

**Testimony of the Board of Public Accountancy**

**Before the  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce**

**Tuesday, March 25, 2025**

**2:00 p.m.**

**Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:**

**S.B. 1291, SD1 RELATING CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS**

Chair Matayoshi and Members of the Committee:

My name is Hector West, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Public Accountancy (Board). The Board supports this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to clarify the education and professional experience requirements for certified public accountant license applicants to establish alternative pathways to licensure.

The Board supports the creation of alternative pathways toward licensure. Thus, the Board supports the reduction of the one hundred-fifty semester hour license requirement and the completion of twelve months of qualifying professional experience in the practice of accountancy in lieu of thirty semester hours of post baccalaureate coursework. These alternative pathways will help to achieve the goal of increasing the number of qualified certified public accountants in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



TO: Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi; Vice Chair Cory M. Chun; and Committee

FROM: Adrian Hong, Managing Member of Hong Consulting, LLC.

RE: SB 1291 SD1 RELATING TO CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 1291 SD1. My name is Adrian Hong, and I am Managing Member of Hong Consulting, LLC. My firm supports this bill as action is desperately needed to improve the supply of certified public accountants in Hawaii.

Through this measure, we hope to increase the options for people to become CPAs in Hawaii with an alternative pathway to CPA licensure. The current 150-credit hour law remains, with the option to substitute an additional year of work experience in public accounting to fulfill the 30 credit hours of post-baccalaureate education. We humbly ask for your continued support of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1291 SD1. Should you have any questions or comments about my testimony you can contact me by email at [adrianhong@hongconsultingllc.com](mailto:adrianhong@hongconsultingllc.com) or by phone at 808-383-5937.

Sincerely,

Adrian K. Hong, CPA

Managing Member

Hong Consulting, LLC.

<https://www.hongconsultingllc.com/>



Email: [adrianhong@hongconsultingllc.com](mailto:adrianhong@hongconsultingllc.com) | Phone: 808-383-5937



**H S C P A**

**HAWAII SOCIETY OF CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS**

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Tuesday, March 25, 2025  
2:00 p.m. In Conference Room 329

**In Strong Support of SB 1291 SD1 - Relating to Certified Public Accountants**

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering and including the amendments of this measure to provide an option for people to major in accounting and pursue becoming a certified public accountant. We, the Board of Directors of the Hawaii Society of CPAs, strongly support SB 1291 SD1.

The critical shortage and demand for accountants and finance professionals is an outcry from Hawaii businesses. Through this measure, we hope to increase the options for people to become CPAs in Hawaii with an alternative pathway to CPA licensure. The current 150-credit hour law remains, with the option to substitute an additional year of work experience in public accounting to fulfill the 30 credit hours of post-baccalaureate education.

We humbly ask for your continued support of SB 1291 SD1 with the effective date. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony.

Respectfully,

Franklin T. Kudo, President  
Hawaii Society of CPAs

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2025 4:43:58 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chantal Mentzer	Chantal Mentzer Inc	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for considering and including the amendments to this measure, which provides an option for people to major in accounting and pursue becoming certified public accountants. I, a certified public accountant on the island of Kauai, strongly support SB 1291 SD1.

The critical shortage and demand for accountants and finance professionals is an outcry from Hawaii businesses. Through this measure, we hope to increase the options for people to become CPAs in Hawaii with an alternative pathway to CPA licensure. The current 150-credit hour law remains, with the option to substitute an additional year of work experience in public accounting to fulfill the 30 credit hours of post-baccalaureate education.

I humbly ask for your continued support of SB 1291 SD1 with the effective date. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



## HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Organized August 7, 1943  
P.O. BOX 61043  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96839



### **Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce**

Tuesday, March 25, 2025; 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

#### **Re: Support for SB1291, SD1 – Relating to Certified Public Accountants**

#### **Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun, and Members of the Committee:**

The Hawaii Association of Public Accountants (HAPA) is the only statewide public accounting organization with active chapters on Oahu, Maui, Big Island, and Kauai. It has approximately 450 members, consisting primarily of small to mid-sized CPA firm owners and employees who are in the active practice of public accountancy.

My name is Marilyn M. Niwao, M.S.P.H., J.D., CPA, CGMA, and I am a past State President and currently a State Director of the Hawaii Association of Public Accountants. I am a Hawaii licensed CPA and Attorney, and President of a well-established Maui CPA firm, Niwao & Roberts, CPAs, a P.C.

I am also a past Vice Chair of the Hawaii Council on Revenues, a former Commissioner of the Hawaii Tax Review Commission, and a Past President of the National Society of Accountants. However, I am testifying here solely in my capacity as a State Director of the Hawaii Association of Public Accountants and co-chair of its legislative committee, while drawing upon my knowledge obtained while serving in the above positions.

#### **HAPA Supports SB1291, SD1**

After extensive discussions regarding providing an alternative pathway for students to meet the educational requirements for obtaining a Hawaii CPA license, HAPA agreed to support legislation specifically allowing one year of public accounting experience in a CPA firm only to substitute for the extra 30 semester hours of college education past the bachelor's degree. This alternative pathway is not meant to satisfy the experience requirement for CPA candidates, which requires two years of professional experience in accounting or auditing work in public accounting or private industry and government accounting.

Many HAPA members engaged in the practice of public accounting or who have subsequently gone on to work in private industry or government accounting believe that candidates who initially obtained public accounting experience in a CPA firm prior to licensure gained a better understanding of the ethical and professional obligations as well as the technical competencies needed to practice as a CPA serving the public. As CPAs in the practice of public accounting are required to obtain continuing professional education each year (unlike CPA license holders in private industry or government

HAPA Testimony  
Support for SB1291,SD1  
March 25, 2025, Page 2

without a permit to practice), the practical and broader education obtained by a candidate working for a CPA firm is directly relevant to learning about the practice of public accountancy. At the same time, the CPA candidate would get compensated for working to achieve his or her CPA license.

Please note that historically, substitution of public accounting experience was accepted for CPA licensure in Hawaii, although 4 ½ years of public accounting experience was required for those who wished to obtain a CPA license with a bachelor's degree.

Due to the increased costs of college education over the years, the costs to obtain the extra 30 semester hours of college education after the bachelor's degree have proven to be a financial hurdle for many college students who may otherwise have considered obtaining a Hawaii CPA license. SB1291, SD1 would allow students an alternative cost-effective way to obtain the CPA license.

**Please support SB1291, SD1.** Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions by contacting me at [niwao@mauicpa.com](mailto:niwao@mauicpa.com) or at (808) 242-4600, ext. 224.

Respectfully submitted,



Marilyn M. Niwao, M.S.P.H., J.D., CPA, CGMA  
Hawaii State Director and Legislative Committee Co-chairperson

Ronald I. Heller  
700 Bishop Street, Suite 1500  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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rheller@torkildson.com

Before the House Committee on  
Consumer Protection and Commerce

Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 2:00 pm

**Testimony of Ronald I. Heller**

**In Support of SB 1291, S.D. 1**

**RELATING TO CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS.**

Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun, and Members of the Committee:

I support SB 1291, SD 1. We are facing a severe shortage of new Certified Public Accountants, nationally and here in Hawaii.

The goal here is to allow more people to pursue careers as CPAs, by creating an alternative pathway to a CPA license. Basically, an additional year of experience, working in a CPA firm, could be substituted for the existing requirement of 30 credit hours of post-baccalaureate education.

Right now, the requirement of 30 additional credit hours of education, after receiving a bachelor's degree, is a significant barrier for many accounting students who would like to pursue careers in public accounting. This bill would create an alternative, allowing them to gain real-world experience instead of spending another year in a classroom.

I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ronald I. Heller*

Ronald I. Heller

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2025 5:07:03 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Darryl Nitta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In strong support. It will give our students more choices and paths to become a professional without compromising the competency and quality of the student as they enter the accounting profession.

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2025 8:58:45 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cassie Ng	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a current student and this will help me become a CPA along with alleviating the financial burden to pay for 30 additional credits after earning my accounting degree.

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2025 9:46:55 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Veralyn Bedan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a recent UH West Oahu graduate, I have met many non-traditional students while being one myself. Our life situations are very diverse where many could not afford the time or money to take extra credits. Many are driven by financial restraints and needing to enter the workforce quickly. Having the option to learn on the job can only help all parties. The new accountant can learn skills from local firms and immediately apply those skills to allow for Hawaii's businesses and other consumers to receive the services they require. I believe that allowing quality experience to compensate for formal education will also allow the accounting career less intimidating to pursue.

Thank you for your consideration.

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2025 10:21:50 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun, and Members of the Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce,

My name is Michael Lee, and I am a Certified Public Accountant here in the State of Hawaii. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Most colleges around the country require that an individual graduates with 120 credit hours if based on a semester system. However, our state has required prospective CPA's to obtain 150 credit hours before becoming certified. I was fortunate that I came from a privileged and fortunate background that gave me the capability of accruing the additional credits necessary to obtain a certification. Others are not as fortunate however, and are faced with a reality after college that requires them to work, to pay off debts and to support their families.

The 150 credit requirement has turned away what I am sure is many smart and talented individuals from a profession which has a critical shortage in this state. Further, the alternative of substituting these additional 20 credit hours with a year of work experience will give prospective valuable experience and training that cannot be taught in a classroom. This will only serve to enhance the capabilities of the hard working professionals who enter the accounting world.

I humbly ask for your continued support of SB 1291 SD1 to promote the growth of CPA's in our state.

Mahalo,

Michael H.T. Lee, CPA

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/21/2025 10:25:22 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jonah Gomes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, I want to express my support on SB1291 SD1 as a student of UH West Oahu. This will greatly help me in becoming a CPA as it will take away some of the financial burden involved in the process of becoming a CPA.

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/22/2025 12:03:36 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Wendell K. Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an instructor at UHWO, I am testifying for my students. There is a critical shortage of accountants in the state of Hawaii. I have practiced for 30 years as a tax professional. Almost all businesses and many residents in our state rely on accounting/tax services from a CPA. The state is unable to collect taxes without the assistance of accountants.

For an accountant to maximize the value of their accounting degree it is important for them to earn their CPA credential. Under the current law to earn your CPA you must have an accounting degree, pass the CPA exam, requisite work experience, and take an additional 30 credits of classes not necessarily related to accounting.

The 30 additional credits was a requirement from many decades ago when the college accounting programs were not as rigorous today and unnecessarily limited entry for many candidates. Today there are many more opportunities for students to choose from such as cybersecurity and digital content majors that students only require a 4 year degree. Providing an alternative pathway allows a graduate to enter the workforce sooner, cost less, and remove an unnecessary barrier.

Please support and pass SB1291 SD1 with a current effective.

Mahalo,

Wendell

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/22/2025 9:29:04 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kessy Bachiller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a current University of Hawai'i West O'ahu student seeking an undergraduate degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting and Finance. I intend to sit for CPA examination and apply for licensure after graduation. I was eligible to graduate with 120 credits for the Spring 2025 semester but I am deferring graduation until Spring 2026 to obtain the additional 30 credits.

I felt that this was the most feasible option for me because I receive financial aid to pay for school. If I had graduated this semester and later went back to school to earn the additional 30 credits, this would have likely caused me financial strain.

I currently work full time as an accountant in a private corporation while being enrolled with 9 credits this semester. In prior semesters, I have taken on the course load of up to 12 credits per semester while working full time. This has not been an easy to juggle and it has been difficult to make ends meet as a student and parent.

I fully support SB 1291 SD1 in the hopes that it will make the journey easier for motivated students like myself in the future, as well as making the journey more attractive by creating an alternative option.

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2025 12:23:30 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michiyo Pendleton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Michiyo Pendleton. I am a student of UH West Oahu. I graduated from Kapiolani Community College in 2014 while raising two children as a single mother, and I am still working on my bachelor's degree as a part-time student. This change is significantly important to me as my time is running out. This is a life-changing event because I do not have any more time to work on 30 extra credits as a part-time student, and I never imagined I could have an opportunity to become a CPA. As Hawaii facing a shortage of CPAs, I can contribute to the community if this change is approved. I appreciate your consideration.

Mahalo

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2025 10:26:05 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Aubrey Dela Cruz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am currently a student majoring in accounting, and this will help me with becoming a CPA by lessening the financial burden of paying for 30 additional credits after earning my degree.

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/23/2025 11:26:20 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kylie Pereda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kylie Pereda and I am currently a sophomore college student, this will help me with becoming a CPA and the financial burden to pay for 30 additional credits after earning my accounting degree.

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 6:07:28 AM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jonathan Fujinaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering and including the amendments of this measure to provide an option for people to major in accounting and pursue becoming a certified public accountant. As a student majoring in accounting, I strongly support SB 1291 SD1.

This measure will relieve many students, including myself, of a great financial burden in order to get into the accounting profession.

I humbly ask for your continued support of SB 1291 SD1 with the effective date. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Fujinaka

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 10:21:37 AM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Trisha Nomura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun and Members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce:

I am in strong support of SB 1291 SD1 Relating to Certified Public Accountants. Through this measure, we hope to increase the pipeline of students majoring in accounting and pursuing their CPA license in Hawaii. The alternative pathway will offer an additional route for accountants to obtain their CPA license through an another year of work experience in public accounting.

I humbly ask for your continued support of SB 1291 SD1 with the effective date. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Trisha Nomura

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 1:09:53 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

My name is Jianne Castro, and I think this is important legislation and will help the people of Hawaii because it will decrease the required amount of credits in Accounting. I say that some of the credits that is being required is too much and irrelevant for some. This lift will help many students who are under the Accounting major.

**LATE**

**ERIC H. MATSUDA**  
**CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT**  
**1481 S. King St., Suite 523**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii 96814**  
**(808) 949-7651**

**Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce**

Tuesday, March 25, 2025; 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

**Re: Support for SB1291, SD1 - Relating to Certified Public Accountants**

**Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun, and Members of the Committee:**

My name is Eric H. Matsuda, CPA, and I am the Oahu Chapter President of the Hawaii Association of Public Accountants and a practicing CPA in Honolulu. HAPA supports SB1291, SD1 relating to certified public accounting.

After extensive discussions regarding providing an alternative pathway for students to meet the educational requirements for obtaining a Hawaii CPA license, HAPA agreed to support legislation specifically allowing one year of public accounting experience in a CPA firm only to substitute for the extra 30 semester hours of college education past the bachelor's degree. This alternative pathway is not meant to satisfy the experience requirement for CPA candidates, which requires two years of professional experience in accounting or auditing work in public accounting or private industry and government accounting.

Many HAPA members engaged in the practice of public accounting or who have subsequently gone on to work in private industry or government accounting believe that candidates who initially obtained public accounting experience in a CPA firm prior to licensure gained a better understanding of the ethical and professional obligations as well as the technical competencies needed to practice as a CPA serving the public. As CPAs in the practice of public accounting are required to obtain continuing professional education each year (unlike CPA license holders in private industry or government without a permit to practice), the practical and broader education obtained by a candidate working for a CPA firm is directly relevant to learning about the practice of public accountancy. At the same time, the CPA candidate would get compensated for working to achieve his or her CPA license.

Due to the increased costs of college education over the years, the costs to obtain the extra 30 semester hours of college education after the bachelor's degree have proven to be a financial hurdle for many college students who may otherwise have considered obtaining a Hawaii CPA license. SB1291, SD1 would allow students an alternative cost-effective way to obtain the CPA license.

Please support SB1291. SD1. Thank you for this opportunity.

Eric H. Matsuda, CPA  
HAPA Oahu Chapter President

**LATE**

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 8:02:27 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Eugene Na	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the option to substitute the 30 credit requirement of post-baccaureate education with a year worth of professional expeience in a public accounting. The post-credit requirement often seems more as a financial barrier of entry rather than education/expertise barrier of entry, and would allow for more pathways to becoming to become certified.

**LATE**

**SB-1291-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/24/2025 11:17:53 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/25/2025 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Camila C	University of West Oahu	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

I am a student at the University of West Oahu, by passing this bill. I can become a CPA one day. It is a major financial burden to pay for 30 additional credits to earn my accounting degree. Hopefully with passing this bill, more CPA's can make an impactful difference in our community. Thank you for your time.