



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

Date: 03/18/2024

Time: 03:05 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1651, HD2 RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on HB1651, HD2.

The Department is fully supportive of protecting our school, district, and state office staff and administrators. Previous versions of this measure that deemed harassment of an educational worker as a misdemeanor mirrored efforts the Department has made in the past to increase the protections for our administrators, teachers, counselors, volunteers and Department employees. We anticipate that these increased protections will deter aggressive behavior being leveled at our employees and avoid harassment of our employees.

The Department has existing procedures for addressing harassment that occurs by or among employees and students. However, the gap is when non-Department employees (e.g., community members, parents) are involved. The Department is open to working with the legislature to provide additional protections for our employees. Our principals are provided training to deal with situations around threatening and intimidating behavior from non-Department individuals but in a situation where an employee is being harassed, the safest course of action is to involve law enforcement.

The Department is concerned that some of the processes identified in the bill fall outside the scope of the Department's control or have additional costs. For example, the Department is not familiar with the time required to pursue judicial protection and so determining a reasonable and sufficient time to

allow for a leave of absence while pursuing judicial protection would be difficult. Additionally, no funding is being provided to cover the costs to provide a leave of absence, the costs of serving a temporary restraining order, cost of annual training for all employees or cost of dedicating one full time employee specifically to harassment of employees by non-Department employees.

For the reasons stated above, the Department is requesting the following amendments:

On page 2, lines 12-18: striking out section (c);

Amending page 2, line 19 to read: "(d) The department shall may:";

On page 3, lines 1-3: striking out section (1);

On page 3, lines 14-17: striking out section 3 subsection (A); and

On page 4, lines 6-13: striking out sections (5) and (6).

The Department requests that the requirement for training be included in the procedures for handling harassment. Rather than mandate annual training of all employees in statute, the Department proposes to establish an appropriate schedule for training.

Should this bill continue to move forward, the Department is requesting resources to carry out the mandates of this bill.

To conclude, the Department feels the above amendments will create a process that protects our employees while also engaging the appropriate law enforcement agencies when dealing with harassment. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



CATHY K. IKEDA
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: HB 1651 HD2 Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers
DATE: March 18, 2024
TIME: 3:05 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education
ROOM: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado Kim, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer **SUPPORT of HB 1651 HD2** which provides increased protection for educational workers by requiring the department of education and public charter schools to take certain steps to better address harassment of educational workers.

The Commission appreciates the inclusion of public charter schools in this measure as it affords public charter school educational workers the same protections as their department counterparts.

The Commission is available to work with the Legislature, the DOE, and our public charter schools in moving this legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2024

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1651, H.D. 2, RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: Monday, March 18, 2024 **TIME:** 3:05 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 229 and Videoconference

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Anne T. Horiuchi, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment of educational workers and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

The proposed sections 302A-__(d)(6), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), added by section 2 of the bill on page 4, lines 9-13, and 302D-__(d)(6), HRS, added by section 3 of the bill on page 7, lines 11-15, provide that the DOE and charter schools shall "[a]ssist educational workers with any legal actions that may arise from harassment, as provided in section 711-__, including covering the costs incurred from serving temporary restraining orders related to the harassment[.]" For clarity, the Department recommends revising the last phrase on page 4, lines 11-12, and page 7, lines 13-15, to provide: "including ~~covering~~ **reimbursing the educational worker for** the costs incurred from serving temporary restraining orders related to the harassment[;], **but shall not include the payment of other attorney's fees or court costs;** and"
(Suggested changes in bold).

Additionally, the wording that would have established the criminal offense of harassment of an educational worker in the original draft and H.D. 1 of the bill has been removed in H.D. 2, but sections 2 and 3 of the bill still contain references to the

proposed section 711-__, HRS. See page 2, lines 5 and 8; page 4, lines 10-11; page 5, lines 10 and 13; and page 7, lines 12-13. To address this inconsistency, the Department suggests replacing the references to "section 711-__" with the following wording: "**section 711-1106 because of the educational worker's position as an educational worker.**" (Suggested changes in bold).

The proposed sections 302A-__(c) and 302D-__(c) provide that an educational worker seeking judicial protection from harassment, "including obtaining a temporary restraining order, shall be entitled to a leave of absence with pay to attend court proceedings related to such protection." Page 2, lines 12-18 (section 2), and page 5, line 17, through page 6, line 2 (section 3). To clarify that such paid leave is appropriate when the educational worker is seeking judicial protection from harassment due to the person's status as an educational worker, the Department recommends amending the proposed sections 302A-__(c) on page 2, lines 12-18, and 302D-__(c) on page 5, line 17, through page 6, line 2, as follows:

(c) An educational worker who seeks judicial protection from harassment, **as provided for in section 711-1106 because of the educational worker's position as an educational worker,** including obtaining a temporary restraining order, shall be entitled to a leave of absence with pay to attend court proceedings related to the protection. The duration of the leave of absence with pay shall be reasonable and sufficient to allow the educational worker to fulfill their court-related obligations.

(Suggested changes in bold).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2024

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Tuesday, March 18, 2024, 3:05 PM
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB1651, HD2 – RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS

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

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW supports HB1651, HD2, which requires the Department of Education (“DOE”) and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

We strongly believe that educational workers should feel assured that the DOE and public charter schools are committed to taking effective action against harassment in order to protect the rights and dignity of the hard-working public employees who are tasked with maintaining a positive learning environment for Hawaii’s students.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kalani Werner', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kalani Werner
State Director

HEADQUARTERS

1426 North School Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-1914
Phone 808.847.2631

HAWAII

362 East Lanikaula Street
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-4336
Phone 808.961.3424

KAUAI

2970 Kele Street, Suite 213
Lihue, Hawaii 96766-1803
Phone 808.245.2412

MAUI

841 Kolu Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793-1436
Phone 808.244.0815

1.866.454.4166

Toll Free - Molokai/Lanai only

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 1:37:25 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Inger Stonehill	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I write to you today with a plea to support the passing of HB 1651, a vital piece of legislation aimed at addressing harassment in the workplace. As both an individual and a dedicated educator I believe that this bill is important in safeguarding the rights and well-being of educational workers.

Even the Senate itself acknowledges the seriousness of harassment, as outlined in its own policy, where it states that harassment creates an environment that unreasonably interferes with job duties or fosters an intimidating, hostile, or offensive workplace. This issue not only harms individuals but also undermines the integrity of our institutions. It is imperative that we establish clear and enforceable guidelines to prevent and address such behavior, especially in educational settings.

HB 1651 presents a framework for identifying and combating harassment. By defining the rights of educational workers this legislation ensures that everyone in the Department of Education is aware of their obligations. It also places a strong emphasis on the Department's responsibility to promptly investigate and address any allegations of harassment. This proactive stance is crucial in fostering a safe and inclusive work environment where every employee feels respected and valued.

Presently, the Department of Education lacks a comprehensive plan to address harassment by community members. HB 1651 fills this void by providing a strategy to tackle harassment effectively, ensuring that educators are protected from all forms of harassment, regardless of the source.

As reported by the National Education Association, employers have a legal obligation to investigate and address harassment, even when it originates from third parties. HB 1651 reinforces this obligation, providing the Department of Education with the necessary tools and guidance to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

I urge you to lend your support to HB 1651 and take decisive action to combat harassment in our public and charter schools. By enacting this legislation, we can uphold the rights of

all employees and foster environments that are conducive to a safe learning environment for student and teacher success.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Inger Stonehill

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 4:05:14 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lindsay Chambers	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

In addressing the urgent issue of harassment against educational workers, we must confront pivotal questions: How many warning signs and red flags must we overlook before enacting decisive change? Are we resigned to waiting until someone is gravely injured or worse, killed, before acknowledging the need for action?

During my tenure at the Department of Education (DOE), I encountered an individual who persistently harassed educational workers for over a decade. This person had accumulated numerous Temporary Restraining Orders (TROs) from DOE employees, and his behavior prompted directives by the Board of Education and Superintendent offices instructing against transferring any of his calls to their respective phone lines.

When this individual made threats of physical violence against an employee under my supervision, the DOE instructed me to obtain a TRO to shield him and the Communications Branch team. However, this directive put a target on my back, with inadequate support leaving me exposed and vulnerable. I faced relentless harassment, incessant calls, and voicemails filled with intimidation and racial slurs, deeply worrying about my safety.

I was forced to personally obtain legal counsel to represent me in court for the TRO directed by the DOE, along with a subsequent TRO necessary for the safety of my family and myself.

Throughout this ordeal, I was informed by the DOE and AG that they would not offer support, deeming TROs as ‘personal matters.’ This was despite their initial guidance to obtain one for the protection of those under my supervision and the harassment I endured due to my employment with the Department. While the Court granted the second injunction against harassment, I was left to navigate this nightmare alone, as the system failed to provide the protection and assistance I urgently required.

Coauthored by myself and two educational workers, HB1651 addresses the repercussions of the DOE’s failure to act, allowing one individual’s harmful behavior to persist unchecked for over a decade. To underscore the critical significance of this bill, since the court granted me a permanent injunction against harassment in 2021, nine additional TROs have been filed by educational workers against the same individual who targeted me and my family, with one filed as recently as March 4, 2024.

Drawing from experiences shared with me by other educational workers and supported by stories in the media, it is evident that additional community members engage in persistent harassment of

public and charter school employees. These narratives encompass a range of experiences, including:

- Former Kaiser High parent guilty on all counts in threatening and assault case, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2019/03/08/hawaii-news/former-kaiser-high-parent-guilty-on-all-counts-in-threatening-and-assault-case/>.
- Principal who received disturbing threats says DOE isn't taking her safety seriously, Hawaii News Now, <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2022/02/04/middle-school-principal-who-got-death-threats-says-doe-isnt-taking-her-safety-seriously/>.
- Former employee says Department of Education hasn't done enough to protect against threats, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2022/09/11/hawaii-news/former-employee-says-doe-hasnt-done-enough-to-protect-against-threats/>.

For those who have shared their stories publicly or have taken the difficult step of seeking legal protections such as TROs, there are countless others who are still gripped by fear and have not been able to take documented action.

The state-level leadership of the DOE, spanning several administrations, has consistently demonstrated a reluctance or incapacity to institute measures to safeguard the well-being of its employees. This legislation not only highlights the gravity of such negligence but also compels the DOE to systematically monitor instances of harassment and establish protocols to safeguard harassed individuals. HB1651 represents a significant leap forward by mandating the DOE to document these occurrences and assume responsibility for the treatment of its workforce.

Let's take proactive steps instead of waiting for tragedy to compel our actions. By shifting the narrative from regretful hindsight to prevention, we can save the life of someone's beloved family member—a parent, spouse, friend and cherished educator. How often have we heard in recent news stories that the warning signs were present, that earlier intervention was warranted? We have witnessed the consequences of inaction, we cannot afford another tragedy.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawaii 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Lisa Thompson
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB1651 HD2 - Relating to the safety of educational workers**

Position: **Support**

Hearing: **March 18, 2024, 3:05 p.m., Conference Room 308**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** HB1651 HD2 which requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

Educators in the public schools of Hawai'i often are subject to harassment, especially in this age of social media. As it becomes increasingly difficult to find and retain quality employees in our public schools, more protections must be afforded to educational workers ultimately for the sake of our keiki.

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



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Second Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Education

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 18, 2024

H.B. 1651, H.D. 2 — RELATING TO THE SAFETY
OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO fully supports H.B. 1651, H.D. 1, which requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

Each school year, we are contacted by multiple members who work at public schools and who have experienced threats made directly at them or witnessed by them in the course of their employment and within the scope of their duties and responsibilities. These threats occur in school offices, at meetings, over the phone, via email, and more recently, through social media.

We strongly support any efforts to increase protection for our educational workers. They should feel assured that the Department is committed to taking prompt and effective action against harassing conduct and those who engage in harassing behavior should be held accountable.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 1651, H.D. 2.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 3:40:07 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hartwell lee loy	Testifying for Farrington High School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm in full support of HB1651!!



Randy Perreira
President

HAWAII STATE AFL-CIO

888 Mililani Street, Suite 501 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Telephone: (808) 597-1441
Fax: (808) 593-2149

The Thirty-Second Legislature
The Senate
Committee on Education

Testimony by
Hawaii State AFL-CIO

March 18, 2024

TESTIMONY ON HB1651 HD2 - RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATION WORKERS

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and members of the committee:

The Hawaii State AFL-CIO is a federation of 74 affiliate labor organizations that represent over 68,000 union members in the State of Hawaii. The AFL-CIO serves its affiliates by advocating for workers and their families before the state legislature and other branches of state and county government.

The Hawaii State AFL-CIO **supports** HB1651 HD2, which requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers while also establishing the criminal offense of harassing an educational worker.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of educational workers is paramount to maintaining a positive and effective learning environment for our students. Passing this bill would also demonstrate a commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of those who dedicate themselves to our keiki. Furthermore, we must provide the necessary tools and support systems to address harassment in educational settings and uphold the fundamental values of respect and professionalism within our schools.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Perreira".

Randy Perreira
President

To the Honorable Chairperson Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair Donna Mercdo Kim and Committee Members:

HD 1651 HD2 – Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers

IN SUPPORT

I am Diana Oshiro, Principal of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA). I have over 50 years of experience in the Hawaii state public school system as a teacher, administrator and HDOE Assistant Superintendent. I understand the challenges and responsibilities of school personnel at all levels and have often been in extremely difficult and contentious situations with parents, and community.

These situations have always been part of the job of an administrator. However, in the past decade these situations have increased exponentially. I am testifying in favor of HD 1651 HD2 because of the significant increase in the amount and frequency of situations where individuals (oftentimes parents and community personnel) feel it is their right to bully and harass school personnel with whom they disagree. They often want to determine their child's programming needs and school support even if it is contrary to the school's vision/mission or the professional decisions made collectively by all school community members' determined policies and procedures. Many of these individuals will resort to behavior and verbal abuse of school faculty and staff. These behaviors are what I would label as "terroristic threatening" which has led my staff to worry, seek counseling and consider police/legal protection. We have created procedures and protocols which currently safeguard faculty and staff from further verbal abuse. However, this is an interim remedy and will not be able to serve as a long-term solution. HD1651 will help many schools. I respectfully request your collective support and help. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am confident that you will be able to recognize our desire to continue to teach and support all students without fear and worry.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 9:35:14 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Weir	Testifying for Myron B Thompson Academy (MBTA)	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Dr James M Weir, fully support HB1651. The well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School is essential to educating our youth. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have experienced harassment from a parent and heard many troubling stories from my colleagues. A list of challenges this bill would help address:

- 1. Maintaining a Professional Environment:** Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.
- 2. Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment:** MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.
- 3. Supporting Students:** Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.
- 4. Mental and Psychological Impact:** The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.
- 5. Physical Safety Concerns:** There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawai'i's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, James M Weir



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 586-8126 Fax: 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov

March 18, 2024

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

Ms. Martha Guinan, *Chair*
Ms. Susan Wood, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Sara Alimoot
Ms. Kathie Awaya
Ms. Virginia Beringer
Ms. Mary Brogan
Ms. Deborah Cheeseman
Ms. Annette Cooper
Ms. Shana Cruz
Mr. Mark Disher
Ms. Mai Hall
Dr. Kurt Humphrey
Ms. Melissa Johnson
Ms. Tina King
Ms. Jennifer Leoiki-Drino
Ms. Dale Matsuura
Ms. Cheryl Matthews
Dr. Paul Meng
Ms. Kiele Pennington
Mr. Christopher Pelayo
Ms. Kau'i Rezentos
Ms. Rosie Rowe
Dr. Scott Shimabukuro
Ms. Debora Uyeda
Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Jasmine Williams

Ms. Helen Kaniho, *liaison to
the Superintendent*
Ms. Wendy Nakasone-Kalani,
*liaison to the military
community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Committee on Education
Hawaii Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: HB 1651, HD 2 - RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF
EDUCATIONAL WORKERS**

Dear Senator Kidani and members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, respectfully provides comments on HB 1651, HD 2 which requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

Educator safety is a work place issue, and the HDOE should have policies in place to address it. SEAC strongly supporting the safety of teachers, school personnel, and any person on a public school campus. Based on previous testimonies submitted on this bill and firsthand accounts to SEAC, a number of teachers who have been threatened with physical harm by a parent have felt unsupported by their administrators, and there is a lack of consistency in the response to the issue from school to school.

Existing harassment law should be applied to instances of educator harassment. SEAC was strongly opposed to the original text of HB1651 that contained a provision establishing a new criminal statute making harassment of an educational worker a misdemeanor. Fortunately the Committee on the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs deleted that section of the bill. Hawaii's existing harassment statute, (HRS 711-1106) has established definitions and ample case law to provide protection to victims of harassment while at the same time hopefully preserving the rights of parents of students with IEPs to advocate for their son or daughter.



Testimony re: HB 1651, HD 2
March 18, 2024
Page 2

Teachers and other school personnel should not be excused from their duties when a parent or community member merely “annoys” staff or engages in repeated phone calls, facsimiles or other electronic communications that the staff person views as “without purpose of legitimate communication.” (711-1106 (1) (c)). These offenses included in the harassment statute likely do not carry the threat of physical harm, and the determination of whether the actions of the parent are legitimate are highly subjective. Many parents have relayed to SEAC that their calls and emails to teachers or administrators on behalf of their child with a disability go unanswered, requiring the parent to make repeated attempts to receive a response from the school. Relieving an educational worker from his or her duties for non-threatening annoyances leaves the student with a disability without the consistent and individualized support necessary to make progress toward academic and behavioral goals.

Annual training for all educational workers on how to use de-escalation techniques and handle harassment from outside actors should ideally include a refresher on the principles of family-school partnerships as outlined in Board Policy 101-14. While there will always be bullies and bad actors who threaten educational workers, relationships with the vast majority of parents and community members improve when schools make the effort to embrace the diverse cultures, languages, strengths and needs of all families.

SEAC is hopeful that frank discussions generated by HB 1651 will result in a thoughtful and effective approach to protect HIDEOE employees without compromising already strained relationships, especially for families of students with disabilities. We stand ready to assist in that endeavor.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
Chair

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 4:35:00 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Kapaona	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I, Alyssa Kapaona, support HB1651 as a crucial measure to protect the safety and well-being of educational workers. I have been an educator in Hawai'i for over 15 years. The rise in harassment incidents targeting school officials underscores the urgent need for legislative intervention. Educational workers play a vital role in shaping our children's futures, and it's our collective duty to shield them from harm as best as possible.

HB1651 is calling for proactive measures by the Hawai'i Department of Education and Public Charter Schools to cultivate a safer environment for educators and students alike. It aims to establish fundamental response protocols to mitigate the trauma inflicted by harassment and address the current absence of support.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB1651 to ensure educational workers can carry out their responsibilities free from fear of harassment or intimidation. Failing to address these concerns not only compromises the integrity of educational institutions but also sends a clear and alarming message about the acceptability of such behavior.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill,

Alyssa Kapaona

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:04:19 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Grant	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a DOE employee and I support this bill. The DOE needs to take responsibility on this matter and protect their employees.

I, Kim Uyeda-Young, reiterate my strong support for HB1651 and reaffirm the points outlined in my testimony submitted on February 22, 2024.

Understanding the gravity of the situation requires firsthand experience. Without having been in a threatening scenario, it's challenging to grasp the full extent of its impact on personal and professional well-being, as well as that of colleagues and students.

It's crucial to recognize that incidents like these aren't isolated occurrences. Concerns raised by educators across various districts underscore the urgent need for action to ensure the safety and security of all stakeholders.

Given the persistent nature of these safety concerns, I stand firm in my original testimony and earnestly request that you give due consideration to this vital matter.

Testimony submitted on February 22, 2024

I, Kim Uyeda-Young, fully support HB1651 as it seeks to safeguard and protect the well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School, as well as the students and families who are part of these educational institutions. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have personally witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of persistent and severe harassment in various aspects of our professional and personal lives, both within and outside the classroom environment. Here are some of the challenges we face:

- 1. Maintaining a Professional Environment:** Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.
- 2. Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment:** MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.
- 3. Supporting Students:** Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.
- 4. Mental and Psychological Impact:** The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.
- 5. Physical Safety Concerns:** There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawaii's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 4:57:04 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aimee Takaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Aimee Takaki, reiterate my strong support for HB1651 and reaffirm the points outlined in my testimony submitted on February 22, 2024.

Understanding the gravity of the situation requires firsthand experience. Without having been in a threatening scenario, it's challenging to grasp the full extent of its impact on personal and professional well-being, as well as that of colleagues and students.

It's crucial to recognize that incidents like these aren't isolated occurrences. Concerns raised by educators across various districts underscore the urgent need for action to ensure the safety and security of all stakeholders.

Given the persistent nature of these safety concerns, I stand firm in my original testimony and earnestly request that you give due consideration to this vital matter.

Testimony submitted on February 22, 2024

I, Aimee Takaki, fully support HB1651 as it seeks to safeguard and protect the well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School, as well as the students and families who are part of these educational institutions. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have personally witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of persistent and severe harassment in various aspects of our professional and personal lives, both within and outside the classroom environment. Here are some of the challenges we face:

- 1. Maintaining a Professional Environment:** Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.
- 2. Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment:** MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.

3. Supporting Students: Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.

4. Mental and Psychological Impact: The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.

5. Physical Safety Concerns: There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawai'i's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 8:42:13 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rob Cacace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Robert Cacace, reiterate my strong support for HB1651 and reaffirm the points outlined in my testimony submitted on February 22, 2024.

Understanding the gravity of the situation requires firsthand experience. Without having been in a threatening scenario, it's challenging to grasp the full extent of its impact on personal and professional well-being, as well as that of colleagues and students.

It's crucial to recognize that incidents like these aren't isolated occurrences. Concerns raised by educators across various districts underscore the urgent need for action to ensure the safety and security of all stakeholders.

Given the persistent nature of these safety concerns, I stand firm in my original testimony and earnestly request that you give due consideration to this vital matter.

Testimony submitted on February 22, 2024

I, Robert Cacace, fully support HB1651 as it seeks to safeguard and protect the well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School, as well as the students and families who are part of these educational institutions. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have personally witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of persistent and severe harassment in various aspects of our professional and personal lives, both within and outside the classroom environment. Here are some of the challenges we face:

1. Maintaining a Professional Environment: Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.

2. Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment: MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.

3. Supporting Students: Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.

4. Mental and Psychological Impact: The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.

5. Physical Safety Concerns: There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawaii's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 10:47:10 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Hirota	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I, Tiffany Hirota, support HB1651 as a crucial measure to protect the safety and well-being of educational workers. The rise in harassment incidents targeting school officials underscores the urgent need for legislative intervention. HB1651 is calling for proactive measures by the Hawaii Department of Education and Public Charter Schools to cultivate a safer environment for educators and students alike. It aims to establish fundamental response protocols to mitigate the trauma inflicted by harassment and address the current absence of support. I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB1651 to ensure educational workers can carry out their responsibilities free from fear of harassment or intimidation. Failing to address these concerns not only compromises the integrity of educational institutions but also sends a clear and alarming message about the acceptability of such behavior. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 7:34:25 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivana Crumpton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 9:15:07 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kris Leahy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Kris Leahy, reiterate my strong support for HB1651 and reaffirm the points outlined in my testimony submitted on February 22, 2024.

Understanding the gravity of the situation requires firsthand experience. Without having been in a threatening scenario, it's challenging to grasp the full extent of its impact on personal and professional well-being, as well as that of colleagues and students.

It's crucial to recognize that incidents like these aren't isolated occurrences. Concerns raised by educators across various districts underscore the urgent need for action to ensure the safety and security of all stakeholders.

Given the persistent nature of these safety concerns, I stand firm in my original testimony and earnestly request that you give due consideration to this vital matter.

Testimony submitted on February 22, 2024

I, Kris Leahy, fully support HB1651 as it seeks to safeguard and protect the well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School, as well as the students and families who are part of these educational institutions. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have personally witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of persistent and severe harassment in various aspects of our professional and personal lives, both within and outside the classroom environment. Here are some of the challenges we face:

1. **Maintaining a Professional Environment:** Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.

2. **Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment:** MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.

3. **Supporting Students:** Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.

4. **Mental and Psychological Impact:** The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.

5. **Physical Safety Concerns:** There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawaii's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 9:04:30 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taren Taguchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to protect DOE employees from harassment.

I was an employee of the DOE for over 20 years. A parent of a student harassed me and threatened to get me fired over a three year period. This parent called me often and would talk for 90 minutes without letting me respond to the parent’s accusations. Every other word was “fuck”, “dumbshit”, “whore”, “asshole”. This parent complained about many DOE staff. When we investigated formally and informally, the parent’s allegations were unfounded. The school office staff at several schools were victims of this parent’s rants. Several staff quit. At least two staff were required to move to the mainland to avoid an assault. One staff had been threatened by this same parent 10 years before my harassment.

The DOE Assistant Superintendent and the Attorney General, specifically said they would not help by sending this parent a letter to cease and desist nor could they represent us as employees to get a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO).

I tried to protect myself by calling the Domestic Violence hotline, but their charter did not allow them to help me because I did not have a relationship with this parent. I went to the police station to ask what would happen if I filed a harassment complaint against this parent. This parent did not know which building I worked in, nor did the parent know my home address or personal cell phone number. The police report required me to release my confidential information to inform the parent which addresses and phone numbers the parent should avoid. This seemed counterintuitive to protect me. So, I could not file a complaint with the police.

I asked for a safety plan from the DOE to keep this parent away from me. The DOE refused to provide a safety plan to keep me safe from this parent. The DOE needs to provide a safety plan for anyone who reports harassment, regardless of whether the threat is within the DOE or outside the DOE. At no time did the DOE deny or curtail services to this parent’s child. This parent had a right to complain about any services provided by the DOE, but parents do not have a right to threaten staff with violence or call them names.

I lost sleep and needed counseling. I separated from the DOE to avoid more harassment and violence against me. The parent did not stop harassing me. The parent filed a complaint against me through the ombudsman after I retired, and the ombudsman found no violations of my conduct. While almost every parent who called me was angry with the DOE, none of them made it personal against me except this parent. I was harassed by this parent, but the worst treatment

was by my own employer who refused to take any action to stop the harassment. The DOE leadership refused to take this parent's calls, which infuriated the parent, and the parent would call the front-line employees, like me. Please protect all state workers from harassment or violence. Last year, the DOE leadership misleadingly testified that they were protecting their employees and did not need oversight. The DOE employees at risk are not those in leadership, the front-line employees are protecting leadership from the nastiest students/parents. DOE employees are not going to testify against their employer while they are still employed.

Please require oversight over the DOE leadership to protect staff when the staff reports harassment regardless of where the harassment originates.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 9:45:59 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaimie Song	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I, Jaimie Song, support HB1651 as a crucial measure to protect the safety and well-being of educational workers. The rise in harassment incidents targeting school officials underscores the urgent need for legislative intervention. Educational workers play a vital role in shaping our children's futures, and it's our collective duty to shield them from harm as best as possible.

HB1651 is calling for proactive measures by the Hawaii Department of Education and Public Charter Schools to cultivate a safer environment for educators and students alike. It aims to establish fundamental response protocols to mitigate the trauma inflicted by harassment and address the current absence of support.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB1651 to ensure educational workers can carry out their responsibilities free from fear of harassment or intimidation. Failing to address these concerns not only compromises the integrity of educational institutions but also sends a clear and alarming message about the acceptability of such behavior.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 5:30:42 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie Kaneko	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 1651. This bill will help to protect educators and educational workers from harrassment. They play a critical role in ensuring shaping the future of our youth and should not be subjected to harassment land should be protected by the DOE and our state.

In the best interest of our educators, public school employees and students, please support this bill.

Mahalo,

Julie Hirano Kaneko

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 1:23:22 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christian Chambers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

1. am writing in support HB1651, and to urge the committee to give this important measure the attention it deserves.

There is no question that the thousands of DOE employees play a critical role in our state. There is also no question that they deserve to work in a safe environment, free from vulgar racial slurs, threats of physical violence, and ongoing harassment.

Unfortunately, this bill is before the committee because DOE employees have come forward to tell the Legislature they are not being supported by the Department. The testimony before the House committees revealed an ongoing and pervasive problem within the DOE, which has not been corrected. Teachers continue to feel unsafe going to school, and continue to be left alone to file hand-written TRO applications and represent themselves in court. Meanwhile, the DOE is not tracking these incidents, and does not have any support in place to prevent similar situations from occurring again and again.

The entire State of Hawaii suffers from the DOE's lack of supports for its employees. Everyone knows teacher recruitment and retention has been an ongoing challenge. I am personally aware of at least one employee who left Hawaii as a direct result of ongoing and outrageous harassment that should have been addressed. I am also personally aware of another employee who retired early to avoid relentless harassment. There are certainly more examples, which directly hurt the efforts the DOE has been making to fully staff its positions.

HB1651 is not asking the DOE or the Public Charter Schools to do any more than a prudent private employer would do in similar circumstances. In fact, private employers are required by OSHA to ensure their workplaces are free from unreasonable dangers caused by customers and the public in general. HB1651 simply ensures the DOE has a system in place to ensure its employees are protected. That is the least the Legislature can do to support a group of people who are vital to our state's interest.

Mahalo for your time and service to the people of Hawaii.

I, Connie Nakasone, reiterate my strong support for HB1651 and reaffirm the points outlined in my testimony submitted on February 22, 2024.

Understanding the gravity of the situation requires firsthand experience. Without having been in a threatening scenario, it's challenging to grasp the full extent of its impact on personal and professional well-being, as well as that of colleagues and students.

It's crucial to recognize that incidents like these aren't isolated occurrences. Concerns raised by educators across various districts underscore the urgent need for action to ensure the safety and security of all stakeholders.

Given the persistent nature of these safety concerns, I stand firm in my original testimony and earnestly request that you give due consideration to this vital matter.

Testimony submitted on February 22, 2024

I, Connie Nakasone, fully support HB1651 as it seeks to safeguard and protect the well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School, as well as the students and families who are part of these educational institutions. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have personally witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of persistent and severe harassment in various aspects of our professional and personal lives, both within and outside the classroom environment. Here are some of the challenges we face:

- 1. Maintaining a Professional Environment: Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.**
- 2. Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment: MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.**
- 3. Supporting Students: Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.**
- 4. Mental and Psychological Impact: The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.**
- 5. Physical Safety Concerns: There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.**

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawaii's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 7:01:04 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ester Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I, Ester Chang, support HB1651 as a crucial measure to protect the safety and well-being of educational workers. The rise in harassment incidents targeting school officials underscores the urgent need for legislative intervention. Educational workers play a vital role in shaping our children’s futures, and it’s our collective duty to shield them from harm as best as possible.

HB1651 is calling for proactive measures by the Hawaii Department of Education and Public Charter Schools to cultivate a safer environment for educators and students alike. It aims to establish fundamental response protocols to mitigate the trauma inflicted by harassment and address the current absence of support.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB1651 to ensure educational workers can carry out their responsibilities free from fear of harassment or intimidation. Failing to address these concerns not only compromises the integrity of educational institutions but also sends a clear and alarming message about the acceptability of such behavior.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 6:23:59 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacey Waterhouse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Jacey Waterhouse, reiterate my strong support for HB1651 and reaffirm the points outlined in my testimony submitted on February 22, 2024.

Understanding the gravity of the situation requires firsthand experience. Without having been in a threatening scenario, it's challenging to grasp the full extent of its impact on personal and professional well-being, as well as that of colleagues and students.

It's crucial to recognize that incidents like these aren't isolated occurrences. Concerns raised by educators across various districts underscore the urgent need for action to ensure the safety and security of all stakeholders.

Given the persistent nature of these safety concerns, I stand firm in my original testimony and earnestly request that you give due consideration to this vital matter.

Testimony submitted on February 22, 2024

I, Jacey Waterhouse, fully support HB1651 as it seeks to safeguard and protect the well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School, as well as the students and families who are part of these educational institutions. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have personally witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of persistent and severe harassment in various aspects of our professional and personal lives, both within and outside the classroom environment. Here are some of the challenges we face:

- 1. Maintaining a Professional Environment:** Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.
- 2. Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment:** MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.

3. Supporting Students: Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.

4. Mental and Psychological Impact: The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.

5. Physical Safety Concerns: There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawaii's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 5:56:20 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
NOELLE TAVARES-SUMIYE	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Noelle Tavares-Sumiye, reiterate my strong support for HB1651 and reaffirm the points outlined in my testimony submitted on February 22, 2024.

Understanding the gravity of the situation requires firsthand experience. Without having been in a threatening scenario, it's challenging to grasp the full extent of its impact on personal and professional well-being, as well as that of colleagues and students.

It's crucial to recognize that incidents like these aren't isolated occurrences. Concerns raised by educators across various districts underscore the urgent need for action to ensure the safety and security of all stakeholders.

Given the persistent nature of these safety concerns, I stand firm in my original testimony and earnestly request that you give due consideration to this vital matter.

Testimony submitted on February 22, 2024

I, Noelle Tavares-Sumiye, fully support HB1651 as it seeks to safeguard and protect the well-being of educators employed by the Department of Education or a Public Charter School, as well as the students and families who are part of these educational institutions. As an employee of Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), a New Century Charter School, I have personally witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of persistent and severe harassment in various aspects of our professional and personal lives, both within and outside the classroom environment. Here are some of the challenges we face:

- 1. Maintaining a Professional Environment:** Despite our efforts to maintain professionalism, verbal harassment persists in various forms such as during meetings, through voice messages, phone calls, and email communications.
- 2. Ensuring a Safe Learning Environment:** MBTA, being a hybrid school, must address safety concerns both in-person and virtually. Unscheduled parent interruptions, outbursts, and harassment during virtual classes via Zoom pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and other stakeholders.

3. Supporting Students: Students who witness verbal harassment and disruptions during virtual classes or on-campus incidents require support to navigate these challenging situations. Additionally, addressing the social and academic impact on the children of harassing parents is crucial.

4. Mental and Psychological Impact: The constant exposure to extreme swearing, name-calling, threats, ranting, and intimidation takes a toll on our mental and psychological well-being, leading to anxiety and other concerns.

5. Physical Safety Concerns: There is genuine worry about the physical safety of everyone associated with MBTA, including staff, students, families, and myself, due to threats of physical harm.

Failure to address these escalating concerns and provide adequate protection for educators in Hawaii's educational system will undermine the integrity of the Department of Education and the Public Charter School Commission. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to students and families about acceptable behavior in an educational setting.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB 1651. By doing so, educational workers can fulfill their duties without fear of harassment or intimidation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 2:19:36 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Byron Sullivan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this legislation.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 12:39:08 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Goo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I, Shannon Goo, support HB1651 as a crucial measure to protect the safety and well-being of educational workers. The rise in harassment incidents targeting school officials underscores the urgent need for legislative intervention. Educational workers play a vital role in shaping our children's futures, and it's our collective duty to shield them from harm as best as possible.

HB1651 is calling for proactive measures by the Hawaii Department of Education and Public Charter Schools to cultivate a safer environment for educators and students alike. It aims to establish fundamental response protocols to mitigate the trauma inflicted by harassment and address the current absence of support.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB1651 to ensure educational workers can carry out their responsibilities free from fear of harassment or intimidation. Failing to address these concerns not only compromises the integrity of educational institutions but also sends a clear and alarming message about the acceptability of such behavior.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:13:52 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tara Taitano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members,

I, Tara Taitano, support HB1651 as a crucial measure to protect the safety and well-being of educational workers. The rise in harassment incidents targeting school officials underscores the urgent need for legislative intervention. Educational workers play a vital role in shaping our children's futures, and it's our collective duty to shield them from harm as best as possible.

HB1651 is calling for proactive measures by the Hawaii Department of Education and Public Charter Schools to cultivate a safer environment for educators and students alike. It aims to establish fundamental response protocols to mitigate the trauma inflicted by harassment and address the current absence of support.

I urge the legislature to prioritize the passage of HB1651 to ensure educational workers can carry out their responsibilities free from fear of harassment or intimidation. Failing to address these concerns not only compromises the integrity of educational institutions but also sends a clear and alarming message about the acceptability of such behavior.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

LATE

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 8:38:30 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Oka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in strong support of HB1651 HD2.

As a concerned citizen deeply invested in the safety and well-being of our educational workers, I believe this bill is a crucial step towards ensuring a secure and supportive environment for educational workers across our state.

Educational workers play an essential role in shaping the future of our children and the welfare of our society. The provisions outlined in this bill demonstrate a comprehensive approach to protecting them from harassment and creating mechanisms to address such conditions effectively.

The reports in the media below seem to indicate that this is a persistent problem and needs to be addressed. For every media story, there are probably many related stories that have not come to the surface. Consider these examples as warning signals.

- Former Kaiser High parent guilty on all counts in threatening and assault case, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2019/03/08/hawaii-news/former-kaiser-high-parent-guilty-on-all-counts-in-threatening-and-assault-case/>.
- Principal who received disturbing threats says DOE isn't taking her safety seriously, Hawaii News Now, <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2022/02/04/middle-school-principal-who-got-death-threats-says-doe-isnt-taking-her-safety-seriously/>.
- Former employee says Department of Education hasn't done enough to protect against threats, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2022/09/11/hawaii-news/former-employee-says-doe-hasnt-done-enough-to-protect-against-threats/>.

HB1651 HD2 represents a vital step towards improving the safety and workplace conditions of educational workers in Hawai'i. I urge you to give your full support to this bill. Our educational workers deserve nothing less than the highest level of protection and support as they carry out their invaluable work in shaping the minds and futures of our children.

Mahalo for your consideration of this important matter.

LATE

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 7:56:02 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Les Murashige	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi

I am in support of HB 1651 and honestly can't understand why this is even necessary. I'm appalled that something like this isn't already in place. I think on bigger picture we need to look at why these incident have happened without the support of the DOE. Shameful.

Les Murashige

LATE

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 10:49:35 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Godbey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1651, HD2, which requires the Department of Education (“DOE”) and public charter schools to take appropriate steps to report unwarranted harassment and to establish procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

Educational workers should know that the DOE and public charter schools have their back, and that they are committed to taking effective action against harassment. The job of our teachers and educators is hard enough; they should not have to endure harrassment just to do their jobs.

LATE

HB-1651-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 11:05:13 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2024 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sean Witwer	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am a special education teacher from Farrington High School, and I support HB1651.

At the end of the last school year, my family and I were harassed on social media and I was physically threatened through emails by a parent of one of my former students, for an incident related to enforcing the electronics use policy in my classroom.

For nearly six months, I attempted to secure a TRO to protect myself from an irrational parent who didn't respect the boundaries of civility or my professional and private life. During this time, I navigated this legal process and interactions with law enforcement and the judicial system alone, as this situation was treated as a personal matter by the DOE. Ultimately, I was unsuccessful in securing a TRO.

I have worked for the DOE for 25 years. I deserved better than this.

Within the last 13 years, over 10 educators have sought TRO's against this same parent, with a majority of them not being approved, as this parent successfully evades our judicial system.

Within the past year, I have witnessed one of my peers leave Farrington HS after a long career there, and another educator who will leave at the end of this year, because of harassment.

The status quo isn't working. Treating harassment as a personal matter and leaving educators to fight through the judicial system alone is not the answer.

The solution does not lie at the school level. The answer lies at the top of the DOE.

In the absence of leadership by the DOE, and their unwillingness to sit down with educators who have been affected by harassment to come up with acceptable solutions, I ask that you support HB1651, to give teachers who have faced harassment greater support and protection. The support and protection we deserve.

Thank you.