



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

**Date:** 03/21/2024

**Time:** 02:00 PM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

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

**Title of Resolution:** HCR 0137 REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO AMEND ITS POLICY ON VALEDICTORIAN DESIGNATION TO EXCLUSIVELY RECOGNIZE STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR ACADEMIC HONORS, GRADE POINT AVERAGE, AND PERFORMANCE IN RIGOROUS ACADEMIC COURSES.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education would like to provide comments on HCR 0137.

HCR 0137 requests that the Board of Education amend its policy on valedictorian designation to exclusively recognize students with exceptional academic achievements, as demonstrated by their academic honors, grade point average, and performance in rigorous academic courses. HCR 0137 further requests that the Board review, discuss, and revise the policy on valedictorian designation to ensure that future valedictorians are selected based on their exceptional academic accomplishments in their core classes.

The Hawai'i Department of Education (Department) has Hawai'i State Board of Education Policy 102-15, High School Graduation Requirements and Commencement. This policy does not include the criteria for determining valedictorian status. While there is no policy on valedictorian designation, guidance is provided by the Department that was approved by the Hawaii High School Principal Forum, that was effective for the Class of 2016 and beyond. Graduating seniors will be declared valedictorian if the following criteria are met: GPA of 4.0; and earned and met the requirements of one of the Honors Recognition Certificates. Valedictorians will be named after the third quarter. The Honors Recognition Certificate requirements are in addition to meeting the requirements for the Hawai'i High School Diploma. Students must attain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above to qualify for a honors recognition certificate in one or more of the honors: Academic Honors, CTE Honors, or STEM Honors. This is available on the Hawaii Public Schools website.

If a course has been granted an Authorized Courses and Code Numbers (ACCN), and students receive a grade for the course, all credit-bearing courses are considered academic courses (vs. non-academic), and are calculated in the student's grade point average.

The Department defers to the Board of Education regarding the amendment of Board policy.

**LATE**

**HR-118**

Submitted on: 3/21/2024 12:40:13 AM

Testimony for EDN on 3/21/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hello to the esteemed members of the Hawai'i State House of Representatives Board of Education,

My name is Clara Steele, and I'm a junior at Hilo High School. I'm here today to voice my support for House Resolution 118, which advocates for recognizing valedictorians based solely on exceptional academic achievements in core subjects.

Throughout my high school journey, I've taken pride in the fact that I've always pushed myself in advanced core classes, and dedicated myself to achieving high grades in these classes. Many of my classmates have done this too, hoping to achieve the valedictorian award.

However, even though many students earn 4.0+ GPAs while taking rigorous academic courses, currently this is not the only way to become a valedictorian in our state public schools. The current system allows for non-academic achievements to contribute to the award of valedictorian, which lessens the emphasis on academic excellence. As a result, students who have excelled academically may not receive the recognition they deserve, while students who for example, may have taken general education classes and completed a business career course could still earn the title.

Limiting valedictorian recognition of academic achievements in core subjects can strengthen the value of academic excellence in our schools and provide a clear incentive for students to strive for success in their studies. This approach aligns with the fundamental purpose of education and sends a powerful message about the importance of rigorous academic preparation which will benefit students long after graduation.

I urge the Hawai'i State House of Representatives Board of Education to adopt House Resolution 118. Let's ensure that future valedictorians are selected based on their academic accomplishments in core subjects, inspiring a culture of academic excellence in our schools.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Mahalo,

Clara Steele  
Hilo High School

