



**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. 89, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.

BEFORE THE:
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

DATE: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 **TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 430

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

Chair Evslin and Members of the Committee:

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

The stated purpose of the bill is to alleviate the financial burden on teachers and improve teacher recruitment and retention by establishing a Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to qualified full-time teachers who are employed by the Department of Education (DOE) or a public charter school and teach at a hard-to-fill school, as determined by the DOE, including public charter schools. The bill appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

As drafted, the bill may violate section 4 of article VII of the State Constitution ("No tax shall be levied or appropriation of public money or property made, nor shall the public credit be used, directly or indirectly, except for a public purpose. . . . No grant of public money or property shall be made except pursuant to standards provided by law.") *See also Spears v. Honda*, 51 Haw. 1, 9 (1968) (having determined that the use of public funds to provide bus transportation subsidies to sectarian and private school students was unconstitutional, the Court acknowledged the possible overlap between section 1 of article X of the State Constitution and what is now section 4 of article VII of the State Constitution).

Therefore, we recommend that this bill be amended to insert appropriate standards. Examples of existing statutes that provide standards for agencies to issue

grants are part II of chapter 9 and sections 10-17, 210D-11, and 383-128, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

We have attached draft standards to this testimony as a sample for your reference. These standards can be inserted on page 3, line 18, as a new subsection (f), with the existing subsection (f) re-designated as subsection (g). Additionally, the statutory reference on page 3, line 15, should be updated from "subsection (f)" to "subsection (g)." We are happy to work with you on developing more specific standards.

Furthermore, we note that "charter school;" on page 4, line 4, is a part of paragraph (3) of section 302A- (f) and should be indented accordingly.

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

POSSIBLE STANDARDS FOR PROVIDING THE VOUCHERS IN THIS BILL

(f) Applications for vouchers shall be made to the department and contain the information as shall be required by rules adopted thereunder. At a minimum, the applicant shall:

- (1) Be an eligible teacher as defined in subsection (g);
- (2) Agree to use state funds exclusively for the purposes of this program;
- (3) Indicate capability to properly use the voucher for the purpose of this program;
- (4) Comply with other requirements as the department may prescribe;
- (5) Comply with all applicable federal, state, and county statutes, rules, and ordinances;
- (6) Agree to indemnify and save harmless the State of Hawaii and its officers, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims arising out of or resulting from the use of vouchers for this program, and procure sufficient insurance to provide this indemnification if requested to do so by the department.
- (7) Agree to make available to the department all records the applicant may have relating to the voucher, to allow state agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with this section.



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

Date: 02/05/2025

Time: 09:00 AM

Location: 430 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Housing

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0089 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.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding HB 89, 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.

We respectfully request several clarifications to strengthen the bill's implementation. First, the term "school" should be clearly defined to specify whether the housing assistance program applies to Hawai'i public schools, private schools, public charter schools, or some combination thereof. Additionally, the requirement of "one year of teaching prior to the application date" needs clarification regarding whether this refers to the year immediately preceding the application or could include any prior year of teaching experience.

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 does not affect the Department's requests in its Governor approved budget.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 89.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO HOUSE BILL 89
RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

House Committee on HOUSING

February 5, 2025

9:00 am

Conference Room 430

Dear Chair Evslin, Vice Chair Miyake, and Committee Members,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) strongly **SUPPORTS HB 89**, which establishes a Teacher Housing Assistance Program to improve recruitment and retention, especially in hard-to-staff schools. By easing the financial burden of housing, this bill directly benefits Native Hawaiian educators and the communities they serve.

Hawai‘i faces a chronic teacher shortage, with 10% of teachers leaving the profession annually¹ and over 60,000 students lacking a certified teacher.² High housing costs are a key factor driving turnover, particularly in underserved communities.³

Native Hawaiian students, particularly in rural and underserved areas, experience persistent teacher shortages. Retaining quality educators is essential for their academic and cultural success. Housing assistance allows Native Hawaiian teachers to stay in their communities, focusing on student success rather than financial hardship. Additionally, supporting Native Hawaiian educators to remain in their communities can strengthen teacher-student identity congruence, a key factor in increasing positive student outcomes.⁴ Those teachers are also more likely to remain employed in their schools, which creates stability and fosters student pride in their community.⁵

¹ Hawai‘i Department of Education. n.d. *Employment Report - School Year 2022-23*. 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 02/01/25. <https://www.hsta.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/>.

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 02/01/25. <https://inpeace.org/equity/ka-lama/>.

This bill also supports economic self-sufficiency for Native Hawaiian educators, many of whom struggle to find affordable housing in one of the most expensive states to live. Providing housing assistance helps stabilize their financial footing, sustain their careers, and strengthen the well-being of their communities.

Furthermore, **HB 89** aligns with OHA's Mana i Maui Ola framework, particularly its Education and Housing strategies. Stable housing enables teachers in DOE, Hawaiian-medium, and Charter Schools to better engage with their students, creating a supportive learning environment that leads to improved educational outcomes.

HB 89 is a critical step toward retaining educators and ensuring Native Hawaiian students receive consistent, high-quality instruction in their own communities. OHA appreciates the opportunity to share our mana'o and strongly urges the Committee to **pass HB 89**.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

COUNTY COUNCIL

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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

February 3, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF ADDISON BULOSAN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON
HB 89, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING
House Committee on Housing
Wednesday, February 5, 2025
9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 430
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Evslin and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in SUPPORT of HB 89, Relating to Teacher Housing. My testimony is submitted in my individual capacity as a member of the Kaua'i County Council.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of HB 89, which would greatly affect the Kaua'i community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 89. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188 or via email to cokcouncil@kauai.gov.

Sincerely,

ADDISON BULOSAN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

AAO:mn



HOUSE BILL 89, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

FEBRUARY 5, 2025 · HSG HEARING

POSITION: Support.

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

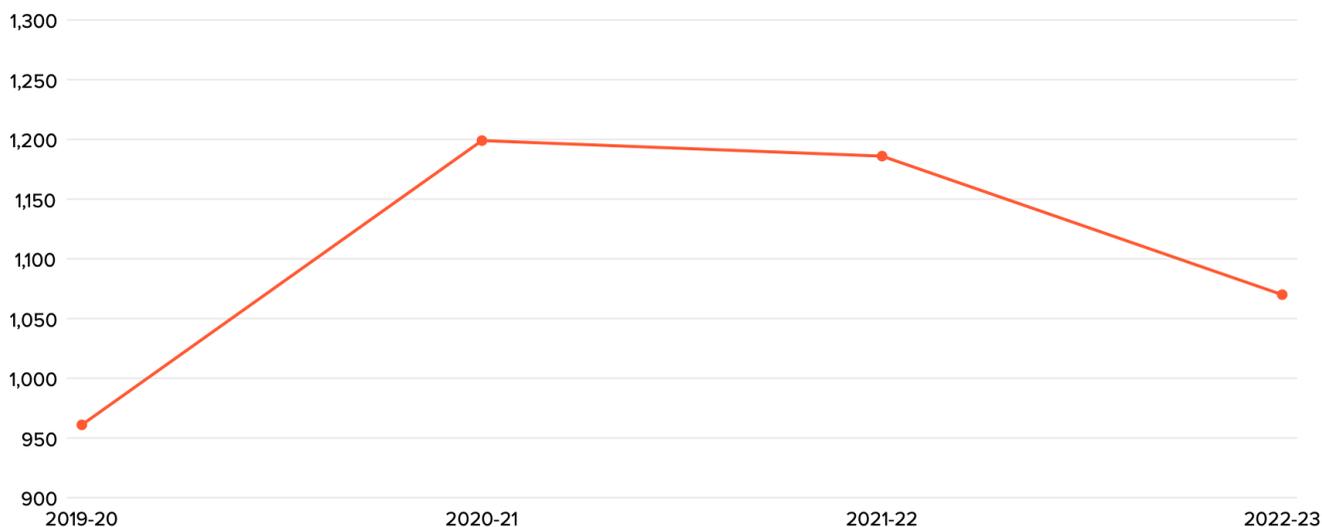
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education 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 Housing

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 5, 2025

H.B. 89 – RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on H.B. 89 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director