



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

Date: 02/01/2024
Time: 02:00 PM
Location: 309 VIA
VIDEOCONFERENCE
Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1616 RELATING TO FIRE ALARMS.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the DOE to submit an annual report to the legislature on the installation, repair, and maintenance of fire alarm systems in Hawaii's public schools. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

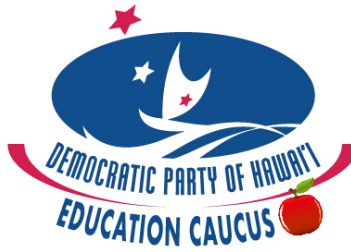
The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 1616 requiring the Department to submit an annual report to the Legislature on the installation, repair, and maintenance of fire alarm systems in Hawaii's public schools. The Department agrees with the Legislature's recognition of the critical role that properly functioning fire alarm systems play in ensuring the safety of our students, especially in aging facilities.

The requirement for the Department to submit a detailed report on the installation, repair, and maintenance of fire alarms in Hawaii's public schools is a commendable step towards transparency and accountability. This information will be invaluable in assessing the effectiveness of fire safety measures.

Additionally, the appropriation of \$25,000,000 for fiscal year 2024-2025 is a crucial investment in the installation, repair, and maintenance of fire alarms in Hawaii public schools. The Department appreciates this proposal and the inclusion of an appropriation, but respectfully requests the Legislature's consideration of the need for dedicated and recurring lump sum funding beyond the proposed one-time appropriation to secure the long-term effectiveness of fire alarm systems. Fire safety is an ongoing concern, and establishing a sustainable funding mechanism will ensure the continual repair, maintenance, and replacement of fire alarm systems in our public schools.

While not in the Department's Board-approved budget priorities, the Department would support this request should the legislature have the flexibility to provide this additional funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 1616.



HOUSE BILL 1616, RELATING TO FIRE ALARMS

FEBRUARY 1, 2024 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1616, relating to fire alarms, which requires the DOE to submit an annual report to the legislature on the installation, repair, and maintenance of fire alarm systems in Hawai'i's public schools; and appropriates funds for statewide fire alarm repair and maintenance at public schools.

The impact of fires is especially severe for aging facilities. According to the Hawai'i Department of Education, as of 2022, the average age of public school buildings in Hawai'i was 72 years. Approximately 20 percent of Hawai'i's 258 public schools are more than 100 years old. The National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code, commonly known as NFPA 101, requires schools to have functioning fire alarm systems. In 2017, however, the DOE acknowledged that King intermediate school in Kaneohe had not had a working fire alarm system for seven years. Additionally, in 2022, teachers at Konawaena elementary school on Hawai'i Island reported that the school's fire alarm system had been out of service for two years, even after a fire broke out on campus in 2020.

On August 8, 2023, wildfires swept across Maui and killed at least 100 people, making it one of the nation's deadliest natural disasters. The wildfires destroyed over 2,200 structures, including King Kamehameha III Elementary School. Though the fires did not occur while students were on

campus, the physical devastation and loss of life resulting from the wildfires reveals the urgency of ensuring that all of the state's public schools have properly functioning fire alarm systems in case of emergencies.

In 2023, legislators unanimously adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 34 and House Resolution No. 55, which urged the DOE to establish a priority list for repairing public school fire alarm systems. In its testimony on the measures, department officials expressed that they maintain a prioritized list of repairs for fire alarm systems that is divided into three categories based on the condition of fire alarms: critical, poor, and fair. DOE leaders noted that the cost of repairs to fire alarm systems that are in critical condition totals \$51,489,537; the cost of repairs to fire alarm systems that are in poor condition totals \$9,085,000; and the cost of repairs to fire alarm systems that are in fair condition totals \$8,001,944.

Safety is essential in creating quality school facilities. Now, more than ever, we should invest in measures that protect our schools and our children from future catastrophes.

Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 1, 2024

HB 1616, RELATING TO FIRE ALARMS

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** HB 1616, relating to fire alarms. Pursuant to the “Education” section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party believes, “Educational facilities must be maintained, renovated, and built to 21st century innovations so that our students learn in well-designed, safe environments.”

Students should learn, not burn.

The impact of fires is especially severe for aging facilities. According to the Hawai'i Department of Education, as of 2022, the average age of public school buildings in Hawai'i was 72 years. Approximately 20 percent of Hawai'i's 258 public schools are more than 100 years old. The National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code, commonly known as NFPA 101, requires schools to have functioning fire alarm systems. In 2017, however, the DOE acknowledged that King intermediate school in Kaneohe had not had a working fire alarm system for seven years. Additionally, in 2022, teachers at Konawaena elementary school on Hawai'i Island reported that the school's fire alarm system had been out of service for two years, even after a fire broke out on campus in 2020.

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Mahalo nui loa,

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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB1616 - Relating to fire alarms**
Position: **Support**
Hearing: **February 1, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309**
Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** HB1616 which requires the DOE to submit an annual report to the legislature on the installation, repair, and maintenance of fire alarm systems in Hawai'i's public schools.

The department's report to the legislature via SCR 34 (2023) already raises the alarm as to some of our schools that are in "critical" condition with regards to fire alarm repair and a number of others in "fair" or "poor" condition. At least 15,000 students are enrolled at identified schools. These reports need to continue to ensure the department keeps fire alarm system maintenance as a priority going forward.

Additionally, the Hawai'i State Teachers Association Board of Directors unanimously agree to advocating for the following items:

- an increased number of fire alarm pull stations
- an increased frequency of inspections of school fire alarm systems
- a fully functional fire suppression system in every school
- multiple evacuation points for emergencies for every school
- a fully functional fire extinguisher in every classroom

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.