With regard,

John Kluesner

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 8:45:23 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica E Lobo- Atnip	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Senate- Kidani / House- Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Lobo Atnip. I am an EL teacher at ‘Aiea Intermediate in the Central District on Oahu, and AMR’s Milken Teacher of Promise for SY 21/22. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I was placed in the 8th grade EL line as a second year Teach for America corp member during school year 21/22, as it was the only available line at the school. Stepping in, I was asked to take on both teaching and EL coordinating for all of the EL students at our school, as well as mentor incoming 7th grade EL teacher who would be my counterpart. She was a first year Teach for America teacher, and would leave the school, TFA and the profession after her first year.

The following year, a veteran teacher stepped into the role and would also quit the line after his first year. He was TESOL certified.

The year after that, my current counterpart stepped into the position and nearly did not return after her first year as well. She is also TESOL Certified.

After my first year, I agreed to return only if I could step out of the coordinator role. We have had 2 coordinators in 3 years and I will once again be taking on that role in the coming year.

All of this to say, the EL position(s) at our school has the highest turnover rate of any department. We must play the role of advocate, translator, cultural liaison, and scheduler oftentimes far before we are able to put on our teacher hats. We each become proficient in 8 different grade level curriculums to support students in all of their core classes. It is not that we just need certified teachers, we need the time and resources to provide adequate support for both students and our peers. The rate of burnout is astronomical and is pushing great teachers not just out of the role, but out of the profession entirely.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Jessica Lobo Atnip

Department Head - 8th Grade ELL ELA

English Language Learner Department

'Aiea Intermediate

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE / HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB973 / HB621

Chair of the Senate- Kidani and Chair of the House- Woodson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nicole Arihood. I am a teacher at Pu'u Kukui Elementary School in the Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kulanihakoi Complex on Maui. I am submitting testimony in support of SB 973 and HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I have worked as the EL Coordinator and EL Lead Teacher at Pu'u Kukui Elementary school since the school was built in 2013. When I was hired, there was not a qualified teacher leading the department, there was an EA hire, because it was difficult to fill the position with someone qualified. There was no materials or curriculum in place for consistent student language servicing. I worked hard to build the EL program into a meaningful language acquisition classroom for my students since hired and up until today 11 years later.

I obtained my TESOL licensure July of 2017 so I could be the most qualified teacher I could be for my EL students. I acquired a Part Time Teacher to help me in servicing the 90+ EL students. It is my responsibility to train and manage my PTT, on top of the administrative duties involved in running the program, and planning, teaching, and instructing K-5 EL students, Newcomer classes, EL Intensive Reading and Writing classes, and one-on-one special education students. I also run the EL CAN DO Club, which gives a cultural space for my 3rd-5th graders to create school/community projects, and participate in free cultural and/or environmental field trips to places this vulnerable population may not have access to. My classroom is an office, so we have limited space for my growing EL population during Dedicated ESL Pull-out classes. This is concerning and something we will have to problem solve in the near future. We will also have to problem solve perhaps adding another PTT to the program, if my EL population continues to grow.

The crucial skills of time management, multi-tasking, and the ability to plan and instruct for six grade levels of students (from newcomers with very limited English proficiency, to severe special education students), to organize family involvement cultural activities in and outside of school, partner with BBBS for events, attend IEPs and CORE meetings, fundraise for EL monies, and coordinate with homeroom teachers, Counselors, and the Social Worker requires extensive time and significant organization skills.

EL Coordinators and EL Teachers actually have one of the most difficult positions of all in the HIDOE. We need to be adept in effectively planning and teaching SIX grade levels, across a variety of learning styles from various cultures, know how to instruct IDEA students, and also comply with all federal and state compliances. I paid for on my own and attained my Educational Doctorate in Leadership in Second Language Learning, so I could continue to be the most qualified teacher for my students. I am lucky I had the motivation, time, and money to do so, as some may not have those luxuries. I am proud of my EL program I run, and absolutely ADORE my EL students and families. My students' families and I are one big 'ohana at my school.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Nicole Arihood

Nicole Arihood

English Language (EL) Coordinator/ Lead EL Teacher
Ke Kumu o Ka 'Ōlelo Pelekane

Pu'u Kukui Elementary

TESOL Certified

Ed.D.

~ Supporting literacy, culture, and 'ohana ~

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
RE: HB621

Chair, House, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michelle Mueller. I am a teacher at Maui Waena Intermediate School in BKKM District on Maui Island. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621 which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I have been an EL teacher for the past eight years; half of my time has been teaching in New York state and the other half as part of the Hawaiian Department of Education. I am very grateful to be teaching here in Hawaii. I love my job because I am an advocate, a mentor, and a source of support for my students, and I love seeing them grow as they further their education. I have helped many of my students both here and in NY, graduate high school and get into college. I love this job because I often stay in touch with my students and help them further their education. When they grow in their proficiency in English, they have more of a chance to succeed in all areas of their lives. I love seeing this because their success is my success and makes me feel like I am making a difference in the world.

Seeing the recent events of the world and what is happening with immigrant and refugee children, I feel it is so important that we have quality educators to give them the best chance possible of succeeding, not only in school and in life. I honestly love living here in Hawaii, but honestly, I am getting paid the same salary I did when I was working in Buffalo, NY and the cost of living is three times as high. I would ideally like to stay in Hawaii, and I am hoping by passing this bill, it would make it more affordable for quality teachers not only to stay in Hawaii, but to remain.

For our students, our keiki deserve the best quality education and consistency not only in education but in a supportive school environment as well. Working last year at Kahului Elementary School reminded me of the importance of school community, especially as we banded together to support our students and those who came from Lahaina and the West Side after the fires. Having consistency in educators and in their school environment is not only important for their education, but also their social and emotional well-being as well. Seeing the way our school community and island banded together at that time was something that meant a lot to me and something that I was proud of.

I believe this legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Michelle Mueller
EL Teacher/ Maui Waena Intermediate School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 12:20:17 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pinky Grace Francisco	Keaau Middle School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Requires and appropriates funds to pay salary differentials to English language educators as an incentive to attract and retain these educators. Appropriates funds.

Chair House- Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is PINKY GRACE FRANCISCO. I am a teacher at KEAAU MIDDLE SCHOOL in THE PUNA DISTRICT in HAWAII COUNTY, HAWAII. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I have been an English Learner (EL) teacher for six years and an EL coordinator for four years. Previously, I taught at Kau High and Pahala Elementary School (KHPES), which served an average of 120 EL students. When I started in 2019, there were only two EL teachers, and the EL coordinator was not TESOL licensed. As a result, inconsistent EL services contributed to persistently low statewide assessment scores and poor academic performance among ELL students.

In the 2021-2022 school year, I began advocating for ELL students and their families and was appointed EL coordinator. I urged my principal to hire a TESOL-licensed EL teacher, and together, we built a structured EL program. While my colleague covered elementary and grades 10-12, I taught grades 7-9, designed a Newcomers Course, and coordinated the EL program. That same year, we saw gains in the English Learner growth-to-target ratio and successfully exited students from the EL program, achieving a 5.0 or higher on the WIDA ACCESS test.

Despite these achievements, the other EL teacher resigned at the end of the year due to the overwhelming workload. The position remained unfilled for a time, as even TESOL-licensed teachers at my school were reluctant to take on the role. Fortunately, in August 2022, KHPES was able to hire another TESOL-licensed EL teacher, and a world language teacher stepped in as a halftime EL instructor. I was still the EL Coordinator, do El parent engagement, took on

elementary and the Newcomers 7-12 teaching lines while mentoring and coaching the new EL teacher, which proved exhausting. I even considered transitioning to an English Language Arts role to focus on a single subject. However, seeing two EL students exit the program and three others earn the Seal of Biliteracy award for the first time reaffirmed my commitment.

In my fifth year at KHPES, my principal hired two additional EL teachers, allowing me to step into the role of Academic Coach and EL Program Coordinator. With a team of TESOL-licensed teachers, we were able to provide comprehensive K-12 EL services, resulting in increased SBA scores in Math, Science, and ELA (see LEi Kulia data), across the board increase in the WIDA ACCESS Test scores and growth-to-target, four EL exits and a Seal of Biliteracy awardee. We also had four students enroll in the first-ever dual credit linguistics course, EL students take on leadership roles, and a rise in parent engagement. The three-year success of the KHPES EL program was largely due to having qualified TESOL-licensed teachers with specialized training.

As of July 2024, I have transitioned to Keaau Middle School, where I now face similar challenges to those I encountered early in my career. The KHPES EL program continues to operate, but with new obstacles, as the EL coordinator role was reassigned to an EL teacher due to the inability to hire another TESOL-licensed educator, which was the position I vacated.

Currently, at Keaau Middle School, I am the sole EL teacher and EL Program Coordinator, responsible for 70 EL students, including eight dual-identified SPED and EL students—four of whom receive inconsistent EL services due to capacity constraints. My responsibilities extend beyond teaching grades 6-8; I also handle state compliance duties, attend IEP meetings for dual specified special education and EL, facilitate family engagement, provide EL-related professional development, administer the WIDA screener and ACCESS tests, monitor student progress, develop intervention plans, write the school's EL Comprehensive Plan, collaborate on student scheduling, and more. (Please check the links: [EL Coordinator job description](#); [EL Teacher job description](#))

Despite the presence of TESOL-licensed general education teachers at my school, none are willing to take on the EL teacher role due to the overwhelming workload. I find myself at a crossroads, questioning whether to continue as an EL teacher and coordinator. However, my passion for empowering multilingual students and their families—who still view being an EL as a disadvantage—keeps me in the role. Another added motivation is the proposed differential bill, that will ensure fair compensation for the time and effort that EL teachers and coordinators invest daily.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically. In my complex area with nine schools, only four EL coordinators are TESOL-licensed, five schools among the nine have new EL coordinators this year 2024-2025, and all EL coordinator positions in all schools are in duality—EL Coordinator with teaching lines OR EL Coordinator with another leadership role (Academic Coach, Literacy Coach, Parent Engagement Coordinator).

The English Learners face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pinky Grace Francisco', written in a cursive style.

PINKY GRACE FRANCISCO
English Learner Program Coordinator and EL Teacher

Keaau Middle School

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION RE: HB 621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

I am the English Learners program coordinator at Waipahu High School in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

My school is home to over 450 English Learner students. These students enrich our school community with their languages and cultures, but their EL teachers require specialized training to support these students as they learn new, grade level content in a new language. These dedicated teachers are highly qualified and licensed in their content area (math, science, etc.) and in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), in addition, they have attended numerous professional development workshops to improve their teaching practice. They devote hours of planning to make their content accessible to ELs and designing lessons to promote language development. In addition to their classroom responsibilities, these teachers often serve as social workers and parent liaisons, connecting families with services like health insurance or rental assistance. There are teachers like this at schools all over the state, putting in extra work to serve these students.

This legislation is a necessary step toward compensating current EL teachers for their additional duties and addressing the shortage of qualified TESOL-licensed teachers to ensure that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Jeremiah Brown
EL program coordinator
Waipahu High School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 3:03:45 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eric Quang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Eric Quang. I am a teacher at Kalaheo High School in the Windward Kalaheo-Kailua District on O'ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Kalaheo has seen an increase in the number of EL students we are serving. With more of our students, especially 9th graders, entering with lower WIDA testing scores and needing the support of dedicated ELD courses, we need ways to retain teachers dedicated to teaching and supporting our EL students. In particular, Kalaheo only has a Part time teacher who can only come on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday when there are ELD classes. Also, over the past 2 years there has been a new ELD PTT, so it is hard to retain someone who is dedicated to our students. Supporting this pay differential will hopefully bring in and maintain consistency and quality education for our EL students.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Eric Quang
EL COORDINATOR/Kalaheo High School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 3:04:10 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joe Troutman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joe Troutman. I am the ELL Coordinator of Konawaena Middle School at the HKKK complex of Big Island. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I greatly enjoy my role at the school and the different populations and communities which I teach, both the students and their families, and am now in my 8th year in this position. I am not one for complaining, but I would like to illustrate for you all the many obligations and roles my work consists of.

In a typical day, I first stop at our school office to let them know if any students will be absent that day. Out of the 104 EL students across 3 grade levels I am responsible for, many of them (particularly Spanish-speakers) contact me for school matters rather than the office, since I am also a Spanish speaker, or in some cases simply because the family knows me well and trusts me after teaching multiple siblings.

Of the 6 class periods total (although there are only 4 per day), I teach 4 classes of 7th and 8th grade ELD students, on average about 15 students per class. The other 2 periods are for coordinator work. This kind of work can be filling out our school's annual EL Report (roughly 35 pages), helping to register new families, calling families for various reasons (usually on behalf of the school or other teachers), providing 4-part WIDA screener tests to determine English levels for students new to HIDOE (from mainland, or international), filling out EL student information for each student on Infinite campus (the HIDOE student database), applying for grants for out-of-school initiatives like our bi-weekly afterschool EL tutoring, or planning for one of our 3 yearly EL family nights (which are well-attended and lots of fun, but for the purposes of this testimony it should be mentioned are a required part of my job). In January and February, I do not have these coordinator periods at all since I need to conduct WIDA Access testing for all 104 EL students, a 4-session standardized test which determines EL's language abilities and whether they still qualify

for the program or not. There is a limited window of time in which this testing can be conducted.

There is no job at our school which I'd rather have than in working with EL students and families here in Hawai'i. They are kind, hard-working, and deserve to have their keiki's interest held in school and department-level decision-making. For too long it has been difficult finding new personnel to help these students as EL teachers and coordinators, and for too long I have seen the coordinator role falling into the laps of school administrators already stretched thin, with little knowledge of EL, and without much personal connection to the EL students and their families.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Joe Troutman
Konawaena Middle School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 3:29:06 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pinochio Dulig	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 Pinochio Dulig. I am a teacher at Ka’u High and Pahala Elementary School in Ka’u-Keaau-Pahoa Complex Area on the Island of Hawaii. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Our EL students have incredible potential, but they need consistent, specialized support to succeed. We need smaller class sizes, dedicated EL specialists, and more resources for up-to-date curriculum and technology. Investing in our EL students is an investment in the future of Hawaii.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii’s multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state’s commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Pinochio Dulig
English Language Teacher

HB-621

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

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elianna Kantar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Elianna Kantar. I am a teacher at Farrington High School in Honolulu on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Farrington has one of the largest EL programs in the state. Over half of our students are actively enrolled in our EL program or were enrolled in an EL program at some point throughout their education. Although we have a program of almost 500 students, we only have 4 TESOL certified teachers working in our ELL department. We are not just English language teachers, we are working with students in all of their core content classes including social studies, English language arts, math, and science across all four years of high school. We are supporting other teachers on campus so they can provide services in their own classrooms by leading school-level professional development sessions for teachers. We are advising clubs and programs on campus to strengthen the sense of community our students have. We are providing interventions not just for our students but for students across our entire campus. We are community liaisons, working with parents, guardians, and community organizations to connect families with the necessary school resources.

Even though every single TESOL teacher takes on these roles each day they walk into their school, I have found the most important part of this job has been advocating for our students. These are students that many adults in our schools do not care about and do not want to put in the time and energy to help these students succeed. At best, they are ignored and at worst they are actively pushed out of our schools. We are in desperate need of both teachers who are trained properly to meet the needs of our EL students, and also legislation that shows these students and their families that we care about them and value the contributions they are making to our communities across the state.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role

in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Elianna Kantar
EL Teacher, Farrington High School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 4:56:46 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Dingal	Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kimberly Dingal. I am a teacher at Highlands Intermediate in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As the EL Coordinator of my school, I oversee about 65 ELs this year in both 7th and 8th grade. This number has steadily increased in my 10 years in this position from 30 ELs to what it is today. Besides coordinating services for ELs, I also teach classes to 8th graders this year. Not only do I ensure proper servicing for ELs, I co-teach in inclusion classrooms, teach a special education/EL class, support long-term substitutes with ELs in their classroom by modeling ELA lessons, run whole-faculty professional development on high-leverage EL strategies, meet with core teachers regularly to evaluate progress of ELs, coordinate yearly EL testing, deliver the WIDA Screener to newly transferred students from out of country, and provide input on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) as well as attend IEPs. As another support to my Polynesian and Micronesian students, I am the advisor of a Nesian Dance Club for our school. I've helped edit two poetry books written by my students through a cultural literacy grant these past three years.

I also run an Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) from 7a-8a daily as well as tutor during recess, lunch, and afterschool. I work with the students' schedules to support their learning. Most days this means I am losing my breaks and prep period as well as my after school time to prep class content or complete EL coordinator duties. It is more than likely I take home work as I regularly contact parents and send out messages to inform home on tutoring or English progress. For example, just this past Friday, I stayed at school until 5p to email teachers and print passes for EL testing to distribute to teachers' boxes prior to Tuesday's testing schedule (Monday is a professional collab day for us). I could not get to these tasks during contract hours because of my servicing periods, catching up ELs on open WIDA ACCESS tests, and an IEP meeting.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Kimberly Dingal
EL Coordinator/Highlands Inter.**

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE / HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB973 / HB621

Chair Senate- Kidani / House- Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alison Aspelin. I am an EL teacher/ Coordinator at Mokapu Elementary School in Kalaheo/Kailua District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of SB 973 / HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As an educator who has worked in the public school system for almost two decades, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that English Language Learners (ELLs) face in our classrooms. In the school where I teach, many of our students come from homes where English is not the primary language; they are also military kids who move every 3 years. I feel like many of these EL students have already slipped through the cracks when they arrive at Mokapu Elementary School. They move so often that prior school seems to just pass them through to the next grade with no extra EL supports. These students often struggle to keep up with their peers, and without sufficient support, their academic progress can be hindered. Unfortunately, there simply aren't enough qualified educators to meet the needs of these students, a situation that has become more evident as the student population has grown.

When I first started teaching EL students, I noticed that many of my colleagues were overwhelmed by the high demands of the job, with limited resources and little support. The shortage of skilled ELL educators meant that teachers were often stretched thin, juggling multiple roles and responsibilities without the training or compensation needed to do the job effectively. This shortage affects not only the educators, but more importantly, it impacts the students who rely on specialized instruction to thrive academically.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Alison Aspelin EL Teacher/Coordinator

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:15:22 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terrina Wong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a retired educator, retired Deputy Director of Social Services, and having taught English as a volunteer to children of refugee farmers, I have first-hand knowledge of the importance of the work, knowledge and commitment required of teachers of English language learners.

Educators who provide direct services to English language learners and is TESOL licensed have specialized skill sets in adapting curriculum, pedagogy and communication skills and these educators educators are often bilingual themselves that enhance the teaching and learning.

Close to 10% of Hawai'i's students in the public schools are English language learners or close to 32,000 students. There are 10 state DOE initiatives to support English Language Learners. In order for the State to be able to recruit and retain the number of English language teachers to support the student learners of our state and the well-intended initiatives that exist, a pay differential is warranted. The limited-English proficient struggle with barriers to rebuilding lives and as a caring community we need to support the children of these families in learning English and the teachers who are committed to them who bring to their jobs additional expertise and competencies.

The outcome will be growing active and contributing members of our community who feel a strong sense of belonging through effective communication.

Thank you.

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:16:08 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
brandy Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brandy Chang and I am a teacher at Moanalua High School in the Central District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony supporting HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

The amount of time, training, and specialized instruction that is required of teachers to become TESOL certified and then provide ongoing, quality instruction for Multilingual learners more than supports the request for the \$10,000 per year requested differential.

At Moanalua, I am one of only three teachers at my school who are specifically designated to support our Multilingual learners, so I can speak to this experience firsthand. On paper, teachers have a title, a department to which they are assigned, and a curriculum from which they are asked to teach. Even if it were this simple, MLL (or ELL) teachers face additional challenges, as their titles as English Language Learner Teacher simply state which language they are assigned to TEACH, not which language they are assigned to teach FROM; the department they are assigned to doesn't take into consideration the OTHER department or departments they are a part of (I am an English Language Arts teacher and a Special Education teacher), and which various curricula they need to learn, which, by the way, is ever-changing. MLL/ELL teachers are unique in that they need to know how to teach both the subject content and the nuances of the English language concurrently and they should be compensated for the time, training and and extra hours spent mastering and maintaining this skill.

This legislation is necessary to address the shortage of qualified teachers and ensure that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers are crucial in

closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Brandy Chang**

12th Grade Expos/World Lit

10th Grade ELA Teacher

9-12 EL/Multilingualism Teacher

9-12 Special Education Teacher

Micronesian Club Advisor

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 8:29:43 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rebecca Nash	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 Rebecca Nash. I am a teacher at Kailua High School in the Windward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I am currently writing as a person who currently wears 8 different teaching hats, (yes, 8 different courses). I am also the EL Coordinator whose task it is to monitor student academic progress, test all incoming students as well as perform annual assessments, attend any specialized meetings and coordinate with IDEA teams. Additionally, it is my duty to share any upcoming events so that my colleagues might earn their SIQ points, which would greatly increase equity in education by placing students in academic courses that meet their language proficiency levels.

I am not unique in this situation and the time that it takes to correctly diversify curriculum to meet the academic levels of EL students, is overwhelming. I have been a teacher on the mainland for over 25 years, and I can say, that the workload is overbearing. I have worked for 8 hours today, Sunday, on lessons, as well as 2 Saturday. I am so grateful for the support system that I have at my school and the encouragement I receive from them, and the warmth I receive from my students. However, the workload is great and comparable to other specialized fields in education who work at the building level and receive a significant stipend. One person simply cannot do it all. We need more resources for staff members to earn their SIQ, and we need to find ways to compensate our teachers, and to lighten the load.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Rebecca Nash
EL Coordinator, Kailua High School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 8:29:58 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joy Paul	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joy Paul. I am a teacher at Holualoa Elementary in Holualoa on Hawai'i Island. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Our community is home to many multi-lingual learners whose families are here working in the coffee and macnut industries, as well as the hospitality industry. Our multi-lingual families are full of gratitude for the education their children recieve. Often, the children are translators for the family, and the family is learning English together. Due to the shortage of qualified teachers for this precious demographic, I am teaching a general-education 3rd grade class, as well as a mixed-grade level (grades 3, 4 & 5) English Language Development class, every day. We do not have enough trained and qualified teachers to fill this role. Additionally, our EL demographic has continued to increase over the past 10 years, and projections show it will continue to increase into the future.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Joy Paul

General Education Teacher, EL Teacher, National Board Certified English as a New
Language Teacher

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 8:31:46 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laura Ginoza	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 Laura Ginoza I am a teacher at Pearl City Elementary in the Leeward District on the island of Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

We have had a high turnover of EL teachers at my school. It is a unique position and additional training is often needed. Personally, I took it upon myself to become a highly qualified teacher of EL. I studied and took the Praxis exam for English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), which is the designated test for adding the TESOL teaching field to my existing Hawaii teaching license. I did this at a personal expense but I felt it was necessary so that I could have the credentials and knowledge needed to best help my EL students. At Pearl City Elementary our EL numbers are increasing and our students are entering with greater needs. As an EL teacher we teach across multiple grade levels. In addition, our students are at varying levels of proficiency in English. In the past year, four students entered our school from Japan and China. These students had little to no understanding of English so it was imperative that we help the students to not only learn English but to help them adapt to a new culture as well. In addition to my teaching duties, I also help to coordinate our testing, and liaison with parents. As you can see my EL position is multi-faceted.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to

effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Laura Ginoza

EL Coordinator
Pearl City Elementary School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:00:52 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kecia McDonald	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 Kecia McDonald. I am a teacher at the District Office in West Hawai'i on Hawai'i Island. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I had the privilege of working as the dedicated Resource Teacher for English Learners, serving 19 schools across the Honoka'a-Kealakehe-Kohala-Konawaena Complex Area. During my three years in that role, I saw a huge increase in English Language Learner population and I can tell you that providing the federally required, civil rights-protected education guaranteed to this special population is no small task. The students and families are eager to learn, and the instruction requires special skills to meet each student where they are and target their need to acquire both language and content knowledge. Teachers need to be highly qualified to adapt grade-level content to close the gaps in language proficiency while students are learning. Anyone serving EL students is constantly adapting, adjusting, and tailoring instruction to help accelerate their learning while accommodating their needs. Additionally, those teachers work hard to include families through translated materials or language services so that the parents and guardians also have equal access to all school functions and processes.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

I live and work in a hard-to-staff area, and I have seen the impact the Special Education differential had on making sure our highest-need students have access to highly qualified teachers. I would love to see the same ripple effect come to be for our multilingual students who often face high incidents of transition and other aggravating factors.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Kecia McDonald
Complex Area Resource Teacher**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:18:44 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joyce Verduzco	Waipahu Intermediate School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joyce Verduzco. I am a teacher of over 20 years at Waipahu Intermediate School in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

First of all, at Waipahu Intermediate School, the English Language Learner Department has a high turnover because there are hardly any teachers who want to fill the vacant positions. Emergency hires or substitute teachers with limited to no experience working with ELLs end up filling the vacant positions. Second of all, our role as an ELL teacher requires on-going training with expectations that are nearly impossible to meet. For example, there is pressure to have our ELLs pass the end of the year state test. Third of all, there is a lack of support in terms of having an Educational Assistant in the classroom or a Part-time teacher who can assist the ELL teacher throughout the entire day. Finally, I am required to meet the needs of students of various ethnicities, languages, cultures, and backgrounds while having to be an advocate for my students' education.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and

communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Joyce Verduzco
ELL Teacher, Waipahu Intermediate School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:37:42 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shawn Ford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Dear Chair Woodson and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Shawn Ford, and I am the coordinator and a professor of the Second Language Teaching (SLT) Program at Kapi‘olani Community College. The SLT Program provides specialized training to Hawai‘i DOE teachers to meet the national Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Standards for working with English learner (EL) students. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for Hawai‘i DOE teachers who provide direct services to EL students.

Highly-qualified EL educators in the Hawai‘i DOE are required to complete a higher education program of study in TESOL consisting of either 30 college credits - 15 of which must be upper division - or 15 upper-division credits plus the national TESOL PRAXIS exam. This is a significant body of knowledge and skills on top of the rigorous training requirements that Hawai‘i DOE teachers must meet to become highly-qualified licensed educators. Teachers often complete this additional TESOL training after completing their BA in Education coursework while working in the Hawai‘i DOE, which demonstrates their commitment to their own professional development in service of the ELs in their classrooms.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of highly qualified teachers and ensuring that our EL students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

EL students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained EL teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these students. However, the persistent shortage of qualified EL teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential for EL teachers, HB621 will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized TESOL training and expertise required to effectively support EL students and will lead to increased EL teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in EL teachers directly benefits students, schools, and

communities by promoting educational equity and improving the long-term academic outcomes of EL students.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass HB621 and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's EL students receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the State's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Shawn M. Ford

SLT Program Coordinator

Kapi'olani Community College

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:50:01 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rianne Tong	Farrington High School Teacher	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rianne Tong. I am an ELL/ELA teacher at Farrington High School in the Honolulu District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Farrington High School has a population of just over 2,000 students with over 400 Multilingual Learner (MLs) students and over 20 languages spoken other than English in homes. Every year, the population of ML students increases; resulting in teachers teaching multiple grade levels/curriculums, and specialized training is required of teachers to provide adequate language assistance for all student needs and developmental levels across all their classes.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Rianne Tong
ELL/ELA Secondary Teacher**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:11:29 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn Villanueva	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 Dawn Villanueva. I am a teacher at Kapolei Elementary in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I have a Bachelor, Professional Diploma and Master in Elementary Education. I have a Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board License in Elementary Education K-6, as well as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages K-6. This is my 30th year of teaching with the last 15 years teaching ELs. Because my school has a relatively small population of ELs and I am the only teacher who is qualified to provide ESL (English as a Second Language) services, I wear multiple hats.

I serve as the EL Coordinator ensuring that our program is in compliance with federal / state mandates. I am responsible for all of the administrative tasks, such as submitting reports. One such report is the Comprehensive EL Plan. I am also responsible for sharing this plan with the faculty, as well as implementing this 20+ page plan. Toward the end of the year, I am responsible for analyzing data to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in the Self-Study portion. Another report I am responsible for submitting is the RFF (Request for Funds) for ELOs (Extended Learning Opportunities) for our ELs. I then am responsible for carrying out the plan, meaning I teach our after school and summer school programs for ELs. I am also responsible for submitting data to support the effectiveness of the ELOs.

In addition, I serve as the EL Resource Teacher providing pull-out services to the EL population. This means using sheltered instruction to differentiate for the varying levels of English proficiency of the ELs in grades K - 5. Because ELs may take from 1 - 5 years for an EL to achieve English proficiency, I get to know the ELs and families very well. I often find myself in the role of advocate for the ELs and their families, as well as encouraging these families to continue to speak their L1 (first language) and pass down their culture. In my role, I also assist teachers in the process of achieving their SIQ (Sheltered Instruction Qualification), which is required by the start of school year 26 - 27. Having teachers who have achieved their

SIQ and can readily provide sheltered instruction in the core content areas is a vital component to our school's ELD (English Language Development) program.

I am eligible to retire in 2 years, but probably will not be able to afford to. This and the fact that I love working with ELs and their families, keeps me going. But when I do finally retire, I wonder if there will be anyone to replace me, or who would want to replace me given the number of responsibilities this position has.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Dawn Villanueva
EL Resource Teacher / Coordinator at Kapolei Elementary

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:28:44 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alohilani Okamura	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 Dr. K. ‘Alohilani Okamura. I am an Assistant Professor at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, College of Education. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As an instructor that prepares students to become EL teachers, there is additional kuleana to those with these roles at the schools. We work closely with mentor teachers who share how they work as advocates, community builders, and liaisons. Their work goes beyond the demands of classroom teachers to better serve their students.

This legislation is necessary to address the shortage of qualified teachers and ensure that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers are crucial in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii’s multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state’s commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Ke aloha nō,

Dr. K. ‘Alohilani HN Okamura

Assistant Professor

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

College of Education

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:31:15 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaime Prober-Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jaime Prober-Smith, I am a teacher at Olomana in the Windward District on the island of Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

EL Coordinators take on additional responsibilities on top of their position they applied to. EL Coordinators conduct the WIDA testing of all EL students, keep current and accurate records of all EL students, attend district and state mandatory meetings, and teach EL students the support minutes based on the legal requirements set out by the state of Hawaii.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii’s multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state’s commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Jaime Prober-Smith
Teacher, HIDOE

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:34:27 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cindy Staples	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 Cindy Staples. I am a full-time English Language Learner (ELL) teacher at Waipahu Elementary School in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As an educator of EL students, I know firsthand the unique needs and challenges these students face. Not only must EL students learn the necessary academic content to be successful later in life, they are tasked with doing so while simultaneously learning a new language. To say this is challenging is an understatement! However, teachers of ELs possess very specialized skills that allow EL students to do exactly that. This doesn't happen by chance, it happens through hard work and years of honing one's professional skills.

EL students face other challenges as well such as acclimating to a new country, a new school, and a new set of social expectations. These stressors impact EL students in personal ways, and EL teachers are there to support the students every step of the way. EL teachers help students to navigate through these extraordinary challenges by providing them with specialized lessons designed for their unique needs.

In order to meet the challenges mentioned above that are faced by our EL students and support them the best we can, educators in the EL department undertake numerous additional hours in professional training as compared to the general education teachers. Additionally, the state has asked EL teachers to become TESOL certified, which is an additional financial burden and a substantial time commitment. In an already demanding career, not many teachers are willing or able to take on this commitment without extra incentive to do so.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Cindy Staples
EL Teacher/Waipahu Elementary School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:39:06 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Haunani Akina	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 Haunani Akina. I am a teacher at Ka'u High & Pahala Elementary School in Ka'u on Hawai'i Island. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

A high turnover exists at Ka'u High & Pahala Elementary School and with that, more training is required of new and existing teachers as they have additional responsibilities mounted onto them. Some examples of this include ELL teachers teaching multiple grade levels and filling multiple roles. In my current situation, with the departure of our previous ELL Program Coordinator, I have been tasked with continuing to teach 9-12 ELA for ELs, 9-12 English Language Development, and taking on the role of ELL Program Coordinator, ELL Curriculum Coach, and mentor for new EL teachers. While I have been teaching for some time, I am barely in my third year with the DOE and have been working way beyond my contract hours to fulfill all of my new and existing responsibilities.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and

communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Haunani Akina

Secondary ELL Teacher/ ELL Program Coordinator/ ELL Curriculum Coach/ New Teacher Induction Mentor/ Ka'u High & Pahala Elementary School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:54:23 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brynn Matthews	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 Brynn Matthews. I am the English Learner Coordinator (Teacher Position) at `Aikahi Elementary in Kailua on O`ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

EL Coordinators like myself have additional responsibilities beyond the scope of a general education teacher. These include teaching multiple grades levels, being responsible for Academic and Language Standards, hosting family events, providing professional development to teachers, supporting the HDOE's deadline of SIQ for teachers and staff. In addition, the role of the EL Coordinator is to maintain federal compliance of Title III through the annual EL Comprehensive Plans and School Self Study. EL Coordinators and EL Teachers act as parent and family liasons to ensure that their children have equal access to education to their English proficient peers. At this point there is no incentive to keep TESOL licensed teachers like me in EL Teaching positions.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Brynn Matthews

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:13:13 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Huynh	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 Christopher Huynh. I am a teacher at Waipahu High in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As an EL teacher for the past 13 I have experience the hardship of teaching multiple lines (subjects) in a day. I have also experience teaching mutliple age groups, students from different ethnicities with differnt English proficiency. Teaching EL students is a challenge that takes a lot of prep work and time. I spend much of my time in school, after school and at home preparing lessons, differentiate and scaffold my lessons to adapt to my students needs. It is a tall task that is draining because every day every child is different and has different needs. I deal with language barriers students with zero literacy skills and thinking about how much I need to get done while only having one prep period is defeating. My energy spent at home preparing for my students takes away my time with my own young children of 4 and 2. I stay up late grading and preparing and wake up early to get to school and have energy for my students. I work a second job on the weekends to try keep up with my bills and make sure I have enough to provide for my family. Please we EL teachers need help.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Christopher Huynh
Teacher Waipahu High School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:17:13 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivy Hsu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ivy Hsu, and I am a teacher and EL Coordinator in Honolulu on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I have served as an EL coordinator for a total of nine years. My first two years were at McKinley High School, where I experienced firsthand the immense challenges faced by EL teachers. Like many others across the state, I was responsible for overseeing EL staff, managing federal Title III compliance, and coordinating schoolwide EL services—all while maintaining a full teaching schedule. I taught multiple grade levels of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and even a Social Studies class. This overwhelming workload is not uncommon. EL teachers are often expected to juggle multiple roles, managing complex instructional needs while ensuring students are prepared for high-stakes assessments.

In my current role at Kalakaua Middle School, I oversee five EL teaching positions to serve approximately 300 EL students. Two of these positions focus on fully self-contained Newcomer services, where teachers must be certified in TESOL as well as in four core subjects—English Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science. In mixed-grade classrooms, these teachers must provide not only language development but also cultural education, helping students adjust to a new academic and social environment. The demands of this job require specialized expertise, patience, and a deep commitment to student success.

Despite the critical role EL teachers play in narrowing the achievement gap, there is a persistent shortage of qualified educators in this field. The challenge of simultaneously teaching language acquisition, content knowledge, and cultural adaptation—while navigating compliance and assessment requirements—leads to high turnover and burnout. Without adequate compensation, attracting and retaining skilled EL teachers will remain a struggle.

HB621 is a necessary step toward addressing this shortage and ensuring that Hawaii’s multilingual learners receive the high-quality instruction they need to thrive. Research consistently shows that well-trained, experienced teachers are essential in supporting EL students’ academic success. By offering a pay differential, this bill will recognize the expertise required for this work, reduce turnover, and create a more stable, supportive learning

environment for students. Investing in our EL teachers is an investment in educational equity and long-term student achievement.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will strengthen Hawaii's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system while ensuring that our EL students receive the opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Ivy Hsu
Kalakaua Middle School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:34:11 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kari Leong	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 Kari Leong. I am a teacher at Manoa School in Honolulu, Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt district on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As a teacher working directly with English learners for the past 28 years, I can speak to the unique challenges and needs our students face. Many schools, including my own school, have experienced high turnover rates, especially among teachers who work with English learners. Teachers who take on this specialized work often require more training and ongoing professional development to meet the needs of our multilingual students. Additionally, these teachers often juggle multiple grade levels and take on additional responsibilities, such as serving as parent liaisons, social workers, and advocates. With the increasing number of ELs in our school, the demands on our teaching staff have only intensified.]

This legislation is a critical step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they deserve to succeed academically.

English learners face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while also trying to keep up with their peers in other content areas. Research consistently shows that well-trained, dedicated teachers play a key role in closing the achievement gap for these students. However, the ongoing shortage of qualified teachers for this essential work makes it difficult to provide the support these students need.

By offering a salary differential, this bill will help attract and retain skilled teachers in this field. Competitive compensation will recognize the specialized training, expertise, and dedication required to effectively support English learners. This, in turn, will lead to greater teacher retention and less turnover, ensuring stability and continuity for our students.

Investing in our teachers is an investment in our students and in the broader community. It promotes educational equity and helps close the achievement gap, improving long-term academic outcomes for our multilingual students.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. By doing so, we can ensure that Hawaii's English learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, and continue to strengthen the state's commitment to an inclusive, effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB621.

Respectfully,

Dr. Kari Leong

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tony Kim. I am a teacher at Farrington High School in the Honolulu district on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

We have a small ELL department of just 5 teachers with a large and increasing ELL population. We teach multiple grade levels and different courses as required which involves extensive planning and preparation. We spend extra time reaching out to families, and to connect with our students to provide support and guidance. In addition, we are continuously training and learning to provide the best possible instruction for our students for the best outcome and results. Finally, we show our dedication and commitment through consistency and perseverance.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Tony Kim

ELL Teacher / Farrington High School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:09:10 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Veralyn Balais	Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veralyn Balais. I am a teacher and EL Coordinator at August Ahrens Elementary School in Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

At August Ahrens Elementary School, we have more than 260 active EL students who need to be provided language services. Our EL staff work diligently everyday to work with the many ELs in our school. Not only are they addressing their needs in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, they are also addressing their social-emotional needs to ensure the students have a sense of belonging and pride in their identity.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the

educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Veralyn Balais
Hawaii Department of Education Teacher

Testimony to House Committee on Education
in Support of HB 621a

Rep. Justin Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trisha La Chica, Vice Chair

February 3, 2025

My name is Jonathan Y. Okamura, and I am Professor Emeritus in ethnic studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I have conducted research, published and lectured on educational inequality and more generally on ethnic inequality in Hawai‘i for more than thirty years. These endeavors have made me fully aware of and concerned about the long-term problems in K-12 public education in Hawai‘i, particularly its chronic underfunding.

I express my full support of HB 621, which provides salary differentials as a means to recruit and retain English language teachers. These educators are greatly needed in our public schools to foster the educational success of the considerable number of English language learners, who continue to enroll each year in our schools. These primarily immigrant students come from a wide diversity of countries, including the Philippines, China, Mexico, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and other nations in Micronesia.

In recent decades, the state Department of Education schools have been opening each year with a shortage of several hundred teachers, even after actively recruiting teachers from the continental United States and employing emergency hires, who are unqualified to be teachers because they lack a state-issued license to teach in Hawai‘i. Through salary differentials, HB 621 will provide the necessary funds to employ fully-qualified English language educators who have a valid license to teach speakers of other languages.

Several years ago, the state legislature appropriated funds for salary differentials up to \$10,000 to recruit and retain teachers in difficult to hire fields, including special education, Hawaiian language immersion, and teaching in rural communities. A 2023 study, “The Impact of a \$10,000 Bonus on Special Education Teacher Shortages in Hawai‘i” by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research demonstrated that the salary differential had lessened the number of vacant special education positions by a considerable 32 percent and of positions filled by an unlicensed teacher by 35 percent.

Such highly positive outcomes that directly resulted from the provision of salary differentials to address the critical shortage of special education teachers need to be taken into consideration in your deliberations on HB 621.

I kindly request your support of HB 621 because by providing a means to recruit and retain fully-qualified English language learner teachers it will foster equal educational opportunity for immigrant students and their overall educational success in our public schools.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:27:36 AM

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

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

Comments:

I support HB 621

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:36:58 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melody Lin	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 Melody Lin. I am a full-time ELL teacher at Farrington High School in Honolulu District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

About 1/4 of the student population at Farrington High School is ELL students. In the past 10 years we have been having an influx of students from Micronesia (which is making up 20 % of the ELL population). They come with little or no educational background. They are unable to function at grade level not only in English, but also in other subject areas. To provide them with stepping stones for grade level work, we had to create "remedial classes" for them in various subjects. This puts an extra burden on ELL teachers to not only be "highly quaified" to teach English, but also in math, social studies and science, too. Not only so, many of the students seem to have learning disabilities but don't qualify for Sped services, so we have to function as special Ed teachers, too. These and other non-teaching duties required of ELL teachers make it hard to find qualified and willing teachers to work in the field, so having a pay differential would definitely attract more teachers to the position.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise

required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Melody Lin
ELL teacher at Farrington High School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:57:49 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Merriam Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robin Merriam Walker. I am a resource teacher for Kau-Keaau-Pahoa Complex Area in Hawaii District on Hawaii island. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to Multilingual Learners (MLs).

In our complex area, we have many dedicated educators who remain in these positions despite driving long distances to remote areas to support this increasing population with no additional compensation. However, we would benefit from hiring more teachers to meet the needs of this increasing population. Roughly one-third of the ML teachers working in these positions are not yet qualified as TESOL teachers since this requires more specialized training. Teachers in these roles often have full teaching lines in multiple grade levels and have additional administrative tasks that need to be completed on an ongoing basis as required by state and federal law.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and retaining those who currently meet the qualification to ensure that our multilingual students receive high-quality instruction and support required to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii’s multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state’s commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Robin Merriam Walker
English Learner Resource Teacher

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:58:33 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela	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 Angela Sakamoto. I am a teacher at Kale'iop'u Elementary School in the Leeward District on O'ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Being both the ELL coordinator and an ELL teacher at my school is no small task. I'm responsible for managing all the required paperwork to ensure compliance with HIDOE and federal guidelines. This includes maintaining individual folders for each ELL student, which contain WIDA ACCESS scores, enrollment documents, and initial testing results. These folders travel with the students throughout their time in the HIDOE system, ensuring their records are up-to-date at each school they attend. I also input data for each ELL student into the Infinite Campus system.

As a TESOL Licensed ELL teacher, I provide pull-out services for all ELL students in grades K-6. It's a role that requires a deep understanding of the expectations and curriculum for all grade levels, as well as strong classroom management skills to work with students aged 5 to 12. And in case you didn't know, elementary school teachers don't get prep time during the workday—our preparation happens before or after school hours. With six grade levels on my roster, I often find myself working well beyond my paid hours to make sure I'm fully prepared for each day's lessons.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Angela Sakamoto

ML Coordinator/Teacher

Kale'iopu'u Elementary School

February 3, 2025

Hawaii State House Committee on Education

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 621

Aloha mai e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Priscila Leal Bluth**, and I am writing in strong support of HB 621, which proposes a salary differential for educators who provide direct services to English Learners (ELs) and hold TESOL licensure. This initiative represents a necessary and strategic investment in Hawai'i's multilingual students, ensuring they receive high-quality, sustained instruction from highly trained professionals.

I am a **lecturer at the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**, specializing in teacher education for multilingual learners. I hold a **Ph.D. in Second Language Studies from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**, a **Master's in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on English as a Second Language from Arizona State University**, and a **bachelor's degree and teaching license in Portuguese Language Arts and Literature from the Federal University of Pará, Brazil**. As an **educator, researcher, and English learner**, I have firsthand experience with the critical role that TESOL-licensed educators play in supporting the academic success and linguistic development of Hawai'i's diverse EL population.

Hawai'i's EL students bring rich linguistic and cultural resources that strengthen our communities and schools. Approximately **18% of Hawai'i's public school students are classified as English learners** (Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership, 2021). Yet, systemic barriers—including inconsistent access to specialized instruction—continue to hinder their academic outcomes. Research has shown that EL students thrive when their multilingualism is valued and when instruction is provided by educators with expertise in second language acquisition and culturally responsive pedagogy (e.g., Calafato, 2021; Gallagher & Haan, 2018).

Currently, Hawai'i faces significant challenges in recruiting and retaining TESOL-certified teachers, leading to disparities in EL instruction across the state. Implementing a **salary differential—such as the \$10,000 annual increase recommended by the HSTA EL Committee—would help address these shortages by incentivizing and retaining qualified educators**, much like the differential already provided for special education teachers. Given that EL students often have intersecting educational needs, ensuring their instruction is led by well-prepared, experienced educators is essential to advancing educational equity.

Moreover, **research demonstrates that investing in specialized EL educators directly improves student outcomes**, leading to **higher graduation rates and increased access to postsecondary and career opportunities**. For Hawai'i to fulfill its commitment to educational excellence and equity, it must recognize and support the specialized expertise of EL educators.

By passing HB 621, the legislature will take a critical step toward ensuring that **all** EL students in Hawai'i receive instruction that builds on their linguistic strengths and meets their learning needs. I urge you to support this bill and help cultivate a more inclusive and effective educational system for Hawai'i's multilingual learners.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.



Priscila Leal Bluth, Ph.D.

p.leal@hawaii.edu

Lecturer | College of Education

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

References

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HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:01:56 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jon Biel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jon Biel. I am a teacher at Kaimiloa Elementary in Ewa Beach on O'ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621.

I taught for ten years at Kamaile Elementary in Waianae and now for five years at Kaimiloa. Both schools have a significant number of English language learners. The demands on teachers increase with the need to successfully communicate and educate students for whom English is not their first or home language.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this testimony.

Kind Regards,

Jon Biel

My name is **SARAH JEAN E. ALEGADO**, and I proudly serve as an **English Language Development (ELD) Coordinator and Teacher** at **Lokelani Intermediate School**. I am here today to express my **strong support for HB 621**, which seeks to allocate appropriate funds to provide **salary differentials for English Language Educators**. This initiative is not only an incentive to **attract and retain qualified ELD coordinators and teachers** but also a necessary step toward ensuring **equitable education for multilingual learners** across our schools.

The Critical Role of ELD in Schools

As an **ELD Coordinator and Teacher**, I work directly with **English learners (ELs) who require targeted instruction and support** to achieve academic success. My role extends beyond teaching—it includes:

- ✓ **Developing and implementing specialized curriculum** tailored to the diverse linguistic needs of ELs.
- ✓ **Providing professional development** to general education teachers on effective strategies for supporting multilingual students.
- ✓ **Collaborating with school administrators and staff** to create an inclusive environment where language is a bridge, not a barrier.
- ✓ **Advocating for equitable access** to resources, programs, and opportunities for ELs to thrive academically and socially.

At **Lokelani Intermediate School**, where a significant number of students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, the work of ELD educators is **essential in ensuring that no student is left behind** due to language barriers.

Despite the **critical role** ELD teachers and coordinators play in student success, **recruitment and retention remain ongoing challenges** due to **the lack of financial incentives and competitive compensation**. Many educators take on additional responsibilities—such as **mentorship, curriculum design, and program coordination**—yet **ELD positions often go unrecognized in salary structures**.

HB 621 will provide the necessary **salary differentials** to:

- ✓ **Recognize and value the specialized work of ELD educators** in bridging language gaps and fostering academic achievement.
- ✓ **Attract and retain highly qualified teachers and coordinators** to serve ELs effectively.
- ✓ **Enhance the overall quality of ELD programs**, ensuring that students receive the support they need to succeed.
- ✓ **Reduce burnout and high turnover rates**, which negatively impact student progress and program stability.

This bill is not just about compensation—it is about ensuring that **ELD educators are valued, supported, and given the resources necessary to continue serving one of the most**

vulnerable student populations. Without proper funding, we risk losing **dedicated professionals** who are instrumental in **shaping the academic success and future opportunities of our multilingual learners.**

I urge you to **support HB 621** and invest in the future of English learners by recognizing the vital contributions of ELD educators. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

SARAH

ELD

Lokelani Intermediate School

JEAN

Coordinator

E.

&

ALEGADO

Teacher

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:58:01 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
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 HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

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.

Teaching English Learners is a complex task, it requires extensive training beyond the standard teacher preparation programs. Learning how to teach English Learners is endless, for example, I attended the University of Southern California and received my MAT-TESOL (Master of Arts in Teaching -Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), 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 addition to the low overall salary that teachers across the board receive, English Learner (EL) teachers generally have additional responsibilities, we must abide by the federal and state laws around EL education, which means that extra training is required for teachers to learn the intricacies of these laws and guidelines. We are often teaching multiple grade levels and multiple teaching lines. For instance, I teach 4 90 90-minute ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) classes of 7th and 8th-grade middle school-aged students who are both foreign and local born. On top of my 4 ESOL classes, I also teach 2 sessions of a Newcomer class, these are students who have arrived recently from outside the country, and require lots of support, from navigating school life in the US to understanding the rich culture of Hawaii, to basic learning basic survival English skills. In addition, I also teach a reading intervention class once a week to support our EL students who need extra reading support.

The average EL teacher workload is immense, our time inside the classroom is spent fostering relationships with our very sensitive demographic of students, providing emotional support, and assisting students with problem-solving - such as helping them find ways to get to school daily and on time, this might mean mapping out public transportation routes and translating this information for parents, after we establish safety, then we can learn, and lessons can be delivered. Additionally, EL teachers are also expected to inform their teaching through data collection - in the form of standardized tests, language assessments, the list goes on and on. With that being said, you might wonder when in the world we are collecting and analyzing data, or even completing other administrative type duties such as updating the grade book or contacting parents. If you are thinking that we cannot possibly complete this within the 7 contract hours, you are absolutely correct, many of us are working at home and on weekends for free just to make sure we are prepared for the next lesson.

Another huge part of our job is to differentiate instruction, this means that we must identify learning differences and adapt our lessons so that everyone in our classroom can access it, and in many cases, we have some non-English speaking students and we have students who were born and raised here on O'ahu and speak English very well. We cannot just cater to the middle of the spectrum, we have to modify each lesson to accommodate the complete range of English proficiencies, this means that the middle proficiency lesson planned must also have additional supports that allow our non-English speakers to participate, and also our very advanced English Speakers. Planning the same lesson for each of the 6 proficiency levels takes a lot of time.

Lastly, I would like to mention the expectation of EL teachers to be die-hard advocates for our students. We want them to be seen, heard and understood. We want to help them to share their unique experiences and culture with their teachers, classmates, and our community. We want our EL students to be successful every day. We want to see them go to college or go to trade school and knock life out of the park. If we want to see that, we have to be advocates. For example, last year I spent weeks drafting a proposal to restructure our EL department to foster more equity. It was an extremely long process that involved presentations to administrators, and endless meetings and negotiations. I have also spent the last 2 years advocating for a strong English Language curriculum, I spent countless hours asking for admin to support this endeavor, negotiating funding at the school level, and when I didn't get the funds I needed, I had to reach out to others. This process alone absorbed most of the student free time I have in my classroom and left little time for all of the other things. I felt and still feel that if we want our EL students to be active participants on our island and in the world, in addition to fostering safety and building strong relationships with our students, we need to ensure that our instruction is going to produce that outcome.

Lastly, I would like to mention that our EL population is growing and growing. It will only become more difficult to fill open EL teaching positions with properly trained teachers as the years and months go on. If I am completely honest, I have been looking for work outside the classroom, I love what I do and I don't want to leave my students or my school, but I cannot continue teaching if I am barely able to feed, clothe, and house myself and my son. If I were a man with the same level of education and had the same experience, but was an engineer or in any other field, I would be making far more than I do now. Which makes me incredibly sad and

frustrated. Teachers are valuable, it may not always feel that way, but we need to keep teachers in the classroom.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill. Please contact me if you need more information.

Respectfully,

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

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Dear Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is E. Brook Chapman de Sousa. I am an Associate Professor of Elementary Education and Multilingual Learning at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. For the past ten years, I have worked on educator preparation in Hawai'i, focusing on multilingual and English Learners (ELs). I am also a parent of two children attending public schools in Hawai'i.

I urge the Legislature to pass HB 621 and fully fund the proposed pay differentials for licensed EL teachers. Having licensed EL teachers provide direct services to students improves student outcomes. There is a shortage of such teachers in Hawai'i, and HB 621 can help address the problem, as did the salary differentials for special education teachers several years ago.

EL teachers have specialized demands, and they fill multiple roles. They are language support specialists with additional training and expertise in second language acquisition. EL teachers work across grade levels, serve as parent liaisons, administer required assessments, and provide colleagues with data to support their targeted instruction. They are essential partners to general education and content-area teachers. However, the persistent shortage of qualified EL teachers has made providing this consistent, high-quality support challenging. Please pass HB 621 and help strengthen our state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

E. Brook Chapman de Sousa, PhD

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "EBC de Sousa", written in dark ink.

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:03:01 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erica Chiogioji	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 Erica Chiogioji. I am a teacher at Pearl City Highlands Elementary School in Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Teaching English to non-native speakers requires specialized skills, including an understanding of language acquisition theories, cultural differences, and how to adapt lessons to meet the diverse needs of students. These skills are honed through years of training and experience, and they deserve to be recognized and compensated fairly. Additionally, the responsibility of helping students navigate language barriers and succeed in an English-dominated education system is no small task. This often means creating customized lessons, offering extra support, and providing a lot of individualized attention, which requires a significant investment of time and energy. Beyond academics, English language teachers often play an emotional support role for their students, many of whom face challenges such as adjusting to a new culture or dealing with the emotional weight of being away from home. This emotional labor is often just as important as the academic work, and it requires patience, understanding, and a deep commitment to my students' well-being.

Moreover, teaching English learners means adapting constantly to the unique needs of each student. Some may progress quickly, while others may face additional obstacles. This level of patience and creativity is essential to helping every student succeed and requires a great deal of dedication. The impact of my work extends far beyond the classroom, as helping students become proficient in English opens doors to better academic and career opportunities, giving them the tools to build better futures. This long-term impact should be acknowledged and reflected in compensation. Lastly, the workload often extends beyond the school day, with teachers spending additional hours planning, meeting with parents, and providing extra help outside of class time.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Erica Chiogioji

EL Coordinator

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:16:44 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Gutierrez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

Aloha, my name is Jennifer Gutierrez. I am an English Learner (EL) Teacher and Coordinator at Ho’okele Elementary School in Leeward District on O’ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to ELs. This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

My upbringing on Maui and O’ahu, where I was surrounded by friends whose families spoke languages other than English, sparked a lifelong fascination with language and communication. While my initial educational path didn't focus on multilingual learners, my desire to serve this often underrepresented student population ultimately guided me to my current position.

Our school has seen a growing number of multilingual students in recent years, particularly newcomers. This year, my classroom includes K-5 students representing 16 different languages, adding significantly to our school's rich linguistic and cultural diversity. Because effectively supporting the unique needs of each student is a priority for me, I'm committed to ongoing professional development and actively seek relevant resources.

English Learners face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention

and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Jennifer
Gutierrez
Coordinator/EL
Teacher
School**

**EL
Ho'okele Elementary**

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tiffany Luong. I am a teacher at Lunalilo Elementary in Honolulu District on Oahu island. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As an EL coordinator, there is more training required of EL teachers and coordinators, we have additional responsibilities (such as maintaining and monitoring EL records for the school and holding family engagement activities for the school), we are teaching multiple grade levels daily, we fill multiple roles (parent liaisons, social workers, advocates, etc). There is also a high turnover of EL students at my school on top of that there is an increasing number of ELs at my school with 126 EL students out of 249 total enrollment at Lunalilo Elementary.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Tiffany Luong
EL Coordinator/ Lunalilo Elementary

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marci Awaya. I am a teacher at Lunalilo Elementary in Honolulu District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

There is a high turnover of EL students at Lunalilo Elementary. More than half of our population are English Learners. With this, additional support should be given to our EL teachers, as we have various responsibilities with the students we service.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Marci Awaya
Lunalilo Elementary

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:50:58 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erica Yamauchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of this legislation to provide salary differentials for English Language (EL) educators. This bill is essential for the future of education in Hawai‘i, as it directly impacts the success and well-being of thousands of students from immigrant and multilingual backgrounds.

Hawai‘i’s classrooms reflect the diversity of our islands, with many students coming from homes where English is not their primary language. Currently, over 15,000 students in our public schools are identified as English Learners (ELs), and this number continues to grow. These students face unique challenges in academic achievement, social integration, and cultural adaptation. Without sufficient support, they struggle to keep pace with their peers, limiting their opportunities for future success.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Erica Yamauchi, Kaimukī/Wilhelmina Rise

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:59:20 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heather Nishimura	Hawaii Dept. of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Heather Nishimura, and I am the EL Coordinator and the only English Language Development (ESL) teacher at Royal School in Honolulu. Our overall school enrollment is around 300 students. About 1/4 of our students speak languages other than English in their homes, and qualify for supplemental English language support services.

Many of our students come from low income homes, and some have a background of limited or interrupted schooling. This leads to significant challenges regarding our students' ability to access grade level content. Without critical intervention and careful planning among teachers, these students are at higher risk of dropping out of school in middle school and beyond. As one can imagine, planning needs to be strategic and tailored to meet each student's unique needs.

Two years ago, I made the decision to change the path of my career from teaching in the general education classroom to focusing solely on English learners. I realized that my passion was to help these students reach their full potential. I enrolled in the TESOL certification program at Kapi'olani Community College, where I would be able to earn 30 credits over the course of 3 years. I persevered through my classes, even though I was diagnosed with breast cancer and received radiation treatment in the fall of 2023.

My story is not unique. I know many ELD/ESL teachers who have made sacrifices and struggled to make ends meet while pursuing new and innovative methods of supporting our English learners. Although I am constantly being inspired by the stories of my students and their passion for learning, I have considered leaving the profession to pursue a higher paying job.

The current teacher shortage is undoubtedly fueled by the rising cost of living without fair or commensurate pay increases. I can attest that many ELD/ESL teachers feel a mounting pressure to increase student success on standardized testing without adequate support. Please consider ratifying HB 621 so educators like myself can continue to forge a brighter path for ALL of Hawaii's keiki.

Mahalo nui loa,

Heather Nishimura

Royal School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:01:41 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Akiko Giambelluca	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Akiko Giambelluca, and I am a teacher and EL coordinator at Farrington High School in the Honolulu District on O‘ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Farrington High School has been making significant efforts to support its English Learner (EL) population by expanding the number of J-line/ELD classes and ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to meet the needs of these students. However, with over 600 students in the EL program, we do not have enough TESOL-certified teachers to provide the level of support necessary for all ELs to succeed in their classes.

Our EL teachers are tasked with teaching multiple grade levels and content areas, yet, in most cases, they do not receive additional preparation periods. In addition to our teaching responsibilities, we also take on the vital role of organizing parent engagement events for both EL students and their families. These efforts require us to dedicate time outside of regular school hours, as we are expected to provide these essential services after school.

The need for additional TESOL-certified educators and dedicated support for EL teachers is critical to ensuring the success of our students. We urge you to consider policies that provide adequate staffing, resources, and time to support both our students and the educators who serve them.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Akiko Giambelluca

EL Coordinator, Farrington High School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:04:49 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandy Ma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB621, requiring and appropriating funds to pay salary differentials to English language educators as an incentive to attract and retain these educators. As an immigrant with English as my second language, I personally know the importance of English Language (EL) educators and the positive impact EL educators have on supporting immigrant students, like myself, to learn, adjust and adapt to new surroundings.

EL educators are critical to students' success. They are highly trained professionals with unique skills and talents and should be properly compensated.

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:11:15 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacquelyn Skaf	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 Jacquelyn Skaf. I am a teacher at Washington Middle School in KMR District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

The majority of our 600 students at Washington Middle School in Honolulu are ESL students. They come from 15 nations speaking 19 languages. I am the only TESOL licensed teacher, and I teach 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Many teachers have completed their required Professional Development credits with the DOE. However, most of them are not multilingual and have never lived abroad. This means that they often struggle to grasp students' sometimes crippling stress and trauma. I teach the Newcomer students - meaning they recently arrived in the USA. But, some students are still in the ESL program even after years in our elementary schools on Oahu.

My responsibility is to teach our Newcomer students English, Math, Science and Social Studies until they can raise their diagnostic scores high enough to enter the General Education classes - or time out of my program after a year. Most of my students from Micronesia enter my ESL Math Class at a 1st grade level - unable to add or subtract double digits, and unable to multiply or divide at all and simply because they have not been taught how to do so in their homelands. This puts my students at a terrible disadvantage in our school system. So I coordinate with the Math Department to attempt to bring these children from 1st grade math to 6th, 7th, or 8th grade math in a year's time. But to be honest, what child on earth can do that?

This is one of the major reasons that our district's high school graduation rate for our Micronesian children is a tragic 6%. Just for emphasis, this means that 6 out of 100 Micronesian students will *not* be able to pursue higher education nor even to work at McDonalds. So what will become of the other 96 children? The DOE urgently needs to directly address the very unique needs of these students or they will end up in gangs or living on the streets of Honolulu.

My colleagues and I are doing all we can to help the young people in our charge. We stay after school to assist them in all subjects and all grade levels. We visit their homes to build understanding and mutual respect with their families. We attend their cultural events, and host 2 cultural celebrations each year at our school. During the week, we meet with their teachers to discuss unique teaching strategies specific to their needs. But sadly, even the best of teachers cannot fathom the level of poverty of their students nor can they accept that the culture of poverty affects their learning. Additionally, most teachers have never experienced a subsistence-living lifestyle nor even spent much time in an non industrialized community. The blindsiding cultural-shock and identity crisis that results from moving from an non industrialized country to an industrialized country cannot be overstated. Trying to help teachers accept this, and encouraging them to use new teaching practices that help this population requires an abundance of extra time, energy, ingenuity and research.

The educational crisis in Hawaii has exacerbated the shortage of qualified ESL teachers. For how long would an ESL teacher be willing to make the efforts I described above with a paycheck that cannot cover the basic needs of her family? For example, although I am a tenured teacher, with two Hawaii teaching licenses in TESOL and Language Arts - with almost 10 years of experience, I still qualify for government medical aid for my children. Furthermore, my current salary only affords me a two bedroom apartment. I give my children the bedrooms, and I sleep in the living room. Now with the new federal tariffs, I will likely need to visit our local food banks.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Jacquelyn Skaf, ESL Teacher
Washington Middle School**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:14:38 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rogelio Mariano	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 Rogelio Mariano. I am a teacher at Waipahu Intermediate School in the Leeward District of O'ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

My school has been facing rising numbers of incoming EL students. In order to do so effectively, we require more training. Teaching EL students is a unique task, in which multiple levels of reading and curriculum modifications are necessary in order to lead whole classes effectively. It is quite different from standard, general education classes in which reading level may be generalized. Many of my students struggle with English as their second language, and it hurts them in all aspects of academics. Their language arts classes are foremost affected, but every teacher must make an effort to accommodate their individual levels of literacy, including Social Studies, Science, and Math.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Rogelio Mariano
Social Studies Teacher**

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jacie Miyashiro. I am a teacher at 'Aiea High School in the Central District on O'ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I teach at a small Title I school, so we currently only have one teacher solely teaching English to English learners. I do not have experience teaching EL classes, but because our department is so small, I often see the amount of work that my EL-teaching colleague must put in to support our EL students. He is responsible for teaching English Language Arts (ELA) to all four grade levels, which means that he must teach multiple curricula simultaneously. For context, most other general education teachers usually only teach one or two grade levels at a time. The more grade levels, and thus curricula, a teacher is responsible for, the greater their workload as they will have more assignments to prepare and a greater variety of work to assess. In addition to having a more demanding teaching load, he is also responsible for administering mandatory language proficiency tests to all of our EL students. To ensure that students are able to complete it on time, he often has to track them down during the school day to get them to complete the test. He's given up his own preparation period to monitor students while they take this test. While I teach English Language Arts, I would hesitate to take on the same role that my colleague fulfills because teaching English to English learners requires a whole different set of English skills. It also requires so much patience and adaptability. I am often impressed by how many phrases my colleague has learned to say in other languages. I see how much he cares about communicating with his students in the effort he makes to connect with them in their own languages.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they

deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Jacie Miyashiro, NBCT

English Language Arts Teacher, 'Aiea High School

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Patrice Mizuno. I am an EL teacher at Likelike Elementary School in the Honolulu District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Likelike has an EL population of 108 students out of 239 students. Almost half of the students are English learners. I am teaching grades kindergarten to fifth grade in addition to doing all of the necessary paperwork and reports required by the Federal Government regarding the EL program. I have multiple roles as the EL teacher at our school. I help parents and students with understanding school policies, helping to monitor student attendance, being an advocate for the parents and students regarding school programs, providing information about social services and helping parents fill out forms and following up on any school related issues. Many of our students are considered homeless or are transient so I have provided some of the necessities they need for school and home because they are not yet financially stable.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Patrice Mizuno
EL Coordinator/Teacher

Likelike Elementary School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:31:34 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany sera	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 Tiffany Sera. I am a Curriculum Coordinator at Lunalilo Elementary School in Honolulu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Extra EL training is needed, especially at my school where our EL population is 126 students out of a total of 249. EL strategies and Professional Development Training are necessary for all teachers and support staff (such as myself). The DOE is requiring all teachers to have a Sheltered Instruction Qualification (SIQ) but the deadline to complete the necessary coursework keeps getting pushed back. For those educators who have completed their coursework, the state/DOE should also be giving some sort of differential.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Tiffany Sera

Curriculum Coordinator, Lunalilo Elementary School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:33:49 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Waynele Yu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to submit testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs). I am an instructor at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa College of Education teaching in a distance program that supports students in becoming licensed teachers across the state. My testimony is submitted as an individual and not as a representative of the University of Hawai‘i.

The teacher shortage in Hawai‘i makes the news year after year. Despite the positive employment outlook, there are over a thousand vacancies each year. As someone who actively recruits students into our teacher education programs, the most common concern prospective students have is whether they can afford our program and whether they will earn enough money to sustain their families in Hawai‘i on a teacher salary. Financial concerns are the largest reason for declining their offers of admission. When adjusted for the cost of living, Hawai‘i teachers are among the lowest paid in the nation (McCann, 2019). It’s no wonder that leaving Hawai‘i has been the most cited reason for teachers leaving the DOE for the past five years, outnumbering retirements (See Hawai‘i Department of Education employment report: <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/Reports/EmploymentReport2022-23.pdf>)

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically. Research supports that higher teacher compensation would not only improve teacher retention in public schools in Hawai‘i but also educational outcomes, particularly in schools with a higher percentage of Native Hawaiian, Filipino-American, and Pacific Islander students (See http://hawaiischolars.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/5/6/135637363/hsesj_brief_2_-_increased_teacher_compensation_can_lead_to_more_equitable_education_in_hawaii.pdf and https://hawaiischolars.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/5/6/135637363/hsesj_research_brief_5_withsignatures_2025-0122.pdf)

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

This bill is a small step in counteracting the historical underfunding of public education in this state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Me ka ha'a ha'a,
Waynele Yu, Ph.D.
Instructor, College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Saki Kashimura. I am a teacher at Stevenson Middle School in Honolulu District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Hawaii experiences an annual influx of English Learners (ELs), driving the need for equitable education through language support while teaching English content. As an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher and the EL Program coordinator, I advocate for our EL students and ensure their unique and diverse personalities are recognized as valuable contributions to our school. However, this role comes with responsibilities that extend far beyond those of a general education teacher.

In my position, I lead professional development and training for faculty, equipping them with the tools to support EL students effectively. My ESOL colleagues and I strongly advocate for our ELs, working collaboratively to foster an inclusive learning environment. Because of the rise in number of newcomers worldwide annually, in addition to our long-term ELs who present a different need in language learning, I provide trainings very frequently during our waiver days, faculty meetings, and during my prep period to equip our teachers with the necessary tools to help our ELs. Like the Special Education (SpEd) department, we co-teach with multiple content area teachers, allowing us to support EL students within general education classrooms. As a result, this adds to our workload on top of the sections we teach independently and prep for.

We consistently work beyond our contracted hours to provide EL students with the equitable education they deserve, yet funding for these efforts remains insufficient. Over time, this leads to teacher burnout and a shortage of EL educators, ultimately impacting the success and learning opportunities of our EL students.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Saki Kashimura
ESOL Teacher and EL Coordinator

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:37:34 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kalika Ayin	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 Kalika Ayin. I am a teacher and the EL Coordinator at Pearl City High School in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Language acquisition is a highly specialized area of instruction. Teachers working in this field need to have a full understanding of how students acquire language including strategies to foster language learning. I have recently become a National Board Certified Teacher with a certificate in English as a New Language, and to my knowledge, only one other teacher in the state of Hawaii has the same certificate area as I do. With a growing number of ELs statewide, and with the highly specialized instruction required to do our job well, I support HB621, and propose a \$10,000/year increase for teachers directly instructing English Learner students, who are licensed in TESOL.

I have been the EL Coordinator at Pearl City High School for five years, and in that time I've had a high turnover of staff within the EL department (only one of three positions has been consistently filled by a returning staff member, not including myself); and these staff need to be retrained every year in order to best support our English Learners. Training for these personnel is highly important because they interact directly with students, and they often advocate for student needs with classroom teachers.

In the past three years, my school's EL population has grown by over 35%. As the only full time EL staff at my school, I am responsible for managing over 100 students' records, educational plans, testing, and data analysis, not including my responsibilities in the classroom as a full time teacher.

In addition to my teaching responsibilities, I – and many other EL staff across the state – are required to hold two parent/family engagement activities per school year. These events often take hours of planning, coordination across the school, and even horizontally and

vertically with other schools in the complex, and a lot of communication with families, families whose primary language is not English, and therefore may require interpretation, translation, and creative means of communication.

HB621 will directly impact the quality of education some of our most vulnerable children receive by incentivizing highly qualified, highly skilled professionals to fill EL positions across the Hawaii Department of Education. This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Kalika Ayin
EL Coordinator, Pearl City High School
Hawaii Department of Education**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:46:44 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heidi Gallagher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chairs Kidani, Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Heidi Gallagher. I am a teacher at Holualoa Elementary School in HKKK District on Hawaii Island. I am submitting testimony in support of SB 973 / HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As a trained English teacher for both my undergraduate and graduate degrees, I see the positive impacts when educators have specific and intentional access to the relevant theories, strategies and methods used as best practices for English Language Learners. Without the care and coordination of a trained English teacher, our students continue to fall further behind in their education across our school. I have seen firsthand the difference in our own school population when our students who once were receiving computer based instruction due to lack of qualified teachers, versus now their receipt of direct instruction by a licensed TESOL educator. When we began class instruction, their testing scores and participation increased. We are currently receiving more EL students each year in our school and need more qualified educators available to support proper instruction. Currently we have to service multiple grade levels at a time, as well as still maintain the community support for helping our families navigate the difficulties in paperwork, social services, and other community resources. We want to provide the best opportunities for all students but need more support from qualified individuals in order to give quality instruction and care throughout the school day.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention

and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Heidi Gallagher, MS Ed, M Ed
English Language Coordinator and Teacher, Holualoa Elementary**

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:52:09 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allan Lau	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 Allan Lau, a 20-year teacher at Ka`imiloa Elementary School in the Campbell-Kapolei District on O`ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As a teacher in `Ewa Beach, many of our students are products of multi-generational bi-lingual families. The support and assistance that we receive in our classrooms for these ELs from our EL teachers is invaluable in helping them achieve the academic success in our schools and bring them up to the level of our English-speaking population. Our coordinator, Ms. Michelle Bagaoisan, and her staff consistently exit students out of the EL program each year through their hard work and dedication to those students. Her close partnership and coordination with our general education teachers and administration is tantamount to their success and they deserve the support through the proposed pay differential.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically. These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field.

Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Allan J.N. Lau, Teacher, Ka'imiloa Elementary School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:59:34 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janel Horiuchi	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 Janel Horiuchi. I am a teacher at Waipahu High School in Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

EL Teachers fill multiple rolls and there are times that I have to advocate for them, purchase personal items, be a parent, aunty, tutor, etc. It is necessary for our state to focus on these students so they can become productive members of society that can read and write.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Janel Horiuchi

EL Teacher

Waipahu High School

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:59:52 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lejos Farr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee

Dear Members,

My name is Lejos Farr and I am writing to offer my full support for HB261, a bill that is of great importance to educators, particularly those such as my wife, Michelle Bagaoisan, who works as an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher in Ka'imiloa Elementary School. As a dedicated specialized professional in the field of education, my wife works tirelessly to help non-native English speakers succeed academically and thrive in our community. This bill's support for ELL educators would have a profound and positive impact on both teachers and students in our state with regards to teacher retention, student performance, and overall communal unity.

As a partner to an ELL educator, I have witnessed firsthand the unique challenges my wife faces in her profession. Teaching students who come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds requires not only a high level of dedication but also the right resources and support to address their individual needs. ELL teachers, like my wife, often work with limited instructional materials and may lack adequate support structures to ensure that their students receive the best possible education. More often than not, it is the educators themselves who go out of their way (professionally and financially) to fulfill any deficiencies in resources from the DOE, and educators in a speciality such as ELL must make due with a smaller support system.

The provisions outlined in HB261 would provide much-needed funding, professional development opportunities, and increased recognition for the critical role ELL educators play. These measures are essential for enhancing the quality of education for non-native speakers, ensuring they are equipped with the language skills necessary to succeed academically and in life.

Moreover, this bill would foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students in Hawaii, recognizing the value that linguistic diversity brings to our educational

system. As someone who witnesses the long hours and relentless commitment my wife invests into her students' success, I can confidently say that the resources proposed in this bill would make a significant difference.

I urge you to pass HB261 and continue to support the dedicated ELL educators in Hawaii who, like my wife, are making an invaluable impact on the lives of countless students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lejos A. Farr

LATE

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tanya Mau. I am a State Office Teacher at the Hawaii Teacher Induction Center in the Leadership Institute under the Office of Talent Management with the Department of Education. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As a former EL teacher and coordinator, as well as a complex area resource teacher providing professional development for teachers who work with English Learners, I have seen high turnover of teachers in the EL teacher and coordinator roles because of the heavy workload for designing and delivering federally-mandated English Language Development services across various grade levels, proficiency levels and managing compliance reports. I have been one of two members on the Hawaii State Teachers Union (HSTA) English Learner Committee since 2019. This was following a two year appointment on the Superintendent's English Learner (EL) Task Force. In both of these roles, I have been advocating for students and teachers, in order to disrupt the inequities and bring more awareness to the issues that teachers face when working with English Learners/Multilingual Learners. The Superintendent's EL Task Force enabled me to take a leadership role in planning and facilitating meetings with various school level leaders in order to prepare a fact-finding report and presentation with short-term and long-term recommendations to the Board of Education. As a member of the HSTA EL Committee, I have been able to plan and facilitate listening sessions at our annual teacher convenings which have enabled me to hear teacher concerns, challenges, and help to then collate their voices to present to leadership negotiations strategies, recommendations, and potential policy changes that will impact the success of our teachers working with multilingual learners.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically. Currently, I support the professional development of instructional mentors and beginning teachers. Often, our beginning teachers are placed in EL positions and these teachers ask for continued support to be successful with teaching English Learners and working with teachers across the school.

Additionally, students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in

our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Tanya Mau

Department of Education

Hawaii Teacher Induction Center

LATE

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:10:39 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Otsubo	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 Alyssa Otsubo. I am a teacher at King William C. Lunalilo Elementary in Kaimuki on O’ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

In my first year in the Hawaii Department of Education, I was hired as an EL (English Language) Teacher. Later within that year, I was asked to fill our EL Coordinator Role. At our school, there is an extremely high turnover. Our student demographic showcases a high EL population. Although this position was extremely rewarding, it required excessive work to fulfill my responsibilities. I was required to attend multiple trainings, teach all grade levels within our school, complete detailed documentation, analyze and share data with staff, and collaborate with parents, teachers, and administration.

Now as a general education Kindergarten Teacher, I still provide direct services to English Language Learners. Although I am not fulfilling my same duties as previously, it is essential that I still apply differentiated instruction to my students to support ALL learners in succeeding. Our entire staff participates in extensive trainings to equip us with strategies for high quality instruction for all.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to

effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Alyssa Otsubo

Kindergarten Teacher

King William C. Lunalilo Elementary School

Hawaii Department of Education

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

LATE

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Athena Anderson and I am a teacher at Samuel Enoka Kalama Intermediate in BKMM District on Maui. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

I have worked as a public school teacher on Maui since 2001 and during that time I have taught elementary school as a classroom teacher and non-classroom teacher and have taught middle school for 6 years. Currently, this is my second year as the EL Coordinator and Teacher at Kalama Intermediate. At this moment, I teach grades 6,7,8th grade ESOL Classes, Coordinate the EL program, and teach 2 sixth grade Reading Workshop classes. Our school has a small number of EL students (39). Due to my experience, I strongly support the pay differential for this position because it requires extra requirements such as the TESOL certification and/or Sheltered Instruction Requirements. Furthermore, the added duties of maintaining, updating, and entering data in the Infinite Campus system, as a requirement for English Learners within the school, adds extra duties to a teacher's workload. Overall, I have noticed it is difficult to maintain EL teachers due to the extra demands and unique nature of these positions. Often there is a high turnover of students and throughout the year, we coordinate and carry out WIDA ACCESS testing, provide initial screeners for incoming students and update/maintain Student Record Profiles. Our school had constant turnover for this position prior to me being asked to do this position by my administrator.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Athena Anderson, M. Ed

EL Teacher/Coordinator

Samuel Enoka Kalama Intermediate School

LATE

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:45:11 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine Oshita	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Representatives,

I serve the students and families of the Hana-Lahainaluna-Lanai-Molokai complex area in the position of District Educational Specialist responsible for the oversight of the English Learner Programs in our schools. I fully support this bill for the simple reason that it is not possible for our complex area to be in compliance with Federal and State laws and policies that require English Learners (ELs) receive specialized instruction from teachers who are qualified to teach students of other languages. Our complex area consists of four separate complexes, three of which are considered to be in hard-to-staff geographic locations: Hana, Lanai, and Molokai. We either do not have teachers who meet the qualification, or in a few cases, the teachers do have the qualification, but are not providing direct specialized instruction to EL students because they are teaching in another subject area. This bill has the opportunity to provide a significant incentive for our existing teachers to earn this status and work directly with EL students. As a side note, I would advise the bill include specific language that addresses the State's current requirement for general education teachers to earn their Sheltered Instruction Qualification, whether or not this constitutes providing direct instruction to ELs, and how it relates to this bill. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Christine Oshita



HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:28:51 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joanne Powell	Leeward District EL Program, Hawaii Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB621

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joanne Powell. I am an English Learner (EL) Resource Teacher for the EL Program in the Leeward District on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English Learners (ELs).

As noted in this U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) [guide \(https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/files/fast_facts/Del4-4ELTeacher%20Projections_6.11.2021_508.pdf\)](https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/files/fast_facts/Del4-4ELTeacher%20Projections_6.11.2021_508.pdf), “among the states that did not realize their projections for additional EL instructors, the five states that were furthest from their projections — **Hawaii**, Idaho, Nevada, Ohio, and Kentucky — all experienced a decrease in certified or licensed EL instructors.” Additionally, when describing the projected need for EL educators, another OELA [guide \(https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/ELsTeachers-Infographic-20230616-508.pdf\)](https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/ELsTeachers-Infographic-20230616-508.pdf) states that “ESL and bilingual education jobs were among the top three teaching positions with the **highest vacancy rate**—6%—in recent school years.”

The Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) has recently set forth additional requirements for teachers of ELs, which includes credit &/or non-credit hour requirements depending on a teacher’s instructional responsibilities. Since more training is required by our state for such teachers, in order to effectively meet the instructional needs of our diverse multilingual learners, this legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive high-quality instruction, from the best teachers, in order to succeed academically.

The Hawai‘i State EL Guidance Manual (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-stl5tKtNsl1zFwE9znJV4UoTBCBSpqgdLcALZy5oM/edit?usp=sharing>) describes the rigorous EL Teacher Certification Requirement (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-stl5tKtNsl1zFwE9znJV4UoTBCBSpqgdLcALZy5oM/edit?tab=t.0#bookmark=id.fqupzrjte8r3>) & pathways to meet the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board’s (HTSB) Teaching English to

Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) License. As a former EL Program coordinator & EL lead teacher for many years, now at the district working with multiple schools, I'm well aware of the need for qualified teachers who will undertake the additional training requirements, as well as put in the daily work needed to intentionally provide specific English language development supports & scaffolds, which takes additional lesson planning time beyond that needed when only addressing content area instruction.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled EL teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English Learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes. A well educated citizenry will benefit our state by providing the skilled workforce that's needed throughout our islands.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Joanne Powell

English Learner Resource Teacher,

Leeward District Office,

Hawaii Department of Education

LATE

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:19:13 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Luxmi Quall	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 Luxmi Quall. I am a teacher at Lahaina Intermediate School in HLLM Complex on Maui. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

Due to the Lahaina Fires, my school has suffered greatly. My school functions typically with two ELL Teachers. Due to the Fires our other ELL Teacher chose to use the early transfer opportunity and leave. This ontop of WSF and cuts, Lahaina Intermediate only has me. I have worked extremely hard to improve the well-being of the EL Student population at my school. I teach multiple grade levels. 6-8th graders. I have single handedly created a newcomer program at my school to support new EL students transition at our school. The lasting positive impact demonstrates the power of advocacy, hard work and the belief all students can learn and have a right to support and an equitable education. Not only am I teaching during the day, I act as a translator to support families and colleagues concerns and even in emergency situations. We have had several Severe Weather days this school year. Without my support families may not have accurately or appropriately been communicated with or supported. Just recently because of severe weather. I stepped in to communicate and make sure our Newcomer's parents had proper communication and information in regards to our school closing. NOT the General Education Teacher, Counselors or other Faculty at our school. When there are behavioral concerns or colleagues need information coomunicated to parents, oftentimes I am the one that steps in those times of needs. NOT the General Education Teacher. General Education Teachers are required to have their 6 credit hours of Sheltered Instruction completed by SY26/27. However this does not replace the relentless efforts that an ELL Teacher is tasked with and required to provide. Our preparations for various responsibilities extend well beyond the work day. SPED Teachers are offered a differential, ELL Teachers should be respected and given the same financial support.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Luxmi Quall
ELL Teacher & Coordinator**

Lahaina Intermediate School

Lahaina HI 96761

LATE

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:24:22 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Domingo	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 Ashley Domingo. I am a teacher at Kaimiloa Elementary in Leeward on Oahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs). Our EL teacher provides services for all the grade levels (K-6) at our school. With our high population of EL students, which only seems to be increasing each year. This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field.

Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials.

Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii’s multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state’s commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Ashley Domingo

Gr.4 Teacher

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: HB 621

LATE

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

Aloha from Kahakai Elementary School in the heart of Kailua-Kona, currently home to 164 EL students and their 418 peers who thrive in community alongside them.

At my school I'm known as Ms. Wee, the EL teacher and EL Coordinator. This is my testimony in support of HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English Learners (ELs).

This is my 23rd year teaching at Kahakai Elementary School and my first year as the EL teacher/coordinator. I graduated college with my endorsement to teach EL then went on to get my masters in English Language Speakers. Honestly, I never envisioned leaving general education, my degrees were always to support the children within the 4 walls of my classroom year after year. However, my principal knew I had the experience and knowledge to lead our EL program, one we currently did not have in place and if I'm being honest, haven't truly held a position for several years on and off. We tried. Nobody would stay...

My principal was giving me my dream job as I would soon find out. You become "family" to each and every EL child. All of a sudden you create a space for children to belong who perhaps didn't feel they fit. "Look, someone like me", becomes very real. And all of a sudden you are providing clothes, shoes, food, car rides, books, school supplies, and time to children who in both large and small capacity were going without these basic needs. Yes, children of all cultures all around our islands face similar challenges, but to not have the language to even ask for help or recognize a hand reaching for you because your culture may not understand a gift when they receive one-I get to do that. Every single day.

I could list the various demands that come with servicing EL children and keeping within compliance the many laws of protection our schools must meet. But for me, that would just be an accumulation of tasks I'd do regardless of a dollar amount-because as with most teachers, it's never about the money. In fact, I wasn't eager to write as I'm not one to beg or complain-but what I do feel deep within my na'au is that I have a voice and if I truly care for the EL students of my community and the ones who come

after them, it is my job to speak up. This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the extreme shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically and one day be able to contribute to the communities in which they live.. In order to do that we need qualified teachers with the training and knowledge to step into these classrooms and stay. Stay. Stay.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawai'i's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system. I like to think of it as, "Once you get to where you are going, turn back and help the next in line." We have to kokua.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to submit a voice in support of this bill.

On Behalf of Kahakai Elementary EL Haumana,
Bree Wee

LATE

HB-621

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:45:16 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aura-Rae Wong	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 Aura-Rae Wong. I am a teacher in the Central District of O'ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of HB621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

**Respectfully,
Aura-Rae Wong
Teacher / Hawaii Department of Education**

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE [SENATE / HOUSE] COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB973 / HB621

LATE

Chair Senate- Kidani / House- Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Risa Mathews. I am a teacher at 'Aiea Intermediate School in Central District on O'ahu. I am submitting testimony in support of SB 973 and HB 621, which seeks to establish and fund salary differentials for teachers who provide direct services to English learners (ELs).

As an English teacher for language learners, my role extends beyond the 7th-grade curriculum. I also teach a Newcomers class, supporting students who have been in the U.S. for less than three years. With no set Hawai'i curriculum—only standards—I design a multicultural program to help them acclimate, build relationships, and succeed.

In addition, I serve dual-certified students who receive both special education and EL support, working to close language and learning gaps. This includes push-in support for general education classrooms to assist Newcomers and EL students.

We are more than teachers—we are mentors, advocates, and support systems. We provide resources through on-campus and nonprofit partnerships like PACT (Parent and Child Together) and WAO (We are Oceania), where these organizations will provide community resources to our families on campus and off-campus.

This legislation is a necessary step toward addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and ensuring that our multilingual students receive the high-quality instruction and support they need to succeed academically.

These students face unique challenges in acquiring academic English while keeping pace with their peers. Research consistently shows that well-trained teachers play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap for these learners. However, the persistent shortage of qualified teachers has made it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality support.

By offering a pay differential, this bill will attract and retain skilled teachers in this essential field. Competitive compensation rewards the specialized training and expertise required to effectively support English learners and will lead to increased teacher retention and less turnover. Investing in our teachers directly benefits students, schools, and communities by promoting educational equity and improving long-term academic outcomes.

For these reasons, I urge the Legislature to pass this bill and fully fund the proposed pay differentials. Doing so will help ensure that Hawaii's multilingual learners receive the educational opportunities they deserve, while also strengthening the state's commitment to an inclusive and effective public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Risa Mathews

7th Grade ELL ELA

English Language Learner Department

'Aiea Intermediate School