



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

Date: 02/25/2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0089, HD2 RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers. Appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding HB 89, HD 2, relating to teacher housing assistance.

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

The Department recommends amending (j) (2) as follows: Has taught at a public school or public charter school in the State for a minimum of one full academic year immediately preceding the application date.

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

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



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO HOUSE BILL 89 HD1
RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

House Committee on Finance

February 25, 2025

10:00 am

Conference Room 308

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House

Committee on Finance:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB 89 HD2**, which establishes a Teacher Housing Assistance Program aimed at improving teacher recruitment and retention, particularly in hard-to-staff schools. OHA commends the introduction of this bill and acknowledges the amendments made in HB 89 HD1 that strengthen its intent and implementation, especially for public charter schools and enhanced eligibility criteria for teachers in hard-to-fill positions. These adjustments will have a more significant impact on Native Hawaiian educators and the communities they serve.

OHA appreciates the amendments made to HB89 HD2, particularly those that outline clear criteria for eligibility and ensure that the program can effectively serve teachers in need. These adjustments ensure that the bill can be successfully implemented and reach those teachers who will benefit most from this support.

Hawai‘i continues to face a chronic teacher shortage, with approximately 10% of teachers leaving the profession annually¹, and over 60,000 students lacking a certified teacher.² One of the leading factors behind teacher turnover is the high cost of living, particularly in relation to housing. The lack of affordable housing options disproportionately impacts underserved communities, including rural areas where many Native Hawaiian students live and attend school.³

Native Hawaiian students are particularly affected by teacher shortages, and their academic success is closely tied to the stability of their educators. The ability to retain quality

¹ Hawai‘i Department of Education. n.d. Employment.Report_„School.Year.8688_89; Hawai‘i Public Schools.<https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/Reports/EmploymentReport2022-23.pdf>

² Hawai‘i.State.Teachers.Association;n;d;Ending.Hawai‘i’s.Teacher.Shortage.Crisis;Accessed.686780.<https://www.hstaj.org/Crisis/>

³ News, A. N. 2020. “Lack of Affordable Housing Is Causing a Teacher Shortage in Hawaii.” NYC.Independent.Press, December 31, 2020. <https://nycip.org/lack-of-affordable-housing-is-causing-a-teacher-shortage-in-hawaii/>.

teachers in these communities is essential for the success of these students⁴. Providing housing assistance directly supports Native Hawaiian educators by easing their financial burden and helping them remain in their communities to serve the students who need them most.

Native Hawaiian teachers are better positioned to form strong cultural and academic connections with Native Hawaiian students, which is vital for fostering a sense of pride, identity, and academic success in these learners. Teachers who remain in their communities are also more likely to stay long-term, promoting stability in schools and ensuring consistency in the educational experience of Native Hawaiian students.⁵

Moreover, HB 89 HD2 aligns with OHA's Mana i Maui Ola framework, which includes goals and strategies for education and housing that directly benefit Native Hawaiian communities. The program's potential to provide housing assistance will contribute to OHA's broader efforts to create economic self-sufficiency for Native Hawaiian educators, many of whom face significant barriers in securing affordable housing in one of the most expensive places to live in the nation. Housing assistance will not only improve their quality of life but also sustain their careers and their ability to support the academic success of the students they teach.

This bill is a critical step toward creating a supportive learning environment for students by ensuring their teachers are able to remain in the communities they serve, reducing turnover, and enhancing the overall quality of education. By stabilizing teachers' financial situations, HB 89 HD2 strengthens the well-being of Native Hawaiian communities and promotes positive educational outcomes for Native Hawaiian students.

OHA strongly urges the Committee to pass HB 89 HD2, as it is a vital measure for retaining educators and ensuring equitable and quality education for Native Hawaiian students. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 89 HD2.

⁴ Kukahiko, K., K. Sang, 'Ā. Iwane, K. Nakasone, A. Austin, P. Fernandez, D. Tanigawa, K. Makua, K. Ka'uhane, L. Nerveza-Clark, D. Andrade, K. Wong, E. Chang, and K. Dukelow. 2024. "Deconstructing the School to Prison Pipeline in Hawai'i: Revitalization and Restoration of Kānaka, 'Āina and Kuleana Through Language and Cultural Practices." *JCSCORE* 10 (1): 83–105. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2642-2387.2024.10.1.83-105>.

⁵ INPEACE. n.d. Ka.Lama; Accessed 020125. <https://inpeace.org/equity/ka-lama/>.

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 89 HD2 Relating to Teacher Housing
DATE: February 25, 2025
TIME: 10:00 A.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Finance
ROOM: Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

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

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT OF THE INTENT of HB 89 HD2** which establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers.

The Commission appreciates the inclusion of public charter school educators into this version of the bill. Public charter schools face the same challenges as their Department of Education colleagues in hiring and retaining qualified teachers.

The Commission is available to work with this committee, the Department of Education, and our public charter schools in moving this legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



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Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Item: HB 89 HD 2– Relating to Teacher Housing

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, February 25, 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 (HSTA) **supports** HB 89, HD2 which establishes the Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers and appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

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

The Teacher Home Assistance Program proposed in HB 89, HD2 would provide crucial financial assistance to help teachers afford housing costs. This would not only alleviate some of the

economic burden on educators but also serve as a powerful recruitment and retention tool. By enabling teachers to live closer to their schools and communities, we can foster stronger relationships, improve teacher morale, and ultimately enhance the quality of education for our keiki.

We urge the committee to pass HB 89, HD2 and invest in the well-being of our teachers. This program is a vital step towards ensuring that all students in Hawai'i have access to a quality education.

Mahalo.

To: Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

From: Chevelle Davis, MPH Director of Early Childhood & Health Policy
Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 89 H.D. 2 – Relating to Teacher Housing

Hearing: Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 10:00 AM, Conference Room 308

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of H.B. No. 89 H.D. 2**, which seeks to establish the Teacher Home Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers for eligible teachers and appropriate funds from the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

Hawai'i's keiki need qualified, committed educators to foster their academic and personal development. Unfortunately, our state faces a persistent teacher shortage, exacerbated by the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing. When teachers cannot afford to live in the communities where they work, our keiki suffer from high teacher turnover, larger class sizes, and inconsistent educational support.

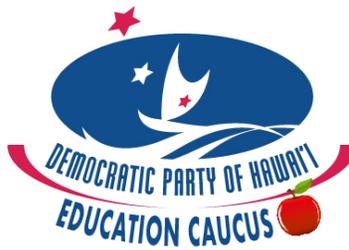
This bill directly addresses these challenges by making housing more accessible and affordable for teachers, which in turn will:

- Improve teacher retention rates, ensuring continuity and stability in the classroom;
- Attract qualified educators to Hawai'i, reducing long-term shortages;
- Strengthen school communities by allowing teachers to live near the students they serve.

When our teachers thrive, our keiki thrive. Quality education is the foundation of a strong community, and stable housing is a critical factor in teachers' ability to remain in the profession. Investing in educators' housing is an investment in our keiki's future.

We urge the committee to pass H.B. No. 89 H.D. 2 to support our teachers and ultimately benefit Hawai'i's keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this critical measure.



HOUSE BILL 89, HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

FEBRUARY 25, 2025 · FIN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 89, HD1, relating to teacher housing, which establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers.

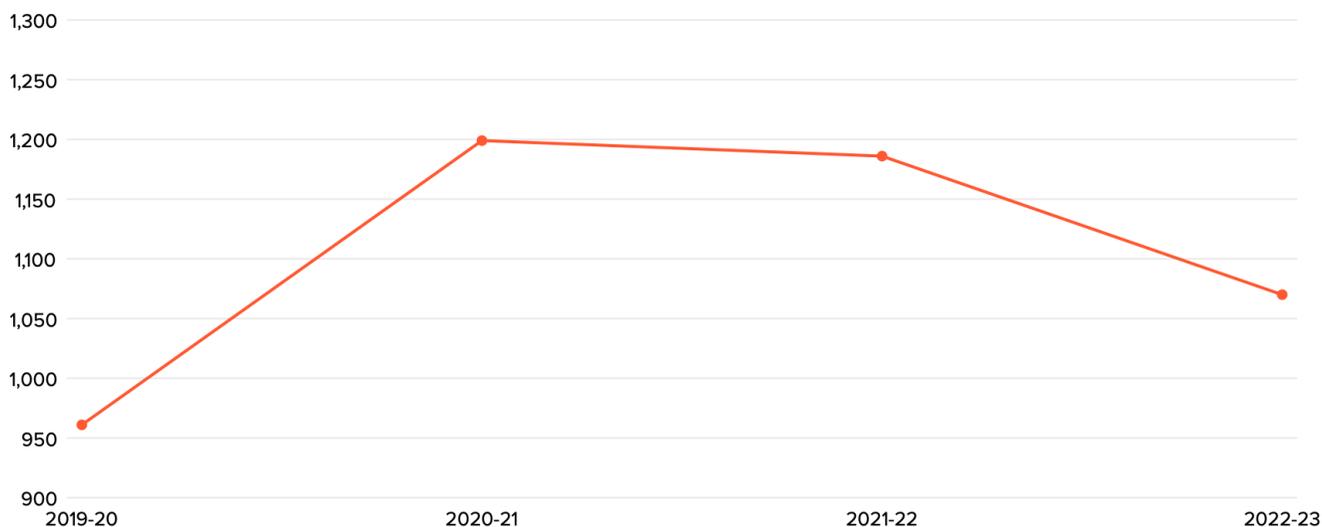
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education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

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

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

Voluntary teacher separations, 2019 to 2023

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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

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

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 25, 2025

H.B. 89, H.D. 2 – RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on H.B. 89, H.D. 2, which proposes to establish a Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers and appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

Under Act 172, SLH 2023, the legislature identified affordable housing as a key strategy for recruiting and retaining the education workforce; not just teachers. Similarly, the legislature should consider providing a "workforce home assistance program" to make other government employees eligible since they face the same low salaries and high cost of living.

The HGEA represents thousands of employees who work for the DOE and public charter schools who make less than a starting Hawaii teacher's salary. Some of these employees also work in hard-to-staff locations with high turnover. They, too, should benefit from a housing assistance program being administered by the department for which they work. They, too, deserve to be eligible for a housing voucher to assist with rent, mortgage, or a down payment for their primary residence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 89, H.D. 2.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

HB-89-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 1:25:08 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/25/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Dean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill to support teachers in Hawai'i in home ownership. This will help address the teacher shortage and provide stability for our wonderful, dedicated educators who are totally underpaid and under supported. If we're going to keep and attract top-notch teachers (and stop relying on long-term and under qualified substitutes and overcrowded classrooms), the state must pursue financial support for teachers. Mahalo.