



SENATE DISTRICT 18 COMMUNITY REPORT

APRIL 2022 – *Serving Mililani Town, Waipio Gentry, Waikele, Village Park & Royal Kunia*

Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

Since the reopening of the Capitol, we have received an influx of visitors to our offices. After two years being closed to the public, it has been wonderful to see friendly faces stopping by to share their insights or say hello. The month of April also meant the return of annual traditions like Purple Up Day (supporting and celebrating military youth in our public schools), and the Women's Legislative Caucus' Easter Basket Drive.

I was happy to once again participate in community events such as Read to Me International at Bishop Museum, as well as the Rotary Club of Mililani Sunrise's Peace Pole Dedication. We are in the final stretch of the 2022 session with a busy week of conference committee hearings and lots of updates on the horizon. I am eager to see how things unfold and am hopeful that we will see positive changes thanks to a number of important bills. Here are a list of my priority bills that are currently in conference committee:

SB2819: RELATING TO TEACHER COMPENSATION – This bill would address the long-standing issue around teacher salary compression that has resulted in many veteran teachers leaving the profession and hurting our ability to retain our highly-qualified teachers. Over the years, teachers have absorbed multiple flat contracts as the State weathered economic downturns, resulting in many senior teachers not receiving pay increases. SB2819 will seek to correct this with a \$93M appropriation for teachers whose salaries have not changed since reaching the top of their pay classifications. We would also remove their classifications from the statute to allow HSTA to negotiate all compensation for teachers.

SB2821: RELATING TO MENSTRUAL EQUITY – As I've shared before (and detail further in this issue), this is an incredibly important issue for students nationwide and which has garnered amazing support from our community. This bill requires menstrual products to be provided free of charge for all HIDOE students. I look forward to passing this important legislation to provide our students the support they need to attend school comfortably and have equal access to necessary health supplies during menstrual periods.

HB2510: RELATING TO INCOME – The economic toll of the pandemic and recent price increases have added extreme additional stress to many local families. These concerns require greater support to provide more economic stability for working residents, especially low-income households with children who are struggling to meet their basic needs. The State has been long overdue in providing wage and tax policies to benefit working families by addressing minimum wage. This bill will incrementally increase the State's minimum wage to \$12/hr beginning October 1, 2022; \$15/hr beginning January 1, 2024; and \$18/hr beginning January 1, 2026.

HB510: RELATING TO TAXATION – The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) bill takes the existing non-refundable EITC which decreases your tax liability and makes it refundable so the balance is returned back to you as part of your tax refund. As a result, more money will be placed into the hands of our hard-working families. It is important to remember that this tax credit is called the "earned income" tax credit because only those who work and earn income qualify.

HB2471: RELATING TO ADEQUATE RESERVE FUND – This bill temporarily amends the amount required in the reserve fund for unemployment insurance. Because this fund is paid for entirely by employers without adjustment, the cost to our small and local businesses would be tremendous after the payouts from the pandemic. Advancing this legislation is a way to protect small and local businesses from absorbing astronomical increases in their unemployment contributions.



SENATE VICE PRESIDENT

Chair:
Committee on Education

Vice Chair:
Committee on
Higher Education

Member:
Committee on
Ways and Means

Member:
Special Committee on
COVID-19

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newsletters

HB2424: RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES – This bill addresses the need for increased power by the Department of Human Services to review and investigate families that receive benefits through the State’s adoption program, as well as to investigate against individuals whom a post-adoption complaint has been made. It is intended to increase crisis support for youth, including helping families establish long-term community and mental health support for foster care youth, foster parents as well as provide additional resources to ensure successful transitions for children and families.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUDGET:

We have made considerable strides in the past year after the budget challenges we faced throughout the pandemic. I am happy to share that the Senate has proposed a significant increase into the Department of Education (DOE) budget, which will have a tremendous impact on schools throughout the state. Here are some highlights from the current DOE budget breakdown:

- \$3M in renovations and equipment for the Waipahu HS Academic Health Center
- \$3M for increased security at campuses throughout the state
- \$6M to increase statewide opportunities for Agricultural Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs (including Mililani High School) through the construction of automated greenhouses
- \$1M to address costs associated with menstrual equity and provide statewide health supplies
- \$9.3M to Mililani High School for CTE equipment and facilities

MENSTRUAL EQUITY SUPPORT



April 1st was a momentous day at the Capitol, when three of my priority bills were heard and passed out of Finance. One in particular was especially moving to witness, as **SB2821 RELATING TO MENSTRUAL EQUALITY** passed. This bill requires menstrual products to be provided free of charge for all students at every campus--a long, overdue journey to ending period poverty in Hawai‘i’s schools. Pictured below are Ma‘i Movement leader Nikki-Ann Yee (dressed in red), Ilima Intermediate School teacher Sarah “Mili” Milianta-Laffin, and her students, who advocated tirelessly for this bill. I celebrate and commend them for their amazing leadership in guiding our students for this cause. Here are a few moving captures from that special day:



WLC EASTER BASKET DRIVE



Each spring, the Hawai'i Women's Legislative Caucus (WLC) hosts our annual Easter Basket Drive in an effort to collect donations for organizations that help women and children in need. This year, we were excited to support the charitable work of several incredible organizations: Domestic Violence Action Center, Institute for Human Services, Parents and Children Together, and Salvation Army Hawaii. It was heartwarming to see the amazing collection of baskets donated from Senate and House offices gifting household and hygiene items for women and children. I look forward to contributing to this wonderful cause each year!

PURPLE UP DAY

April is the month of the Military Child, and on Purple Up Day we wear purple to highlight our commitment to serving military families and their keiki in our schools. Purple is a mix of the red, blue and green colors that branches of our military highlight in their uniforms and insignia.

I was proud to recognize our military students and families with a statement on the Senate floor, bringing light to this occasion. I was also encouraged by the show of solidarity from my colleagues who wore purple in honor of this significant cause to celebrate Purple Up Day on April 14th.



NAESP 2022 NATIONAL OUTSTANDING ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



STACY KAWAMURA

2022 NAESP National Outstanding Assistant Principal

Congratulations to Waikele Elementary School Vice Principal, **Stacy Kawamura**, on her deserving recognition as the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) 2022 National Outstanding Assistant Principal! She was instrumental in establishing Waikele as the nation's first elementary academy pathway program, exposing students to career opportunities through their primary school education. Stacy has worked tirelessly to engage the local community and provide rich educational opportunities for students and nurture a collaborative school culture. I am so grateful for educators and leaders like Stacy guiding the next generation of keiki towards a successful future.

PEACE POLE DEDICATION -- ROTARY CLUB OF MILILANI SUNRISE

While the planning of our Peace Pole began over a year ago in honor of our Rotary Club's 25th anniversary, it holds even greater significance now due to the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It was especially moving to be joined by Ukrainian members of our community, as well as principals and students from various Mililani schools, who shared our collective support and aloha for Ukraine. I was honored to stand alongside fellow members of my Rotary Club of Mililani Sunrise for their dedication of the Mililani Peace Pole. Standing proudly just outside the campus of Mililani High School (on Meheula Parkway near the cafeteria) it reads "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in English, Hawaiian, Japanese, Samoan, Tagalog, Spanish, Korean and Mandarin, representing the unique diversity of our community. Over 250,000 Peace Poles have been erected throughout the world and are recognized as a symbol of hope for humanity which stand in silent prayer for peace on Earth. Mahalo nui to the Honolulu Star Advertiser for capturing this moment.



READ TO ME INTERNATIONAL AT BISHOP MUSEUM

I had a wonderful time at Bishop Museum on April 9th sharing one of my favorite childrens books, *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss, for Read To Me International's annual celebration! Read To Me partnered with Bishop Museum, Raising Cane and 102.7 Da Bomb to commemorate this heartwarming occasion, and I was thrilled to be their featured read-aloud guest. Mahalo nui to executive director, Kara Kusunoki, Lynne Waihe'e and the Read To Me International team for including me in such a beautiful day!



HIDOE FREE SUMMER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Free DOE summer programs and meals will be offered to support Hawai'i's public school students, especially for those impacted by disruptions due to the pandemic. Offerings will include: official summer school courses, school learning hubs for specialized student support, accelerated learning, as well as college, career and community learning (including internships). Priority enrollment will be given to students two or more grade levels below English and/or math, high school students not on track to graduate (especially seniors), fourth graders who did not meet grade 3 proficiency, K-2 students unable to attend school in person due to the pandemic, and students in transition grades. Click the image to the right or [head online to hawaiipublicschools.org](https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org) to sign up, or for more information on the 239 schools offering 2022 summer programs, including all district 18 HIDOE schools.

