

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



RYAN I. YAMANE  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA  
Office of the Director  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 18, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 754 HD1 – RELATING TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS.**

Hearing: February 20, 2025, 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of the measure, defers to the Department of Education, and provides comments. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace priorities identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee on Education amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

DHS shares the same vision through school-based family resource centers, which are a component of community schools. Family resource centers are welcoming spaces on school campuses that utilize a multigenerational, strengths-based, and family-centered approach. Families may access services in a place they are comfortable in that reflects and is responsive to

February 18, 2025

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the community's needs and interests. Services are generally at no or low cost and aim to build communities of peer support and increase social connections. Schools, families, and communities benefit from these models that support student learning, reduce chronic absenteeism, and strengthen communities.

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

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:** 02/20/2025

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Finance

**Department:** Education

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

**Bill Title:** HB 0754, HD1 RELATING TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS.

**Purpose of Bill:** Appropriates funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the intent of HB 754, HD1, provided that it does not affect the priorities identified in the Department's Governor approved budget.

The Department supports the implementation of community schools programs to provide high-quality educational opportunities by focusing on the whole child, their family, and their community when providing educational experiences for our students. To accomplish this, the community school model requires the support of school staff, teachers, families, and communities. Creating these partnerships and valuable relationships enrich students and their surrounding communities.

Currently, the Department requires that the schools designated under federal requirements as Comprehensive Support and Improvement with More Rigorous Interventions (CSI-MRI) move to a full-service community schools model. CSI-MRI schools have been identified as the lowest performing schools in need of support for their students. To bolster the support, one of the requirements of the CSI-MRI schools is to partner with community organizations to implement the community schools approach fully. The Department also has a Memorandum of Agreement in place with the Hawaii Afterschool Alliance, who provides support to our schools who are currently implementing a community schools model.

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

**HB-754-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 10:28:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Hannah Loyola	Kohala Elementary School -Hawaii Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I support HB 754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.**

**The Community Schools program has been a valuable equity strategy for Kohala Elementary School. Having the support of a Community School Coordinator to engage our families and community in the work of school improvement has allowed us to offer support and enrichment to our students and families.**

**I urge you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.**

Sincerely,

Hannah Loyola

Principal of Kohala Elementary School



*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: House Committee on Finance  
Re: HB 754 Relating to Community Schools

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference  
Thursday, February 20, 2025, 10:00AM

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

**On behalf of HCANSpeaks!, I am writing in strong support of HB 754, relating to community schools.** This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position. Coordinating relationships and resources are needed to help students recover and accelerate equitable outcomes. Through community schools, thriving learners, educators, families, 'āina, and communities are supported by nurturing networks that promote reciprocity.

HB 754 aims to ensure that funding and initiatives are administered in a way that directly benefits Hawai'i's communities, supporting sustainable development and protecting the unique values of communities across the islands.

I urge you to support this bill, HB 754, that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB 754.**

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

Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance  
1776 University Avenue, WA1-102  
Honolulu, HI 96822



House Committee on Finance  
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

February 20, 2025  
Conference Room 308

RE: Support of HB 754

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance supports HB754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for Community Schools and a program manager position.

In Hawai'i, full-service Community Schools are innovative, thriving hubs of learning in which partnerships and collaboration create a'o aku, a'o mai, reciprocal relationships between learners and place, content and context, and schools and communities.

Community schools is a proven, time-tested strategy that can bring forth short-term results like improving family engagement and attendance and decreasing behavioral referrals. It is also proven to show long-term results like closing the achievement gap, and improving academic scores and graduation rates.<sup>1</sup>

There are currently 26 Community Schools in Hawai'i across four islands that are mobilizing their community partners, families, students, and school staff to ensure that all students thrive in their school community. Each school has a Community School Coordinator who facilitates the co-creation of innovative strategies and are building a system of support to address the barriers students and families face. These innovative strategies fall under the following key practices:

- Collaborative leadership, shared power, and voice;
- Expanded, enriched learning opportunities;
- Rigorous, community-connected classroom instruction;
- Culture of belonging, safety, and care;
- Powerful family and student engagement;
- Integrated systems of support; and
- Grounded in Hawai'i.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maier, A., Daniel, J., Oakes, J. & Lam, L. (2017, December). *Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence*. Learning Policy Institute.  
[https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/137/download?inline&file=Community\\_Schools\\_Effective\\_REPO\\_RT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/137/download?inline&file=Community_Schools_Effective_REPO_RT.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance. (n.d.). *Hawai'i Community Schools Framework*.  
[https://www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org/uploads/2/8/4/2/28427169/hawai%E2%80%98i\\_cs\\_framework\\_24.pdf](https://www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org/uploads/2/8/4/2/28427169/hawai%E2%80%98i_cs_framework_24.pdf)

The needs and assets assessments completed by our current Community School Coordinators reveal the many resources already in their communities that may be operating in silos or are underutilized. This points to the immense need for the Community School Coordinator to organize resources and bring the school and community partners together to fully leverage the assets at hand and collectively address barriers to learning.

The Coordinator role has been proven to effectively leverage resources and bring benefits to the school. A return on investment study done in Albuquerque, NM found that for every dollar invested in a Community School Coordinator brought a return of \$7.11 of net benefits.<sup>3</sup>

Community Schools in Hawai'i have also made great strides in addressing some of the most pressing issues facing our schools. For example, Wai'anae Elementary brought a food pantry, financial literacy, housing and utility support, health and mental health services on campus, and more. These benefits were not only available to students and families but to their teachers. This system of support has led to improvements in their teacher retention rates as last summer, Wai'anae El didn't have to hire any teachers. Everyone stayed from the previous school year.

Another example is Maunaloa Elementary on Moloka'i which improved their regular attendance rates from 63% in SY22-23 to 93% in SY23-24. A 30% increase in one year! This is due in part to the role of their Community School Coordinator focusing on family engagement and spreading a consistent message to the community about the importance of attendance.

Schools should not be tackling challenges like attendance and teacher retention alone. This is why Community Schools are needed more than ever as Community School Coordinators can help to leverage the already existing assets and resources available within their school community to remove barriers to learning and accelerate equitable outcomes in health, education, and employment.

We urge you to support this bill that would ensure our current schools can continue to support their students and families and create the necessary support within the DOE to lead the state's community school efforts.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Masutani  
Program Director  
Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance  
hawaiiafterschool@gmail.com  
[www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org](http://www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org)

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<sup>3</sup> Bloodworth, M.R. & Horner, A.C. (2019, May). *Return on Investment of a Community School Coordinator: A Case Study*. Coalition for Community Schools.  
[https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/ROI\\_Coordinator.pdf](https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/ROI_Coordinator.pdf)



## HOUSE BILL 754, HD1, RELATING TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FEBRUARY 20, 2025 · FIN HEARING

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 754, HD1, relating to community schools, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.

Policymakers should promote education programs that deliver wraparound care for students and deal with educational “inputs” that impact student success, like poverty and access to healthcare. An example of such a program is the community schools model of education, which as noted in Hawai'i's Consolidated State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act, is a research-based strategy for school improvement that emphasizes high-quality teaching, culturally relevant curricula, wraparound student supports, positive disciplinary practices and restorative justice, parent and community engagement, and inclusive school leadership.

In prioritizing student wellness, community schools have been shown to increase learning growth and graduation rates, while decreasing behavioral referrals and chronic absenteeism. In New York City, for example, community schools that highlight mental health counseling and consistent family outreach have seen chronic absenteeism rates fall by 7.8 percent as of 2017, with graduation rates rising 4.8 percent. Engaged learners are more like to acquire the skills necessary to become active citizens and productive members of the workforce. Additionally, since even the

most affluent and well-adjusted children face challenges in their maturation processes, guaranteeing that schools have the resources to respond to childhood pressures and trauma with compassion and sensitivity may make the difference between sending a student to college or losing them to social threats, like substance abuse or our state's prolific sex trade.

As the National Education Association states, "Community Schools transform traditional public schools into neighborhood hubs that mobilize students, staff, families and community members to reimagine education and co-construct a shared vision for their school and community. Community Schools are developed with the understanding that every community is different." Community schools rely on integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning opportunities, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership to strengthen educational outcomes. Currently, 25 community schools exist in our state.

## 25 Community Schools in Hawai'i

O'ahu	Hawai'i Island	Moloka'i	Lāna'i
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Barbers Point El</li><li>Blanche Pope El</li><li>Dole Middle</li><li>Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind</li><li>Kaimukī High</li><li>Ke'elikolani Middle</li><li>Nānākuli High &amp; Inter</li><li>Olomana School</li><li>Wai'anae El</li><li>Wai'anae High</li><li>Waimānalo School</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hōnaunau El</li><li>Ka'u High &amp; Pahala El</li><li>Kealakehe El</li><li>Kealakehe Inter</li><li>Kohala El</li><li>Kohala High</li><li>Kohala Middle</li><li>Mountain View El</li><li>Na'alehu El</li><li>Pāhoa High &amp; Inter</li><li>Waikōloa El</li><li>Waimea El</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Maunaloa El</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lāna'i High &amp; El</li></ul>

**Contact: [educationcaucusdph@gmail.com](mailto:educationcaucusdph@gmail.com)**

House Committee on Finance  
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

February 20, 2025  
Conference Room 308

RE: Support of HB 754

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning supports HB 754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.

Building stronger family ties and improving student learning in all areas depends on supporting community schools. Schools such as these function as a potent catalyst for the development of robust partnerships and the promotion of collaboration among families, educators, and local organizations. Community schools establish an environment that fosters the development of both intellectual and social abilities, thereby empowering students and enhancing the entire community. This is achieved by preserving these essential connections.

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning urge you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Kathlina S. Martin  
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning



Date: February 19, 2025

To: House Committee on Finance  
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair  
And members of the Committee

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for HB754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for **Community Schools**

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Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

**ECAS strongly supports passage of HB754**, which would strengthen the development of community schools to support student success across Hawai'i.

Community Schools are a time-tested strategy for connecting students to the supports they need to thrive. They are a proven school improvement strategy, focused on student-centered teaching and learning that better serves the holistic needs of all students and their families.

Community Schools are an investment in children, families, and our shared future. Quality Community Schools support **higher student achievement and graduation rates** and lead them to become contributing members of society by increasing opportunities for ALL students.

**Community Schools work in partnership with community organizations, families, and other agencies to advance student outcomes** by integrating student supports, active family and community engagement, collaborative leadership practices, and expanded and enriching learning time. Educators may work with partners such as local companies, nonprofits, and higher education institutions to offer students real-world projects that make learning more relevant and engaging. They build connections that can open the door to future opportunities.

The community schools strategy brings funding and resources into schools that would otherwise not be available to them, resulting in an impressive "return on investment" to the government support provided. [This study](#) shows that each \$1 invested in the Coordinator returns approximately **\$7.11 in net benefits**.

Kids and families do better when communities work together. More public funding can **ensure that ALL students and families benefit from the holistic framework that Community Schools offer**--including urban, suburban, and rural communities. It is also a great way to address the needs of parents and students who need specialized support--such as children with disabilities and English language learners.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony **in support of HB754** which would provide critical infrastructure support to Hawai'i's community schools.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

**Osa Tui, Jr.**  
President

**Logan Okita**  
Vice President

**Cheney Kaku**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Ann Mahi**  
Executive Director

## **TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Item: **HB 754 HD 1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION - COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Hearing: **Thursday, February 20, 2025, 10:00 am, Room 308**

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

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association stands in strong support of HB 754 HD 1, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.

In Hawai'i, community schools are innovative, thriving hubs of learning in which partnerships and collaboration create a'o mai, a'o aku, reciprocal relationships between learners and place, content and context, and schools and communities. Community schools intentionally connect schools, 'āina, indigenous and contemporary knowledge and ensure that learners belong to a thriving community.

The Hawaii State Teachers Association urges you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.



**HAWAII APPLESEED**  
CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice  
Support for HB 754 – Relating to School Meals  
House Committee on Finance  
Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 10:00 AM

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Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee:

Hawai‘i Appleseed supports HB 754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.

Public schools are one of the most critical community-oriented institutions we have as a society. The community schools movement seeks to intentionally integrate schools into their surrounding communities, giving parents, families, and other members of the community a place to learn and connect with one another. This is absolutely critical in a time where so many are socially isolated, and political differences have driven wedges into nearly every corner of society.

Community Schools partner with community organizations, families, and other agencies to advance student outcomes by integrating student supports, active family and community engagement, collaborative leadership practices, and expanded learning time. Educators may work with partners such as local companies, nonprofits, and higher education institutions to offer students real-world projects that make learning more relevant and engaging. They build connections that can open the door to future opportunities.

Furthermore, this strategy is crucial for building community disaster resilience, as seen during the global COVID pandemic. Community Schools are able to mobilize their community in times of uncertainty or hardship, through well-established partnerships built on trust. These partnerships can often ensure that basic needs, and other necessities are still available to those who need them.

Please support this bill to sustain the community schools movement in Hawai‘i and organize our resources towards the success of students, families, and communities.



## **Testimony in Support of HB 754: Community Schools Bill**

Representative Yamashita, Representative Takenouchi and Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Hawai'i 'Ohana Support Network Advisory Committee, we are in strong support of HB 754, particularly in recognition of the bill's emphasis on powerful family and student engagement. As an organization that supports Family Resource Centers (FRCs) in Community Schools across Hawai'i, we understand firsthand the transformative impact that strong, collaborative partnerships between schools and families can have on student success.

FRCs play a crucial role in bridging the gap between families and schools, empowering families to take an active role in their children's education. We believe that family engagement is one of the most significant factors in improving student outcomes, and HB 754 provides the framework for a more inclusive, supportive, and effective approach to this engagement. The following points highlight the integral role FRCs play in the implementation of this key practice in Community Schools:

- 1. Building Trusting, Collaborative Partnerships**

At the heart of effective family engagement is trust. Family Resource Centers foster a supportive, welcoming environment where families feel valued and heard. Through one-on-one consultations, support groups, and community-building activities, FRCs create spaces where families can openly share their needs, concerns, and aspirations. By working in partnership with families, FRCs ensure that parents and caregivers are active participants in shaping the educational experience of their children.

- 2. Identifying Family Needs and Strengthening Families**

Family Resource Centers serve as a critical touchpoint for identifying the unique needs of families within the community. Whether those needs are related to housing, food security, mental health services, or access to educational tools, FRCs connect families with local resources and services. By addressing these foundational needs, FRCs create a stable environment that supports students' well-being and academic success. When families are supported and empowered, students are better able to focus on their education and achieve their fullest potential.

- 3. Connecting Families to Community Resources**

Hawai'i is home to many diverse communities, each with unique strengths and challenges. FRCs are uniquely positioned to connect families to local resources, whether they be healthcare services, counseling, job training, or after-school programs. By

helping families navigate these services, FRCs ensure that families are not only supported in times of crisis but also have ongoing access to resources that promote long-term stability and success.

**4. Creating a Culture of Belonging and Support**

Effective family engagement goes beyond communication; it involves creating an environment where families feel a sense of belonging. FRCs serve as a bridge between families and schools, ensuring that all families—regardless of background or circumstance—are welcomed and supported. When families feel a strong sense of connection and care, they are more likely to engage with their children's education, attend school events, and advocate for their children's success.

**5. Empowering Families to Advocate for Their Children**

A key component of family engagement is empowering families to become advocates for their children. Through FRCs, families gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to navigate the educational system, support their children's learning, and advocate for their children's needs. By building strong family-school partnerships, FRCs help ensure that families have a voice in shaping their children's educational journey.

**6. Supporting Student Success Through Holistic Family Support**

Research consistently shows that when families are engaged in their children's education, student outcomes improve. FRCs support this engagement by providing a holistic approach to family well-being, which in turn fosters better academic and social-emotional outcomes for students. When students know that their families are connected to a supportive network, they are more likely to feel motivated, confident, and secure in their learning environment.

In conclusion, the Hawai'i 'Ohana Support Network strongly supports HB 754, especially its focus on powerful family engagement. We believe that Family Resource Centers are a vital component of this practice, as they serve as a bridge between families, schools, and the broader community. By working together in partnership with families, FRCs help to identify needs, strengthen families, and ultimately support student success.

We respectfully urge the committee to pass HB 754, as it aligns with our shared vision of creating an inclusive, supportive, and effective educational environment for all students and families in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,  
Kathleen O'Dell, PhD  
Network Coordinator,  
Hawai'i 'Ohana Support Network

**HB-754-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 10:18:24 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christina Simmons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Committee on Finance

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Re: Support of HB 754

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

I am in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 754 because I have experienced the difference Community Schools can make to an entire community.

While working with Linapuni Elementary as a neighborhood partner and a contractor, the difference in student outcome once the community schools model was used, was significant. We were able to decrease absenteeism from 34% to 12.5% while decreasing staff time and expenses. This also played a role in staff satisfaction with the school year due to the increased working relationship with families as partners in their child's education.

Community schools work.

Sincerely,

Christina Simmons - Kaneohe resident

**HB-754-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 11:31:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Luiz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Leilani Luiz**  
**Community School Coordinator & Parent**  
**leilaniluz4@gmail.com**  
**February 18, 2025**

**To: House of Representatives**  
**Hawai'i State Legislature**

**Subject: Strong Support for HB 754 – Investing in Community Schools**

**Aloha,**

**As both a Community School Coordinator and a mother of four keiki in our public schools, I write with strong support for HB 754, which will provide essential funding to sustain and expand community schools in Hawai'i. This investment is not just about education—it is about strengthening our communities, uplifting our most vulnerable, and ensuring every child and 'ohana has the support they need to thrive.**

**Community schools are more than places of learning; they are spaces of shared leadership, where educators, families, and community members come together with a united vision. This collaboration naturally fosters 'ohana engagement, strengthens pilina, and creates an environment where every student feels seen, heard, and valued. When keiki and 'ohana feel connected to their school, their academic success, well-being, and overall growth flourish.**

**The success of community schools is rooted in their ability to bridge families to vital resources, from health services to academic support, addressing the barriers that often stand in the way of student achievement. As research has shown, these investments yield high returns, not just in test scores, but in school culture, teacher retention, and graduation rates. When we invest in community schools, we are investing in Hawai'i's future—ensuring that every keiki, no matter their circumstances, has the opportunity to rise as high as Mauna Kea.**

**I urge you to support HB 754 and allocate the necessary funding to continue this vital work. The time to invest in our keiki and our communities is now.**

**Mahalo for your time and dedication to the future of Hawai'i's children.**

**Me ka ha'aha'a,  
Leilani Luiz**

**Community School Coordinator & Parent**

**HB-754-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 12:57:07 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jayleen Pharmin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of HB 754**

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 754, which appropriates funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position. I believe this bill is a crucial investment in the future of our children and our communities.

As someone who grew up participating in an afterschool program, I can personally attest to the immense impact that community schools and afterschool programs have on a student’s academic success and overall development. These programs provided me with the additional support I needed to excel in school and to continue my education after high school. I gained valuable life skills, mentorship, and a sense of belonging that helped me navigate the challenges of school and life in general.

In addition to my own experiences as a student, I have also had the privilege of working in afterschool programs. I have seen firsthand how these programs help students stay engaged, provide a safe environment, and offer crucial academic and emotional support outside regular school hours. Community schools, with their holistic approach, go beyond just academics, nurturing the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students.

Funding for community schools and a dedicated program manager position will strengthen these programs and ensure that more students can benefit from the same opportunities that I had. The investment in these services is an investment in the success of our children, which ultimately contributes to the prosperity of our communities.

I urge you to support HB 754 and help ensure that these life-changing programs remain accessible to all students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jayleen Pharmin

**HB-754-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 2:43:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cyd L. Hoffeld	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Committee on Finance

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

February 20, 2025

Conference Room 308

RE: Support of HB 754

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

My name is Cyd Hoffeld, and I live in Hilo. I support HB 754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.

The reasons I support this bill and believe it is important is because I know that many of our youth suffered greatly during the pandemic and continue to struggle emotionally and academically. Community schools give them and other students who experienced hardships an opportunity to gain knowledge through innovative lesson plans, credit recovery programs, address barriers to learning, provide a safe learning environment, and build capacity in our communities for those like me who are lifelong learners. I enrolled in a community school for adults because I wanted to learn the Japanese language and conversational Japanese. It was great learning in a small group setting with other global citizens.

I urge you to strongly support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Mahalo,

Cyd Hoffeld, Community Health Educator and Lifelong Learner

House Committee on Finance  
Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair  
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

February 20, 2025  
Conference Room 308

RE: Support of HB 754

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

I support HB 754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.

In these uncertain times, kids need a *Puu Honua*, place of refuge, where they feel safe and are known, can receive help to learn at their own pace, and have opportunities for hands-on learning. As a former volunteer tutor and Big Sister, I saw first-hand that early learning challenges (i.e., reading and comprehension) can lead to frustration, poor self-esteem and academic failure. Helping students at an early age is a MUCH better investment than dealing later with absenteeism, delinquency, social isolation, etc.

I urge you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai'i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

**Debra Shiraishi-Pratt**

**HB-754-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 9:41:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/20/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kaipo Correa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Committee on Finance

Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

February 20, 2025

Conference Room 308

RE: Support of HB 754

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

I, Kaipo Correa, support HB 754, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Education for community schools and a program manager position.

As a community member invested in supporting my children's education from birth I have grown alongside my children through a Family and Early Childhood Education program called Na Pono No Na Ohana located at Blanche Pope Elementary in Waimānalo. Over time I have worn various hats in our community leading me to accomplishing my BSW and returning to the school where it all started and where my Ohana have been students for over four generations, as the Community School Coordinator at Blanche Pope Elementary and Ke Kula Kaiapuni O Wainānalo. Through my lived experiences I have seen what works in and for our community. The Community School strategy and framework brings together stakeholders within the community and school in order address matters through collaborative leadership, shared power and voice, expanded and enriched learning opportunities, rigorous, community-connected

classroom instruction, culture of belonging, safety, and care, integrated systems of support, powerful student and family engagement, and grounded in Hawai‘i. Through the Community School strategy and framework there is significant opportunity in building strong, flourishing schools and communities through sustainable resources, shared governance, continuous improvement, data systems, professional learning opportunities, and strategic partnerships.

Over the past year and a half as the Community School Coordinator here at Blanche Pope Elementary and Ke Kula Kaiapuni O Waimānalo I have learned that this strategy has a long way to go. Support for Community Schools embedded in the system of education can only benefit our schools and communities across the pae aina. Building a hub, support, and open space for school, families, and community to share and collaborate while focusing on a shared vision and towards a common goal.

Here are some things to know about Hawai‘i Community Schools:

- In Hawai‘i, community schools are innovative, thriving hubs of learning in which partnerships and collaboration create a‘o mai, a‘o aku, reciprocal relationships between learners and place, content and context, and schools and communities.
- Community schools intentionally connect schools, ‘āina, indigenous and contemporary knowledge and ensure that learners belong to a thriving community.
- Systems of support form the foundation for community schools that are rooted in organizing resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.
- Hawai‘i-based community schools reflect who we are, how we live, and what we aspire to become.
- The intended outcomes of Community Schools in Hawai‘i are:
  - Thriving learners, educators, families, ‘āina, and communities are supported by nurturing networks that promote reciprocity.
  - Innovative, thriving hubs of learning that incubate and connect Indigenous wisdom and contemporary knowledge to create and meet local and global opportunities.
- [Hawai‘i Community Schools Framework](#)
- [Community Schools Storymap](#)

Benefit and Impact of Community Schools

- A time-tested strategy for social and civic needs: Community Schools are a time-tested strategy for connecting students to the supports they need to thrive. They are a proven school improvement strategy, focused on student-centered teaching and learning that better serves the holistic needs of all students and their families.
- A strategy that believes in people: In Community Schools, every family and community member is an asset. Each person’s skills, talents, and generosity of time are utilized to build on students’ strengths, engage them as learners, and enable them to reach their full potential.
- Community Schools are an investment in children, families, and our shared future. Quality Community Schools support higher student achievement and graduation rates and

lead them to become contributing members of society by increasing opportunities for ALL students.

- CS is a strategy for transforming high-poverty, low-performing schools into thriving schools. With schools so often serving as centers of community life, transforming schools can lead to transformed communities.
- Community Schools work in partnership with community organizations, families, and other agencies to advance student outcomes by integrating student supports, active family and community engagement, collaborative leadership practices, and expanded and enriching learning time. Educators may work with partners such as local companies, nonprofits, and higher education institutions to offer students real-world projects that make learning more relevant and engaging. They build connections that can open the door to future opportunities.
- The community schools strategy brings funding and resources into schools that would otherwise not be available to them, resulting in an impressive “return on investment” to the government support provided. [This study](#) shows that each \$1 invested in the Coordinator returns approximately \$7.11 in net benefits.
- A Community School strategy is designed and well-suited to address urgent student, family, and community needs in times of crises, as we’ve seen during the global Coronavirus pandemic. It’s a comprehensive recovery plan for our current, unprecedented environment.
- Community Schools are able to mobilize their community in times of uncertainty or hardship, through well-established partnerships built on trust. These partnerships can often ensure that basic needs, and other necessities are still available to those who need them.
- A CS strategy puts more power in the hands of parents and families.
- Kids and families do better when communities work together. More public funding can ensure that ALL students and families benefit from the holistic framework that Community Schools offer--including urban, suburban, and rural communities. It is also a great way to address the needs of parents and students who need specialized support--such as children with disabilities and English language learners.

I, Kaipo Correa, urge you to support this bill that would sustain the community schools movement in Hawai‘i and organize our resources towards the success of learners, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Kaipo Correa

Community School Coordinator at

Blanche Pope Elementary

Ke Kula Kaiapuni O Waimānalo

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