



March 30, 2025

To: Chair Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the Committee on Health

From: Health Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of HCR 145 / HR 139 - Estimating Autism Prevalence

Date: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, **Time:** 10:30 AM

Place: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, Conference Room 329, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and Members of the Committee,

The Health Committee of the Democratic Party of Hawaii is in support of HCR 145 / HR 139, which urges the Department of Education, Department of Health, and other relevant stakeholders to collaborate and develop a strategic plan to prepare Hawaii for pursuing funding and participation in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Surveillance program for estimating autism prevalence. This resolution is a vital step toward understanding autism prevalence in Hawaii and addressing the needs of individuals and families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

- **Importance of Autism Spectrum Disorder Data:**

- Autism impacts communities across Hawaii, with the CDC reporting that approximately 1 in 36 children in the United States are diagnosed with ASD.
- Reliable data is critical for shaping effective policies, improving early diagnoses, and developing support systems for individuals with ASD and their families.

- **Benefits of Public Health Surveillance:**

- Participation in the CDC's surveillance program will provide Hawaii with access to essential data on autism prevalence.

- Enhanced data collection empowers policymakers to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively to address community needs.
- **Advocacy for Collaboration:**
 - Collaboration among the Department of Education, Department of Health, and other relevant stakeholders is crucial to developing a comprehensive strategic plan.
 - A unified approach maximizes Hawaii's ability to secure funding and resources for this initiative.
- **Positive Impact on Communities:**
 - Strengthened public health infrastructure ensures individuals with autism and their families receive the care and resources they need to thrive.
 - Inclusive and informed decision-making benefits all residents and fosters a stronger, more supportive community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important resolution. Passing HCR 145 / HR 139 demonstrates Hawaii's commitment to understanding autism prevalence and enhancing public health services. Together, we can work toward a future where every individual affected by autism is supported and empowered to achieve their fullest potential.

Mahalo nui loa,

Alan Burdick, Chair, Health Committee
Melodie Aduja, Vice Chair, Health Committee

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:39:01 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Crystal Nelson	Pakolea Support Services	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:24:32 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christina libby	Mau Loa Learning LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 9:08:25 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Kilgore	Full Life	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and members of the Committee on Health:

My name is Jim Kilgore and I am the Executive Director at Full Life, a non-profit organization serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities on Hawai'i Island.

We strongly support HCR145, which urges the DOE, DOH, and other stakeholders to collaborate and develop a strategic plan to prepare for Hawai'i's pursuit of Funding for and participation in the CDC public health surveillance for estimating autism prevalence.

This opportunity will lead to a better understanding of autism prevalence in Hawai'i and will lead to enhanced autism screening. Accurate data and screening will result in greater advocacy for the necessary services for children with autism and their families.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HCR145.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:38:06 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Crystal Thomas	Balanced ABA	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:10:06 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendra Bean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:19:44 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Kramer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a BCBA, mother of a child with Autism, and former Special Education Teacher. So many years were missed before autism was covered under insurance where my child could have had more intensive treatment in addition to my support during his developmental years. At that time, treatment was costly to my pocketbook as well as to my other children.

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

Mahalo,

Melissa H Kramer

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:25:44 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shaianne Kealoha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai‘i to participate in the CDC’s autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:37:09 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Siyuan Wang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:40:51 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie Mitchell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

Jessie Mitchell, MA, LBA, LMHC

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 9:16:00 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stanley Bloom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 9:25:50 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberlynn Galapon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 9:25:55 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Naomi Tachera	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Naomi Tachera, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 145.

As both a parent of children with autism and a special education teacher, I know firsthand the importance of understanding autism prevalence in our state. Hawai‘i’s participation in the CDC’s autism prevalence monitoring is not just data collection—it’s about visibility, equity, and informed action for our keiki and their ‘ohana.

Our communities are diverse, and our needs are equally unique. Without accurate, up-to-date information on autism rates in Hawai‘i, we risk falling short in providing appropriate services, supports, and resources to those who need them most.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Naomi Tachera

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 9:29:04 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dodi Pritchett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Without data, we cannot know how to support our families. It's important that our unique needs be recognized and prioritized.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 9:59:56 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Noochan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:17:41 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valerie Clack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 11:21:37 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shanda Strickland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of H.C.R. 145. I believe it to be necessary to ensure a thorough understanding of the needs pertinent to those who need services and aid in the allocation of resources for children with autism.

Mahalo,

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:23:24 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carla T Schmidt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 7:06:43 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Lipinski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism. I believe having this monitoring system available would allow for a better understanding of who and how we can support autistic individuals.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 7:19:54 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Dinkelo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Legislatures and committee chairs;

My name is Sara Dinkelo and I have been a practicing BCBA for almost 10 years and working actively in the field supporting people affected by autism for close to 20 years. I am writing to you in strong support of HCR145 to participate in the CDC's prevalence study.

I see individuals impacted by funding by insurance providers as well as in the school. We need to be included in this important study as funding streams are monitoring the results of these studies closely. In order to continue to move towards building sustainable services for individuals affected by autism in the state of Hawai'i, having this information will be critical for not only knowing how the people of Hawai'i are impacted by autism, but to also secure funding for needed services.

Representation matters here; it is important for Hawai'i to be represented in this study to ensure future funding. Additionally, peer reviewed journals will cite the report presented by CDC and could be helpful in ensuring that Hawai'i is included in future research studies in developing vital evidenced based strategies for people affected by autism.

I implore the committee to pursue participation in the CDC's study on the prevalence of autism in Hawai'i. My testimony is in strong support of HCR145.

Sincerely,

Sara Dinkelo, M.S., BCBA, LBA

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:15:12 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Felicia Linton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill as long as it does not place additional requirements for the DOE for monitoring. DOE already has systems to provide data needed.

Our state has a lack of facilities to educate our more intensive support needs youth and could benefit from more facilities.

As a member of the DOE and in my current role I have become increasingly more aware of the lack of facilities for our moderate to intensive needs ASD individuals to live more independently. There are few homes or facilities for this population to live outside of their family homes. We need an increase in homes for this group.

In order to determine the growing needs we need a way to better monitor and track this population and this bill is a step in that direction. This bill will better help our state determine current needs and plan ahead for future needs.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:38:32 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Lethlean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism. The ratio of kids being diagnosed is growing and currently at 1 in 36 children.

In Service,

Emily Lethlean

Autism Consultant Teacher

HIDOE HKKK

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 8:44:28 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Dixon-Pennington	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an Autism Consulting Teacher for the Hawaii DOE, I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 9:40:32 AM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gesine Dommer	DOE	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HCR145 because it represents a vital step toward understanding and addressing autism in Hawaii. By participating in the CDC's surveillance program, we can gather much-needed data on autism trends, disparities, and service gaps across our diverse communities. This information is essential for creating targeted interventions, improving access to resources, and ensuring families across the state receive the support they need.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:16:10 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natasha Bailey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an autism provider in the DOE, we have very many students with autism or who have similar topographies of symptoms perhaps due to COVID restrictions, poverty, etc.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 2:24:35 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristin Le	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.

HR-139

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 6:43:19 PM

Testimony for HLT on 4/2/2025 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sho Araiba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support H.C.R. 145 as it is crucial for Hawai'i to participate in the CDC's autism prevalence monitoring to better understand the needs of our diverse communities and ensure appropriate services and resources are allocated for children with autism.