

**SB-421**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 7:11:06 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/7/2025 3:08:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dyslexia is often undiagnosed and that can obviously have very negative consequences for the child's educational progress over the years. For that reason, this is a good idea.

**Subject: Written Testimony in Support of SB421**

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Education,

**I am writing to express my strong support for SB421**, which requires the Department of Education to administer a general dyslexia screening to all students in kindergarten through grade three, continue the administration of the general English language arts universal screening for students in kindergarten through grade nine, and collaborate with teacher training programs to ensure prospective educators are trained in literacy instruction, including evidence-based interventions.

As a long-time educator with 24 years of experience, including 17 years on the island of Maui, and as a parent of a middle school student with dyslexia, I have seen firsthand the challenges that students with dyslexia face when they are not identified and provided with appropriate interventions. My son was unable to be tested for his reading disability in school and has not had access to trained interventions designed specifically for dyslexia. This bill will ensure that students like my son, who struggle with reading due to undiagnosed dyslexia, receive the early identification and support they need to succeed.

Without proper identification and intervention, approximately 70-80% of students with early reading difficulties will continue to struggle in later years. Research indicates that up to 35% of students with dyslexia drop out of high school, compared to the national average dropout rate of 8%. Moreover, individuals with dyslexia are at a higher risk for anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which can negatively impact their future academic and career opportunities.

Dyslexia affects up to 17% of the population worldwide, yet only about 25% of students with dyslexia are identified and receive appropriate support in schools. The cost of untreated dyslexia is high, as it can lead to academic struggles, employment difficulties, and increased reliance on support services. However, early screening and intervention can change the trajectory for these students, providing them with the tools they need to become proficient readers and successful learners.

By passing SB421, Hawai'i will take a critical step toward ensuring that all students, regardless of their learning differences, have an equitable chance at academic success. **I urge you to support this bill and help provide the necessary resources for students with dyslexia to thrive.**

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Carrie DeMott

**SB-421**

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 9:08:47 AM

Testimony for EDU on 2/7/2025 3:08:00 PM

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

Comments:

As a teacher I wholeheartedly **SUPPORT SB421 re. dyslexia screening**

Please, also add: **Vision screening**

I've seen many students with eye tracking, and ocular motor issues. This could also hugely affect reading success. Over the span of my 35+ teaching career I've noticed that many students are on devices now since a very young age, and find it challenging to read the board from the back of the classroom, thus affecting their learning during whole group instruction.



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Date: February 6, 2025

To: Committee on Education  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice-Chair  
AND Committee Members

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Strong Support of **SB241 Relating to Literacy**

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**The Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS)** is a statewide, cross-sector collaborative dedicated to improving the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work together to align priorities for children from prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and enhance programs that support early childhood development.

**As the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Coordinator for ECAS**, my role focuses on building a collaborative, knowledgeable, and highly qualified workforce. This workforce will provide **culturally and linguistically responsive early learning services** for children from birth to age five with special needs and their families. Our efforts are guided by national standards and integrated within the state's personnel systems.

Ensuring that children receive **evidence-based developmental screenings** is critical—not only to identify those who need additional support but also to equip teachers with the tools to implement effective interventions.

**ECAS strongly supports SB241**, which would require all public schools to administer universal screenings for **kindergarten through third grade** students to identify those at risk for **dyslexia and other developmental language disabilities**. The bill would also provide professional learning opportunities for teachers to implement **structured literacy instruction** and deliver **evidence-based interventions** within a tiered support system.

We all share the responsibility of ensuring that early education teachers, particularly those working with **pre-kindergarten through third grade students**, are using best practices in literacy instruction. Teacher preparation programs should align with **research-based approaches**, and professional development opportunities on literacy assessments and instructional strategies must be widely accessible.

Two of the five CSPD workgroups focus on **pre-service training**—which includes **Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)**—and **in-service training**, which focuses on professional development for current educators. By ensuring new professionals enter the field with a strong foundation in **identifying and addressing reading difficulties**, we can better equip current educators to follow best practices as well.

Mahalo for your continued support in improving the health, safety, and well-being of our youngest keiki with significant support needs and their `ohana. We appreciate your support for **SB241**.



**earlychildhood**  
**ACTION STRATEGY**  
TAKING ACTION FOR HAWAII'S CHILDREN

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Aloha nui,



Jonathan R. Alexander

Hawaii Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator (CSPD), ECAS

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  
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Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 6, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 421 – RELATING TO LITERACY**

Hearing: Friday, February 7, 2025, 3:08 p.m.  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, defers to the Department of Education, and provides comments.

**PURPOSE:** the purpose of this measure is to support students with dyslexia or other language and literacy challenges by:

- (1) Requiring public schools to administer a Department of Education-approved dyslexia screening as part of the general English language arts universal screening process;
- (2) Implementing evidence-based intervention for students who are identified as having dyslexia or students who are flagged as having language and literacy challenges through the Hawaii multi-tiered system of support framework; and
- (3) Providing professional development for teachers to increase implementation of structured literacy instruction by offering pre-service teacher programs to train general and special education teacher candidates in structured literacy instruction.

The DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) recognizes the importance of early identification and intervention in addressing literacy challenges and supports the intent of this bill to strengthen the support systems available to students. Ensuring that all students,

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regardless of learning differences, have access to the tools they need to succeed is a shared priority.

As an agency dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving meaningful employment and independence, DVR acknowledges the long-term benefits of strong literacy skills. We appreciate the bill's focus on universal screening, evidence-based interventions, and professional development, which align with broader efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students.

We defer to the Department of Education's expertise in determining the best approaches for implementation. We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Department and the Legislature in addressing the diverse needs of Hawaii's students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I**  
**STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**  
**'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA**

PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING  
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

February 7, 2025

The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senate Committee on Education  
The Thirty-Third Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Kidani, and Committee Members:

**SUBJECT: SB421 Relating to Literacy**

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS SB421**, which Requires the Department of Education to administer a general dyslexia screening to all students in kindergarten through grade three. Requires the Department of Education to continue to administer the general English language arts universal screening for students in kindergarten through grade nine. Requires the Department of Education to collaborate with teacher training programs to ensure prospective candidates are trained on literacy instruction, including evidence-based intervention, to support all students.

Currently, just over half of Hawaii's students meet reading proficiency standards, emphasizing the need for a more effective and systematic approach to address reading challenges. While the Department of Education provides special education services for students with learning or developmental disabilities, many families may be unaware that their child has underlying reading difficulties due to a learning disability. This lack of awareness delays the necessary interventions and support that are crucial for students to succeed academically. Additionally, Hawaii is currently the only state in the U.S. without laws specific to dyslexia.

This is a critical opportunity to improve reading proficiency for all students, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) often face challenges in language processing, memory, and comprehension, and will benefit significantly from the early identification and targeted interventions proposed in this bill. By implementing dyslexia-sensitive universal screening, any learning differences can be identified in students early. Early identification of these students

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ensures that reading challenges are addressed before they fall behind due to undiagnosed difficulties. By adding specialized screening and support, all students—regardless of their learning profile—receive the necessary tools and resources to achieve reading proficiency.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of SB421**.

Sincerely,



Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator

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This testimony strongly supports the proposed initiative aimed at improving reading proficiency in Hawaii's schools

In an effort to improve reading proficiency in the Hawai'i's school, this b



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

**Date:** 02/07/2025

**Time:** 03:08 PM

**Location:** CR 229 & Videoconference

**Committee:** Senate Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Bill Title:** SB 0421 RELATING TO LITERACY.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires the Department of Education to administer a general dyslexia screening to all students in kindergarten through grade three. Requires the Department of Education to continue to administer the general English language arts universal screening for students in kindergarten through grade nine. Requires the Department of Education to collaborate with teacher training programs to ensure prospective candidates are trained on literacy instruction, including evidence-based intervention, to support all students.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports SB 421, which offers a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to improving literacy outcomes. Early identification of literacy challenges and targeted interventions can significantly impact a child's future by providing the necessary support to build a strong foundation in literacy.

The Department recommends replacing the text of SB 421 with the text of SB 1001 in its entirety, as SB 1001 more accurately reflects the Department's ongoing collaboration with the literacy workgroups and aligns closely with the legislative intent.

The language in SB 1001 provides a clear and comprehensive framework for effectively implementing initiatives to support struggling readers and mandates that all public schools administer an approved screening tool in grades kindergarten through three, ensuring that they receive evidence-based instructional interventions and progress is monitored. The measure also mandates professional learning opportunities statewide for teachers on the implementation of structured literacy instruction and evidence-based interventions and requires collaboration with teacher preparation programs in Hawai'i to ensure that future general and special education teacher candidates are trained in the implementation of structured literacy instruction and interventions.

The Department respectfully requests \$750,000 in recurring funds to successfully implement these initiatives to support mandated dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners. This investment is critical to identifying literacy challenges early, closing literacy gaps, and ensuring that all students, especially those with dyslexia and other language-based learning difficulties, receive the targeted interventions needed for success.

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



info@hawaiikidscan.org  
hawaiikidscan.org

February 6, 2025

Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani,  
Chair, Senate Committee on Education

Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim,  
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Education

Regarding: **Support for SB421 Relating to Literacy**

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

**Please accept this testimony in strong support of SB421**, which requires all public schools to implement universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities, and mandates the provision of professional learning opportunities to support the implementation of structured literacy instruction.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawai'i has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

Over two thirds of Hawai'i's students do not read proficiently,<sup>1</sup> yet there are insufficient early detection policies and standardized assessment regulations in Hawai'i to address students at risk of having dyslexia. Hawai'i is the only state without dyslexia-specific laws related to student support.<sup>2</sup> This void is allowing many students in Hawai'i to fall behind, as their needs are not being accurately identified and supported.

Research underscores that students who are not proficient readers by third grade face long-term academic and career challenges. Students who are not identified as struggling before grade three and brought up to proficiency have significantly lower rates of success in the future, are four times more likely not to graduate from high school on time and have higher rates of future incarceration and other negative outcomes.<sup>3-4</sup> Students need proper intervention methods that are scientifically based as early as possible to ensure their success. Many states have already seen the need to adopt policies that address students with dyslexia, which makes up one in five

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\), 1998–2024 Reading Assessments](#) Hawaii Snapshot

<sup>2</sup> National Council on Teacher Quality: [Hawaii: Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation of the Science of Reading](#)

<sup>3</sup> Study: [Third Grade Reading Predicts Later High School Graduation](#)

<sup>4</sup> Governors Early Literacy Connection: [Early Literacy Connection to Incarceration](#)



students.<sup>5</sup> It is imperative that Hawai'i takes steps to identify our struggling readers and help our keiki achieve better outcomes.

This bill addresses these issues head-on, moving schools away from the “wait to fail” method, whereby students with dyslexia are not identified until they have experienced prolonged reading failure. Research has shown that the wait to fail framework is problematic for multiple reasons, including the negative impact reading challenges can have on the emotional well-being of struggling students and the difficulty students face in meeting grade-level expectations when reading interventions are initiated in later elementary school.<sup>6</sup>

SB421 also codifies the elements of a scientifically-based assessment tool, including core elements such as phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding and encoding skills, and rapid naming. Using an appropriately comprehensive tool will ensure the creation of a holistic profile of our students in Hawai'i, equipping teachers to address their specific needs.

Finally, by requiring professional learning opportunities around supporting students with dyslexia for educators and pre-service educators, SB421 ensures that teachers will be equipped to understand and respond to students' needs in a way that aligns with evidence-based practices.

By passing SB421, Hawai'i can ensure that all students, including those with dyslexia and other literacy challenges, are supported in realizing their human right to literacy.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Erica Nakanishi-Stanis  
Advocacy Director  
HawaiiKidsCAN

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<sup>5</sup> University of Michigan: [Debunking the Myths about Dyslexia](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines](#), Massachusetts Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education

Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition  
2444 Dole Street, Bachman Annex 6  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

February 6, 2025

Committee on Education  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice-Chair

Aloha e Chair Kidani, Vice-Chair Mercado Kim, and Members of the Committee,

**The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition supports [S.B. No. 421](#)**, as it will require all public schools to administer universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other developmental language disabilities; as well as provide professional learning opportunities for teachers in implementing structured literacy instruction and delivering evidence-based interventions within the tiered system framework.

Collectively, we have a responsibility to ensure that teachers, especially those in early education classrooms between pre-Kindergarten and third grade, are using best practices in teaching reading. This means that teacher preparation programs should be aligning their programs with the research consensus, and that professional development for early education teachers on literacy assessments and strategies must be universally available.

We will defer to the Hawai'i State Department of Education regarding the implementation and provisions of the sections of the bill that are pertinent to the department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition is a network of education leaders who have made a collective commitment to promoting literacy throughout the state of Hawai'i. Together, we have developed the Hawai'i State Literacy Plan and Hawai'i Early Literacy Guide that focus on providing research-informed strategies to improve literacy for Hawaii's people.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

Members of the Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition

- Erin D'Amelio
- Kim Guieb-Kang
- Karla Hayashi
- Jessica Kato, MEd, NBCT
- Kara Kusunoki
- Lauren Padesky, Ph.D.
- Petra Schatz, Ph.D.
- Charis-Ann Sole, M.S., MEd ECE
- Germaine Tauati, M.A in Ed