



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

PERSON TESTIFYING: Mitzie Higa, Licensing Specialist, on behalf of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board

DATE: February 26, 2025

TIME: 10:03 AM

LOCATION: Conference Room 211 and Video Conference

TITLE OF BILL: SB819 SD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION

PURPOSE OF BILL: Requires HTSB to establish an international teacher license for certain visa holders.
Establishes criteria for obtaining an international license.

POSITION: Opposes

Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) opposes SB819 SD1, relating education.

The mission and vision of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) is to ensure that all public-school students in Hawai'i are taught by qualified teachers. This is achieved through the development of rigorous professional teacher licensing standards. **HTSB holds all applicants to the same standards, regardless of whether their educational credentials come from a regionally accredited institution or a non-U.S. institution. HTSB also provides all applicants with access and opportunity to obtain licensure, if they meet the required standards.**

This bill states that Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires". This statement is not correct. J-1 teachers who possess the qualifications necessary for licensure have been issued licenses in their approved license field. HTSB is statutorily responsible for setting the criteria for the requirements of each license. HTSB is a regulatory agency which is administrative attached to the Hawai'i Department of Education ("HIDOE"), but not under the HIDOE. HTSB became a separate entity by statute from HIDOE to ensure that there would be no conflict of interest or entanglement between employment and licensure HTSB receives their authority from Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §302A-802 to determine licensing and certification standards which is expressed in detail in Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR).

HTSB knows this bill was well intentioned, but it is not the answer to the problem. What is more concerning is the fact that J-1 visa holders are being taken advantage of by loan sharks. These loan sharks are offering J-1 visa holders high interest loans to move to the U.S. and are offering super high-interest loans (around 50%- 60% annual interest!) to pay for their flights, moving expenses to move to the U.S. to work, relocation fees, licensing, etc. to become a teacher in the U.S.

At the National Conference for State Legislatures (NCSL) a few years back, there was a labor session and a resolution that specifically served to protect J-1 Visa holders. The legislators decided to add language to the NCSL resolution to protect J-1 teachers from 3rd party "coyote" companies offering J-1 Visa holders these high-interest loans. The 3rd party "coyote" companies even charged J-1 Visa holders a licensing fee even when

states, such as ours, do not have licensing fees. NCSL brought it to the attention of members that there have had major problems in many other states before we even heard about it in Hawai'i, so they were letting us know. NCSL passed this resolution with those protections for J-1 teachers. We should follow suit as NCSL did in protecting J-1 visa holders from these loan sharks.

Here are links to documents that explain more that were shared at NCSL. AFL-CIO [Use and Abuse of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Teacher Program — Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO](#) Note: Make sure you check out the articles they cite as well at the bottom of this report. Here is also a report from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) [Importing Educators: Causes and Consequences of International Teacher Recruitment](#) who is more aware of this problem as it hit them first. [Start on page 17 to see the fraud and the 'coyote' recruiting tactics that are being used.]

At HTSB we only have 5 Licensing Specialists that are responsible for all teacher licensing and certifications. Our licensing is free to all who apply, since we are now funded by the legislature for our operations. HTSB used to rely on licensing fees, but now we have ZERO licensing fees, since being funded by the legislature.

It has been brought to our attention that some principals have been covering the costs of the Praxis tests for some J-1 teachers, as well as other teachers who may need to take the Praxis tests. This is a commendable gesture, and it's possible they are utilizing Title II funds to do so. The Praxis Core is \$150, PLT is \$156, and content exams range from \$130 to \$180, depending on the specific test taken, the cost for all three is typically less than \$500.

While J-1 visa holders are responsible for covering the Praxis test fees, it's important to note the HTSB does not charge licensing or application fees beyond the tests cost. In contrast, other states, such as **Alaska (as mentioned in the preamble) charge a licensing fee of approximately \$200 and an additional application fee of \$50, as do Nevada, and North Carolina. Alaska also does require passing scores from a basic competency exam for teachers with preparation outside the U.S.** (See #8 [Alaska Teacher Certification FAQ](#)). These states also require applicants to complete additional coursework as part of their licensing requirements; Nevada requires a Family Engagement course and Alaska requires a Multicultural course.

In the most recent bargaining session, HSTA successfully negotiated an increase in pay for Emergency Hires as part of the 2024-2027 contract. Prior to this new agreement, salaries for individuals holding Emergency Hire Permits were set at \$45,593 per year. However, under the new contract, their salaries have been raised to \$50,325 for the 2023-2024 school year, \$51,835 for the 2024-25 school year, and \$53,649 for the 2026-27 school year.

Through these negotiations, HSTA has secured an addition \$6,242 for Emergency Hire teachers in the 2024-2025 school year, with further increases in the following year. Once applicants pass the Praxis tests, they can transition to a full teaching license and move onto the HDOE Licensed Teacher pay scale, that begins at \$53,390 per year in the 2024-25 school year, and rises to \$55, 250 per year in the 2026-27 school year.

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) requires teachers who have completed out-of-state educator preparation programs outside the U.S., including international teachers and those teachers with international licenses, to pass three Praxis tests to gain licensure. This process is designed to ensure that these teachers have a thorough understanding of the content they will teach, the grade levels they will instruct, and the specific field and grade span of their degree. It is essential for our teachers to meet these standards to effectively address the needs of our students.

Additionally, it's important to note that special education laws in the U.S. differ from those in other countries, and acceptable forms of discipline also vary. For instance, we've been informed by J-1 teachers from the Philippines that corporal punishment is allowed in their home country, but it is explicitly prohibited in our state. This is just once example of the differences international teachers may face when transitioning to teaching in the U.S.

The idea of creating an International License for the J-1 Visa Holders was previously presented to the board's committee responsible for teacher licensure. However, committee members strongly opposed this proposal, stating that they want international teachers to complete the three required Praxis exams, just as the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) mandates for teachers who obtain a teaching degree from out-of-state institutions, even if they are already within U.S.

As the state's official teacher licensing agency, HTSB is deeply familiar with the trends and best practices in teacher licensure. We are committed to ensuring that only qualified teachers are allowed to teach in Hawai'i. HTSB is also vigilant about preventing fraud and the actions of bad actors in this field. This is a critical part of our responsibility to protect the integrity of our licensing process, our educators, and our state. That is why the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board is entrusted with the authority to establish and enforce licensing requirements, as set in our Hawaii Administrative Rules.

Lastly, there are for-profit companies out there, even in the U.S., offering "International Teacher degrees", and some of them are BAD actors.

This bill is unnecessary, and HTSB wants to be able to license, renew licenses, and add-fields to licenses, at our agency, but this bill would dilute our licensing standards rigors and make us a license mill for international agencies who are bad actors in all of this.

We already license teachers from other countries, and we do require three tests for quality assurance from applicants with degrees from somewhere else in the U.S. or internationally. Even most in-state Educator Preparation Programs require Praxis tests, so it is not unusual at all.

Therefore, we humbly ask this committee to **oppose** this bill.



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

Date: 02/26/2025

Time: 10:03 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: SB 0819, SD1 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to establish an international teacher license for certain visa holders. Establishes criteria for obtaining and renewing an international teacher license. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) strongly supports SB 819, SD 1 which creates an international visiting teacher license.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators participating through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 2025 - 2026, the Department will invite an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

Hawaii requires all teachers to hold a valid license or permit prior to employment. Currently, J-1 Visa Program participants receive a permit, which restricts their stay in Hawaii to a maximum of three years. We hope the proposed international teacher license would enable qualified international educators to remain for up to five years permitted under the J-1 visa program, so that the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators who not only provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community, but also serve as inspirational role models who may motivate our keiki to pursue teaching careers themselves.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 819, SD 1.

Dear Members of the Committee:

My name is Crystal Bunts, and I am the Vice President of Programs at Alliance Abroad Group. Alliance Abroad is a visa sponsor for several J-1 programs, including the J-1 Teach Program. We have sponsored the program since 2009, and during the past 15 years have brought thousands of international teachers into the country to share their culture and teaching methodologies with students in K-12 schools. We have partnered with the Department of Education in Hawaii since 2019, sponsoring over 200 teachers into the state, with another 100 hired for the 2025-2026 school year.

When I visited our teachers in Hawaii last May I was able to travel to several schools across islands to meet our international teachers, domestic teachers, principals, students, and community members. Overwhelmingly the feedback on the impact of the program was positive and covered an improvement in school culture, students seeing themselves and their culture in their teachers, and dedication to succeeding in the classroom. We want to see that positive impact continue; therefore we ask for your support in the creation of an international visiting teacher license through SB819, SD 1.

The current licensing process is cumbersome and creates barriers for international teachers to obtain certification. Those barriers are varied and include the stress of passing exams and of covering the associated costs, when they, in fact, are already certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S. training educators. Also of note, until the teachers do pass these exams, they are not eligible for the salary differentials that others receive for being hired in a hard-to-staff location and in special education. In other words, the teachers are not appropriately paid for their experience or the location in which they are hired.

We have seen visiting international teaching licenses work well in numerous states. The most notable example we have is in the State of Texas, which is where our office is located. Similarly to Hawaii, the Texas Education Agency realized that the path to licensure was cumbersome and costly for their international teachers. The Texas Education Agency launched the VIT, allowing visa sponsors and districts to apply to sponsor and host international teachers on the program. Upon evidence that the sponsor is meeting Department of State eligibility requirements for their teachers, TEA approves the sponsor. Since Alliance Abroad is an approved sponsor, our teachers are able to apply for the VIT with a nominal application fee; this allows them to teach for the first three years. They can then apply for an extension for the additional two years once that extension is approved by the Department of State, allowing them to continue teaching for the district up to five years total. This is all without additional praxis exams being required.

ALLIANCE ABROAD

Without the passing of this bill, I must impress upon you the difficulty we as the visa sponsor will face. Already we have teachers who choose to leave Hawaii and move to another state that offers an easier licensure path. Without a change to the current licensure situation, we will have no choice but to re-evaluate our ability to sponsor the number of teachers we currently do in Hawaii, quite possibly determining we cannot sponsor any additional teachers at all.

I ask you again for your support of SB819 SD 1. Your support allows international teachers to continue coming to Hawaii on the J-1 visa and positively impacting students and communities. Your support allows teachers who are acclimating to a new home and a new culture to remove the worry of passing exams and paying for the associated costs. Your support allows equal pay for equal work by activating access to the differentials not currently available to international teachers prior to licensure. Your support for the international teachers is support for your communities and your children.

I would be happy to offer further information and support if you would like. You can reach me at the details below.

Warmly,



Crystal Bunts

Vice President of Programs

Alliance Abroad Group, Inc.

512-904-1134

cbunts@allianceabroad.com

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:54:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ROSELYN B. DELA CRUZ	Testifying for DOE HAWAII J1 Teacher	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz,

My name is Roselyn Dela Cruz, and I am a 4th-grade teacher at Lanai High and Elementary School. I am writing today to express my strong support for SB819 SD1, which seeks to establish an International Visiting Teacher License.

I hold a professional teaching license in the Philippines and have earned a four-year bachelor's degree with master's units in education. I respectfully request that the State of Hawaii reciprocate our credentials by granting us a Hawaii teaching license.

The Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) in the Philippines is equivalent to the Praxis Test mandated in Hawaii. Our licensure exam includes core subjects such as Reading, Math, Writing, and Pedagogy, which align with the Praxis requirements. Furthermore, our transcripts and master's units have already undergone Foreign Credential Evaluation, demonstrating that our academic qualifications are equivalent to those in the U.S..

Previously, J-1 teachers who arrived in Hawaii had their international teaching licenses accepted and reciprocated, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to Hawaii's schools. However, current international teachers face additional financial and bureaucratic burdens in obtaining a Hawaii license, despite having met similar academic and professional standards.

The financial strain of securing a teaching license in Hawaii has been overwhelming. The high cost of living, particularly in hard-to-staff areas like Lanai, adds to this challenge. As an emergency hire teacher, I earn a lower salary than fully licensed teachers, making it difficult to cover essential expenses.

On Lanai, access to resources is limited, and we often have to travel to other islands for professional development or even basic supplies. Additionally, housing costs consume a significant portion of my income, and like many international teachers, I also support family members back in the Philippines.

Passing SB819 SD1 would not only help alleviate the teacher shortage in Hawaii but also ensure that international educators receive the recognition and support they deserve. Many of us have

years of teaching experience and have proven our dedication to Hawaii's students, yet we continue to face unnecessary obstacles.

I urge you to support SB819 SD1 to allow international teachers to continue making a meaningful impact on Hawaii's education system. ***By doing so, we can retain qualified educators, provide stability for students, and uphold the quality of education across the state.***

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,
Roselyn Dela Cruz
4th Grade Teacher
Lanai High and Elementary School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2025 2:10:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandy Ma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee,

I support SB819, SD1, requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to establish an international teacher license for certain visa holders and establishing criteria for obtaining and renewing an international teacher license. The purpose of SB819, SD1 is to recognize the qualifications and experiences of international teachers, while ensuring equitable compensation, by requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to establish a provisional licensing pathway for visiting international teachers.

Hawai'i is experiencing a tremendous shortage of qualified teachers. SB819, SD1 will help with the shortfall to support our education system and students.

Please pass SB819, SD1 out of your Committee.

As part of the International Teachers here in Hawaii, my compatriots and I wholeheartedly serve our work as teachers to our students knowing that we share not only knowledge but love as second parents to them while they are at school, However, the need to prepare for multiple licensure exams while managing our teaching responsibilities places unnecessary stress on us and takes valuable time away from lesson planning and student engagement. As a teacher of young people with special needs, there are many subjects they must learn, especially the life skills that are important for them so that they can use them in their future life and so that they can have their own lives and abilities that expect nothing else but to be able to stand on their own feet, We teachers, although we teach a different race, our love for our work has not changed and our love for the students we teach is also there. We are also open to learning from our schoolmates as part of the Cultural Exchange Program and we are also ready to help as much as we can and learn the different methods and cultures that exist in the country of Hawaii. In my teaching now although it will take three to five years, I can say that my dedication to teaching will remain there no matter where I go not only the ability to share knowledge but to love my work, students and co-workers. My students today I can see, and I can tell that there is a change in them when it comes to cognitive, sociability, love for others and their readiness to stand on their own feet using their own abilities. I love my job, I love my School, students and coworkers and most of all I love Hawaii so I hope the law about **SB819, SD 1** is pass for our teachers who want to continue our teaching here in Hawaii as far as possible of our ability and we can continue teaching and shaping the students.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 11:00:28 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexis Navarro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I am Alexis C. Navarro, a Science teacher at Lahaina Intermediate School, and I am writing in strong support of SB 819 SD1 , which seeks to establish an International Teacher Visiting License. As a teacher originally from the Philippines, I am deeply invested in the future of education in Hawaii, and I believe this bill will greatly benefit not only international teachers like myself but also the students and communities we serve here in Hawaii.

I would like to share my personal experience and perspective as a J1 teacher in Hawaii:

1. I have worked tirelessly to earn my degrees, including a master's and doctorate, in the Philippines. With many years of teaching experience, I've had the honor of leading a school as a school head. My educational background and professional journey have prepared me to contribute positively to the school communities I serve.
2. As a J1 teacher here in Hawaii, I am proud to share my knowledge and expertise with students, staff, and parents. The administration has expressed their appreciation for my talents, and I truly value being able to contribute to the educational environment. This kind of mutual respect and recognition motivates me to continue improving and supporting the success of all students.
3. I am dedicated to continually improving as an educator. I actively attend training sessions, conferences, and workshops to learn the most effective teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and other skills to better serve my students. This ongoing commitment to growth is a testament to my passion for teaching and my desire to be an effective educator here in Hawaii.
4. The proposed five-year stay under this bill would provide my family and me the stability we need to establish a strong foundation. The current three-year contract length is insufficient to cover the loans we took out in the Philippines before coming here. A five-year period would offer us the time needed to pay off these financial obligations and build a more secure future.

5. As international teachers, we already face the financial burden of paying for the Praxis exam, which is costly and time-consuming. Additionally, the preparation required for this exam takes away valuable time that could otherwise be spent planning lessons, creating educational innovations, and focusing on our students' needs. The proposed changes in this bill would reduce this burden and allow us to devote more energy to our teaching and professional development.

6. I firmly believe that the educational qualifications I hold, as well as my professional experience, are on par with the standards of teaching here in Hawaii. The reciprocity of our licenses from the Philippines, combined with the real-world experience we bring, ensures that we are equipped to contribute effectively to the local education system. We are fully capable of meeting Hawaii's teaching standards, and this bill will help validate and streamline our contributions.

I strongly urge the committee to pass SB 819 SD1 as it will not only support international teachers but also improve the quality of education in Hawaii. It will foster a more stable, dedicated teaching force and ensure that educators can focus on what truly matters: the success and well-being of our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

ALEXIS C. NAVARRO

Science Teacher

Lahaina Intermediate School

Maui, Hawaii

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 11:05:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dianne Cabrera	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Dianne Cabrera, and I am a 2nd grade teacher at Kahakai Elementary School. I am submitting this testimony in strong support to SB819, SD1.

As an. educator, my philosophy of teaching centers around fostering the holistic development of children in terms of academically, socially, emotionally, and morally. I believe that education should not merely be about imparting knowledge but should focus on shaping well rounded individuals. My goal is to create an environment where each child can thrive, feel valued, and develop the skills necessary for lifelong success. I intentionally provide engaging and effective instruction that was learner centered for each day. The bill SB819, SD1 acknowledge the qualifications and experience we bring from our home countries, and it provides a fair pathway for us to continuously making a significant impact in Hawaii DOE Schools.

I strongly urge you to support this bill, which will provide international teachers like myself with a fair path to licensure and extend our stay for five years.By supporting this bill, we can help foster a more inclusive and effective educational environment for all.

Respectfully,**Dianne A. Cabrera****Second Grade Teacher****Kahakai Elementary School**

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 12:02:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANNALIZA PIGAO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

My name is Annaliza Pigao and I am a Science teacher at Aliamanu Middle School. I am writing in strong support of SB819, SD 1, a bill that would create an international visiting teacher license in Hawai‘i. I have witnessed firsthand the incredibly positive impact that international teachers, particularly those on J-1 visas, have had on our students, our school community, and our campus climate.

Our school has benefited greatly from the presence of a J-1 teacher. I brought a wealth of diverse experiences, perspectives, and teaching methodologies that enrich the learning environment for all students. As an international teacher, I don't just teach; I also inspire, broaden horizons, and create a more globally aware and accepting school culture.

Currently, the short-term nature of the J-1 visa program creates instability for our schools and our students. SB819, SD 1 addresses this critical issue by allowing these highly valued educators to remain in Hawai‘i for up to five years if we obtain the international visiting teacher license. This extended stay will provide much-needed continuity for our students, allowing them to build strong, lasting relationships with their teachers. It will also allow our schools to invest in teachers like us, knowing that our expertise and dedication will benefit our community for a longer period.

The provisions within SB819, SD 1 are essential for ensuring fairness and respect for educators. Equal pay for equal work is a fundamental principle, and I applaud the bill's commitment to this. Granting access to differentials for licensed teachers further acknowledges the value and qualification we bring. Recognizing our internationally recognized credentials as equivalent to "highly qualified" status would be a great help. We have already demonstrated our expertise and experience in our home countries, and we should not impose unnecessary burdens, such as expensive and time-consuming Praxis exams, when we already hold international licenses and degrees.

By streamlining the licensing process and removing unnecessary obstacles, SB819, SD 1 allows us, as international teachers, to focus on what truly matters: supporting our students, enriching our schools, and contributing to our community. It allows us to do what we are best qualified to do and what we came here to do.

I urge the committee to support SB819, SD 1. It is a win-win for our students, our schools, and our community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

A Testimony in Supporting of HB 439 – International Visiting Teacher License

Aloha!

My name is Janica Mary C. Pogoy, a professional teacher from the Philippines who has almost a decade of experience, currently teaching at Solomon Elementary School. I am writing this testimony to support SB819, SD 1 for teachers that recognize the contributions of educators across the world.

Stepping off the plane in Hawaii, I was captivated by the breathtaking view of the mountains, cool weather, very kind people and that validated my goals as an adventurous teacher. I came here with the dual purpose of teaching and sharing my culture, an opportunity that is important to me, particularly because it allowed me to work with elementary students, my area of expertise.

From the first day of school, I feel welcomed by a warm and supportive community. The faculty's collaborative spirit is evident in terms of helping the structure in the classroom, how to make a sub plan, their willingness to share resources, and fostering a truly enriching and positive working environment.

Transitioning into this new environment, I prioritized getting to know my students, recognizing their diverse cultural backgrounds. I focus on fostering independence, kindness, and responsibility in my students. I consistently strive to give my best in the classroom. My prior experience teaching preschoolers, middle schoolers, high school students, and even college students have prepared me to effectively address the diverse needs of my current students, particularly given their varied cultural background.

While I possess extensive teaching experience and a master's degree earned prior to my arrival, the licensing process in Hawaii has presented a significant challenge. This examination is a barrier, financially and mentally, to us teachers. As I am here on a J1 exchange visa under the emergency hire category, which entails average compensation and additional requirements. I believe that we can do more, share knowledge and expertise in the teaching field.

I respectfully request that the committee consider the impact of these factors on educators in similar circumstances. We sincerely hope the committee will consider our testimony.

Sincerely,

Janica Mary C. Pogoy

Kindergarten, Solomon Elementary School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 5:22:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ELVIN BEJERANO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB 819 – International Visiting Teacher License**Hearing Date:** February 23, 2025**Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,**

My name is **Dr. Elvin Valero Bejerano**, and I am a **4th-grade teacher at Kihei Elementary School**. I am writing in **strong support of SB 819**, which seeks to establish an **International Visiting Teacher License** in Hawaii. As an educator with over **25 years of experience**, I hold a **Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership and Management**, a **Master's Degree in Elementary Education**, and **42 doctoral units in Educational Supervision**. Additionally, I have **out-of-state teaching licenses from Nevada and New Mexico**. My teaching journey across multiple countries has allowed me to develop a deep understanding of how to support **multilingual learners** and promote **cultural awareness** in the classroom. Since arriving in Hawaii through the **J-1 cultural exchange program**, I have worked diligently to provide my students with high-quality instruction and a nurturing learning environment.

Despite my qualifications, obtaining full licensure in Hawaii has been a significant challenge. Even though my out-of-state licenses were recognized to some extent, I was still required to take multiple **costly PRAXIS exams**, adding up to over **\$1,000**. These exams take time away from my students and place an unnecessary financial strain on international teachers who are already fully certified in other states and countries. The current system classifies J-1 teachers as **emergency hires**, limiting our job stability and preventing us from receiving the same benefits as our licensed colleagues, despite performing the same work.

This uncertainty affects not only educators but also the students we serve. Without a **clear pathway to licensure**, international teachers must constantly renew their eligibility to teach, creating instability that impacts both our professional lives and our ability to provide continuity in the classroom. Establishing a **five-year International Visiting Teacher License** would allow teachers like me to focus entirely on **student learning without** worrying about contract renewals and unnecessary certification barriers.

Another major concern is fair compensation. My wife, **Arlene M. Bejerano**, and I are full-time teachers in Hawaii, yet we struggle financially because we are paid only as emergency hires. With Hawaii's **high cost of living** and our **two children** relying on us, we constantly face

financial challenges, despite our commitment to educating Hawaii's keiki. If this bill is passed, it would allow international teachers to receive **differentials and fair compensation**, providing financial stability and allowing us to continue serving Hawaii's students without added stress.

Hawaii's schools benefit tremendously from the dedication, experience, and global perspectives that international teachers bring. We help **fill critical teacher shortages**, especially in hard-to-staff schools while enriching students' learning experiences with diverse cultural perspectives. However, without policies that support and retain us, many highly qualified teachers are forced to leave despite their dedication to their students. SB 819 presents a real opportunity to **create a fairer system—one that values international educators, strengthens teacher retention, and ultimately ensures better outcomes for Hawaii's keiki**.

I **respectfully urge** you to support and pass **SB 819**, ensuring that **international teachers can continue making a meaningful impact** in Hawaii's classrooms.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elvin Valero Bejerano

4th Grade Teacher, Kihei Elementary School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 5:31:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vernadeth Salas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 819, SD1, which seeks to establish an international teacher license for certain visa holders. This legislation is a crucial step toward addressing Hawaii's teacher shortage and enhancing the diversity and quality of education in our public schools. I am supporting this, it will really help me as a teacher to continue serving students here in Hawaii and I am really glad to do it.

Addressing Teacher Shortages

Hawaii has long faced challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified educators. By creating a pathway for us, J1 Visa Teachers, particularly those from countries with strong educational systems like the Philippines and Kenya, SB819, SD1, offers a practical solution to this ongoing issue. These educators bring valuable experience and diverse perspectives that can enrich our classrooms.

Enhancing Cultural Diversity

The bill recognizes the importance of cultural representation in education. With 22.4% of Hawaii's public school students identifying as Filipino, yet only 7.4% of educators sharing the same background, SB819, SD1, aims to bridge this gap. Research indicates that diverse educator representation positively impacts student learning, helping to close achievement gaps and improve attendance and behavioral outcomes.

Streamlining Licensing Processes

Currently, international teachers face significant barriers due to Hawaii's licensing requirements, including costly examinations and the "emergency hire" designation. SB819, SD1, proposes a more inclusive and equitable licensing system by establishing a provisional licensing pathway for visiting international teachers. This approach aligns with practices in other states that have successfully integrated international educators into their school systems.

Conclusion

In summary, SB819, SD1, is a forward-thinking measure that addresses critical issues in Hawaii's education system. By facilitating the integration of qualified international teachers, the bill promises to enhance educational quality, promote cultural diversity, and provide students with role models who reflect their backgrounds. I urge the committee to pass this bill and support the future of education in Hawaii.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Vernadeth Salas

ELA Teacher

Waimea Canyon Middle School

Aloha

I am Marcel C. Suniga, a Second Grade Teacher at Kahakai Elementary School. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB819, SD 1 which seeks to establish an international teacher license for qualified visa holders.

As a Gen Ed teacher, I am passionate about my career shaping young ones and ensuring my kids that they receive a quality education. I have worked tirelessly to provide differentiated instructions to my students with various backgrounds, abilities and needs. I always design and implement various teaching strategies that cater my student's needs. As their teacher, I want each of my students to receive the support and encouragement that will reach their full potential.

Beyond my responsibilities in the classroom, I actively engage in collaborating with my colleagues, in the school community, with our parents and stakeholders to foster a culture of excellence. I participated also in various community programs wherein I was able to showcase Filipino cultures and traditions.

Despite my experiences and contributions, obtaining full Licensure in Hawai'i remains a challenge due to financial and logistical burdens of the Praxis Exam. These exams are expensive and not readily available within the island.

SB819, SD1 would change everything. By passing this bill, international teachers will be having full teaching licenses, and extending our stay for five years, giving our students consistency in their learning.

Hawaii faces teacher shortage just like other states. Having international teachers who are dedicated, passionate, committed and continuing making a huge difference in teaching our students, would greatly help to fill these gaps.

I, as an international teacher in the island of Hawai'i, respectfully urge to pass SB819, SD1 so that I can continue serving Hawaii's Keiki.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Marcel C. Suniga
2nd Grade Teacher
Kahakai Elementary School
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii

Testimony in Support the intent of SB819, SD 1

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer A. Raval, and I am a special education teacher. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB819, SD1 that acknowledges the dedication and contributions of educators like myself.

As an educator, I have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to my students' academic and personal growth. I create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment where every child feels valued and empowered to succeed. My ability to differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of my students is commendable, ensuring that each learner receives the necessary support and encouragement to reach their full potential. Beyond my responsibilities in the classroom, I actively engage in the school community, collaborating with colleagues, parents, and stakeholders to foster a culture of excellence. I consistently go above and beyond to develop innovative teaching strategies, integrate technology into instruction, and provide meaningful learning experiences tailored to my students' abilities.

Despite the challenges that come with being a special education teacher, I remain dedicated and passionate about my profession. My resilience, adaptability, and genuine care for my students set me apart as an educator. The impact of my work extends beyond academics—I nurture confidence, instill values, and prepare my students for lifelong success.

Recognizing educators like myself is essential in promoting quality education and acknowledging the invaluable contributions of dedicated teachers. I strongly support any initiative that ensures teachers like me receive the recognition, resources, and opportunities we deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jennifer A. Raval

SPED Teacher

Holualoa Elementary School

Big Island, Hawaii

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 7:42:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abigail L Cayabyab	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz:

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license. I recommend SB 819, SD1 relating to education.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have streamlined/reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without additional exams, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. SB819, HD 1 ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB819 HD1.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 8:04:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deonel R Advincula	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license and recommend that SB 819, SD1 be amended to align with SB 819, SD1 – Relating to Education.

Hawai‘i’s J-1 Visa Program has been a tremendous success for our Keiki. Currently, 218 certified international educators—holding qualifications equivalent to U.S.-trained educators—serve in 55 schools across the state, primarily in hard-to-staff areas and special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, these international teachers have answered the call to provide high-quality education while enriching their communities as cultural ambassadors. For the 2025-2026 school year, the Department plans to bring in an additional 116 international educators as part of its Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State’s current licensing policies create unnecessary barriers for these highly qualified educators. Unlike Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina—which have streamlined or reciprocal licensing for international teachers—Hawai‘i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires," requiring them to take additional comprehensive exams that can cost over \$1,000. These examinations not only impose a financial burden but also take time away from critical instructional tasks such as analyzing formative assessments, meeting with families, and planning curriculum. Additionally, J-1 teachers remain ineligible for the extra compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions, despite performing the same work.

It is important to emphasize that international educators’ credentials are already rigorously evaluated by accredited third-party U.S. evaluators, ensuring their qualifications are on par with local teachers. SB 819, SD1 will allow these dedicated professionals to remain in Hawai‘i’s classrooms for up to five years, providing continuity of instruction and maintaining the high-quality learning and cultural exchange that benefits our students.

If this bill does not pass, Hawai‘i risks losing many of its international teachers after just one or two years, as many will transfer to states like Minnesota, Nevada, and North Carolina—where their credentials are fully recognized, allowing them to teach for the full five-year J-1 visa term without unnecessary testing barriers. Passing SB 819, SD1 will not only retain these educators but also strengthen Hawai‘i’s workforce by embracing the diverse perspectives and expertise they bring to our schools.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 819, SD1 and urge the committee to advance this critical measure.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Mr. Advincula

J1 Teacher

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 8:44:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aina Mae Ranises	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom It May concern,

Please allow me to introduce first myself. I'm Aina MAe Ranises, a Special Education Teacher at Kahului Elementary School. I've been teaching for 15 years in one of the public schools in the Philippines before I applied as a J1 teacher in Hawaii.

At first, I was hesitant for some reasons. First, I need to leave my teaching position in my home country in fact I already had a stable job. Then, I'm very far to my family and living in a foreign land is not easy. Lastly, the expenses that I need to spend just to get through of the program. Honestly, my passion is to teach the children because I want to be an agent of change. I don't want to teach only their minds but I want also to touch their hearts and transform their lives. That's why I decided to push through my application regardless of the hindrances/hesistancies that I'll face in the future.

When I arrived in Maui, I was amazed by the place as well as the environment and I even told myself if given the opportunity, I want to work here a little bit longer before going home to my home country. In terms of the school community that I'm part now, I really like to work even if we are sometimes short-staffed because I love what I'm doing and I want to support the kids in school. Teaching the students with different special needs , different nationalities are quite challenging but I want to be part of their success to live in the community independently that they belong. Although there are some challenges but I always think that an easy task becomes difficult if you do it with reluctant. Thankfully I was able to surpass some of the challenges with the support of the school administrators, department head, colleagues, and most of all my strong faith in God.

Lastly, I'm knocking each one of you to please hear our side and please give us the chance to spend more years in your country so that we will be able to finish our program successfully. We will be able to do this if you are going to pass the bill thinking the sacrifices and the decisions that we made in coming here. Taking also the Praxis exam, there are a lot of things to consider such as the exam fees which cost a lot for us, the preparedness to take the exam which is also a burden for us because we need to prioritize to prepare our daily lessons than to take some time to review. Our future as a J1 teacher lies on your hands for us to be able to finish our program successfully and I still prefer to teach here compared to the other states despite of the cost of living here if I'm given a chance. Thank you and more power.

Respectfully yours,

Aina Mae Ranises

Testimony of Contribution and Support

As a special education teacher at Lokelani Intermediate School, I am deeply committed to meeting the unique academic and social-emotional needs of my 6th grade students. Through both push-in and pull-out sessions, I provide individualized instruction, creating tailored lessons that address the diverse learning needs of each student. This personalized approach allows my students to make meaningful academic progress, while also building the self-confidence they need to succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

In addition to my direct work with special education students, I collaborate closely with general education teachers, helping to extend support to regular students in the classroom setting. By helping during lessons and providing real-time intervention, I contribute to maximizing learning opportunities for all students. This collaboration ensures that every student, regardless of their learning profile, can engage with the curriculum and receive the support they need to excel.

My contributions are integral to achieving the mission and vision of Lokelani Inter, which seeks to foster an inclusive, nurturing environment where every student can thrive. Through my work, I strive to ensure that all students feel supported and valued as they work toward their educational goals.

Additionally, I would like to express my strong support for SB819, SD 1, which proposes the creation of an International Teacher License. This bill would allow teachers from the Philippines, like me, to use our credentials and teaching licenses here in the United States. By recognizing our qualifications as highly experienced and dedicated educators, we would be afforded equal pay for equal work, access to salary differentials, and the opportunity to work without the burden of additional requirements such as the Praxis exam. The Praxis exam poses a significant challenge given the time it demands for preparation, especially when balanced with our already demanding workloads. Moreover, international teachers teaching in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, and few other states enjoy the full benefit of teaching license reciprocity. It is my belief that SB819, SD 1 would not only benefit teachers like me but also enhance the overall educational experience for our students by ensuring that highly qualified educators are retained and supported.

Thank you for considering both my contributions to the school community and my support for SB819,SD1, which would help to improve the professional recognition and treatment of international teachers in the U.S.

Sincerely,

MAYLEN M. PATANAO

Special Education Teacher

Lokelani Intermediate School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 7:36:13 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
June Kenneth G. Roska	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is June Kenneth G. Roska, and I am a mathematics teacher. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB819 SD1 that acknowledges the dedication and contributions of educators like myself. As an educator, I have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to my students' academic and personal growth. I create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment where every child feels valued and empowered to succeed. My ability to differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of my students is commendable, ensuring that each learner receives the necessary support and encouragement to reach their full potential. Beyond my responsibilities in the classroom, I actively engage in the school community, collaborating with colleagues, parents, and stakeholders to foster a culture of excellence. I consistently go above and beyond to develop innovative teaching strategies, integrate technology into instruction, and provide meaningful learning experiences tailored to my students' abilities. Despite the challenges that come with being a mathematics teacher, I remain dedicated and passionate about my profession. My resilience, adaptability, and genuine care for my students set me apart as an educator. The impact of my work extends beyond academics—I nurture confidence, instill values, and prepare my students for lifelong success. Recognizing educators like myself is essential in promoting quality education and acknowledging the invaluable contributions of dedicated teachers. I strongly support any initiative that ensures teachers like me receive the recognition, resources, and opportunities we deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

June Kenneth G. Roska

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 7:37:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rica Gilbuena	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! I am Rica Gilbuena, a J-1 visa holder and a 2nd grade teacher in Maui. As a visiting international teacher, I have experienced firsthand the joy and privilege of working with students here in Hawai'i. Every day, I see the spark of curiosity in the eyes of my students and the potential within each of them. I strive to bring not only my subject matter to life, but also a broader understanding of the world and different cultures. I have built strong connections with my students, becoming a mentor and a guide, and I have seen them grow and develop a love for learning. These relationships are incredibly precious to me.

However, the current licensing requirements create a significant hurdle to us, visiting international teachers. While I hold a valid teaching license in my home country, the process of obtaining a new license here is a substantial burden, not just financially, but also in terms of time. The cost of the exams alone is a significant challenge, but even more so is the time commitment required for preparation. Instead of spending precious time planning engaging lessons, collaborating with colleagues, or simply being with my family, I have to divert countless hours to studying for these exams. This takes away from the time I could be dedicating to my students and my own well-being. More importantly, it puts my ability to continue teaching here and support my students at risk. This proposed bill, SB819, SD1, would be a game-changer. It would allow me, and other international teachers like me, to focus on what truly matters: our students. It would remove the unnecessary financial and time strain and ensure that we can continue to provide stability and enrichment in the classroom. Passing this bill would not only benefit international teachers, but it would also greatly benefit the students who rely on us. It would allow us to continue nurturing their growth and inspiring their potential for years to come.

Mahalo!

Testimony: Support of Establishing a Provisional Licensing Pathway for Visiting International Teachers

Dear Members of the Legislature,

My name is Mark Vincent Espiritu, and I am a J-1 teacher at Samuel E. Kalama Intermediate School, where I teach 8th grade English Language Arts and Social Studies Inclusion Class. Kalama Intermediate is home to over 800 students, serving grades 6 through 8, with students coming from diverse communities spanning Huelo to Kipahulu. I am honored to be part of this vibrant learning environment, where I contribute to student success while engaging in meaningful professional growth.

The J-1 visa program has provided me with the opportunity to bring my expertise, cultural perspective, and passion for education to Hawaii's public schools. My foreign-evaluated transcripts and licensure from the Philippines reflect my years of training and experience—qualifications that align with global teaching standards. However, despite these credentials, Hawaii's current licensing structure presents challenges for J-1 educators. The additional testing requirements, which can cost over \$1,000, create unnecessary financial and logistical barriers. This process detracts from the time and focus that should be dedicated to analyzing formative assessments, collaborating with families, and planning effective instruction.

Despite these challenges, my experience at Kalama Intermediate has been deeply fulfilling, thanks to the unwavering support of the department head, administrators, teachers, and the school-wide community. From the moment I joined the faculty, I was welcomed with open arms and provided with the necessary guidance to transition smoothly into my role. The mentorship and collaboration I have received have allowed me to not only contribute to student learning but also grow professionally.

Furthermore, my presence in the classroom has had a profound impact on students, particularly those of Filipino heritage. Representation in education matters—when students see teachers who share their background, they gain confidence, motivation, and a stronger sense of belonging. Beyond academic benefits, diverse educator representation fosters cultural appreciation, empathy, and global-mindedness among all students.

By establishing a provisional licensing pathway for visiting international teachers, Hawaii can fully recognize and leverage the talents of educators who are already making significant contributions to student learning. Streamlining this process will ensure equity in hiring and compensation, attract more highly qualified teachers to serve in hard-to-fill positions, and reinforce Hawaii's commitment to a globally competitive and locally committed education system.

I wholeheartedly support the creation of this provisional licensing pathway and urge the Legislature to take this important step toward recognizing the value of international educators. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Vincent Espiritu
J-1 Inclusion Teacher, 8th Grade ELA & Social Studies

Testimony in Support of SB819, D1 International Visiting Teacher License
Hearing Date: February 26, 2025, at 10:00am

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee;

My name is Aloha Mae E. Tamulac, and I wholeheartedly support HB 439, the International Visiting Teacher License bill. This legislation is crucial for teachers like myself, who are already licensed in the Philippines but face obstacles like the Praxis exam, preventing us from continuing to teach in Hawaii. I taught for 12 years in the Philippines, graduated with my master's in teaching in 2022, and have had my transcript of record evaluated by SpanTran, confirming my qualifications to teach here in Hawaii.

International teachers are dedicated to providing their students with a top-notch education and preparing them for the future. As one such teacher, I am passionate about sharing my expertise with young minds. I hope to stay for five years, immersing myself in the culture and learning diverse teaching strategies that will enhance my professional skills. This will be possible if this bill passes. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that Hawaii has one of the highest costs of living in the United States. To ensure we can cope with these significant expenses, it is essential that we receive the same salary and differentials as licensed teachers, enabling us to support our families.

We believe that eliminating a burden like the Praxis test, which requires both time and money, will allow us to focus more on ensuring that our daily teaching is fruitful and meaningful for our students. We are dedicated, committed, and qualified, with exceptional experience both in our home country and here in Hawaii, where we give our best to Hawaii's keiki.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 439 to help us, International Teachers, continue serving Hawaii's keiki and the community.

Aloha Mae E. Tamulac

Pre-K Teacher

Naalehu Elementary School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:44:28 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennelyn Soriano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 819 (SB819), which seeks to establish an international teacher licensing pathway for qualified educators from other countries to teach in Hawaii. As someone deeply committed to enhancing education and supporting diverse teaching environments, I believe this bill is an important step toward fostering a more inclusive and dynamic educational system in the state.

Hawaii's schools benefit from the expertise and unique perspectives that international teachers bring. By establishing a clear and accessible process for international teachers to obtain provisional licenses, SB819 not only attracts skilled educators but also helps address teacher shortages in specific subject areas. Furthermore, this measure would open doors for a broader, more diverse range of educators to contribute to the success of Hawaii's students.

The proposed bill ensures that teachers who meet the necessary standards and qualifications will be able to contribute to our classrooms while maintaining the high standards of education that Hawaii values. This will undoubtedly enhance the quality of education for students, allowing them to engage with a variety of teaching styles and perspectives that enrich their learning experiences.

I fully support SB819 and encourage its passage. By promoting greater access to talented international teachers, we can continue to build an education system that celebrates diversity and excellence. I urge all legislators to give this bill their full support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennelyn Soriano

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:57:05 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carlbhy Lou U. Singson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license SB 819, SD1 - Relating to Education.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have streamlined/reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without additional exams, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. SB819 ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB819.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:11:29 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samson Bulanandi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members,

I wholeheartedly support the intent of Sb819, SD1, which aims to create a visiting international teacher license.

To ensure its effectiveness, I recommend revising the bill to eliminate burdensome examinations that aren't required of other licensed teachers. Specifically, I propose establishing a visiting international teacher license with the following requirements: -

A valid J-1 visa - Equivalent of a US bachelor's degree or higher - Completion of a US teacher preparation program

- A valid teaching license in the teacher's home country - Verification of three years of teaching experience
Renewal of this license should be contingent upon maintaining a valid J-1 visa and participation in the US Department of State's exchange visitor program. Hawaii's J-1 Visa Program has been highly successful, bringing 218 certified educators to 55 schools statewide.

However, our current licensing rules hinder the program's full potential by classifying J-1 teachers as "emergency hires" and requiring additional examinations that can be costly and time-consuming. Streamlining the licensing process for international educators, as states like Alaska and North Carolina have done, would allow Hawaii to fully leverage their skills and experience.

This, in turn, would provide a more diverse workforce and high-quality educational opportunities for our students. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, we can ensure continuity of instruction and cultural exchange opportunities for our keiki.

Mahalo for considering my testimony on SB819,SD1

Aloha Members of the Committee: I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license.

I recommend that HB 439, HD1 be amended to match SB 819, SD1 - Relating to Education. The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed." However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have streamlined/reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without additional exams, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. HB 439, HD 1 ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB819 SD1.

Mahalo for your support.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:45:13 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Federlie Abejero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Federlie Sabado-Abejero and I am a SPED/English and World History Inclusion teacher in Kaua'i High School. I am currently handling the Grade 10 class. I am writing in strong support of SB 819, SD 1 which seeks to establish an International Visiting Teacher License in Hawaii. This bill is important for teachers like me, who have already earned our teaching license in the Philippines, but experience additional challenges, such as the Praxis tests, in order to keep on serving students in Hawaii.

As an educator with 21 years of teaching experience, I have shown dedication in ensuring the holistic development of my students. Since joining Kaua'i High School in September 2025, I have worked tirelessly to give effective instruction and engaging activities, support my students in their learning and personal growth, and contribute to the success of the school community.

However, despite my full experience and commitment, obtaining full licensure in Hawaii remains a big challenge due to the financial and logistical constraints of the Praxis tests. These tests are expensive and it adds to our struggles as teachers.

Hawai'i is my dream place to teach and now that I am finally here, I can truly say that it is my second home because it is so similar to the Philippines. I love its people, its culture, and the school and the Filipino-American community welcomed me with open arms. My goal is to continue what I love most, to teach and inspire students. I respectfully urge all of you to pass SB 819, SD 1 to make sure that international teachers can continue enhancing and shaping the young minds of Hawai'i.

Thank you for your time and we are looking forward to a positive response from you.

Respectfully,

Federlie Sabado-Abejero

SPED-English and World History Inclusion Teacher

Kaua'i High School

Lihue, Hawaii

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:49:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gretchen Cacao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB819, which aims to address critical teacher shortages and promote diversity in Hawaii's classrooms. This bill's establishment of a provisional licensing pathway for visiting international teachers is essential for several reasons:

- Addressing Teacher Shortages:** Hawaii, like many states, faces ongoing teacher shortages, particularly in hard-to-staff areas and special education. SB819 offers a practical solution by streamlining the process for qualified international teachers to contribute their expertise to our keiki.
- Promoting Diversity:** Research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of diverse educators on student learning, particularly for students of color. This bill recognizes the value of international teachers in reflecting the rich diversity of Hawaii's student population and fostering culturally responsive classrooms. The specific mention of the Filipino community highlights the potential to address representation gaps.
- Recognizing International Qualifications:** SB819 acknowledges the qualifications and experience of international educators, moving away from the current "emergency hire" designation that undervalues their credentials and places unnecessary burdens on them. This is a matter of equity and respect for these professionals.
- Streamlining Licensing:** By creating a more streamlined licensing process, SB819 removes unnecessary obstacles that currently prevent qualified international teachers from working in Hawaii's schools. This allows them to focus on what matters most: teaching and supporting students.
- Supporting Existing Successful Programs:** The bill builds upon the proven success of the J-1 visa program, which has already brought highly qualified international educators to Hawaii's classrooms. It seeks to expand and improve this program for the benefit of our students.

Please, I implore you to support SB819. Our keiki deserve qualified, diverse teachers, and this bill is the key. We're facing a critical teacher shortage, and this bill offers a real solution. It's not just about filling slots; it's about giving our children the best possible

education. SB819 makes it possible for talented international teachers to share their expertise and enrich our classrooms. It's about equity, it's about opportunity, and it's about giving our students the future they deserve. Please, pass SB819. Our children are counting on you.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 11:55:13 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennelyn Cornelio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB819 - SD1

Hearing Date: February 24, 2025, at 3:00 PM

Honorable members of the committee, I am Jennelyn G. Cornelio, a High School teacher at HP Baldwin in Maui, Hawaii, representing international teachers, and I am here today to express my strong support for exempting J-1 visa teachers from state-mandated standardized testing (Praxis) requirements to continue serving the students in Hawaii Department of Education for 5 consecutive years. Before being a qualified international teacher, we have already earned our teaching licenses in the Philippines and did an equivalent evaluation of our Transcript of Records (TOR) to identify if we are qualified to teach in the United States of America.

I would say that the state of Hawaii benefits immensely from the presence of J-1 teachers in our classrooms. We bring diverse cultural perspectives, enrich our students' understanding of the world, and often fill critical teaching shortages, particularly in STEM fields, foreign languages, and special education. We, as dedicated educators, invest our time, energy, and passion in shaping the minds of our future generations.

However, requiring us, J-1 teachers, to undergo state standardized testing within our initial years of service places an unnecessary burden on and, ultimately, on our schools and students.

The following are the key factors that contribute to this:

1. Cultural and linguistic differences: Many of us are J-1 teachers coming from different educational backgrounds, with different pedagogical approaches. While we do possess strong English proficiency to qualify for the program, nuances in standardized testing often focused on specific state curriculum frameworks can be hard to navigate in our initial years. Not to mention the added pressures brought on by adjusting to a new culture, a different school system, and often an unfamiliar language environment.

2. Center Everything on Classroom Instructions: As a J-1 teacher, I want to give my very best of my ability, concentrate on instructing and building relationships with students in a personal relationship. Those time consumed in preparing for and administering standardized tests could better be used in focusing on our core duties in planning classroom lessons and helping the students-and even professional development that benefits our student populations.

3. Recruitment and Retention Issues: This will create a strong deterrent for qualified international teachers to teach in the state of Hawaii. It adds another layer of complexity and cost to an already hard and costly process, thus making it even more difficult for the schools to recruit and retain valuable, experienced, and most importantly, adjusted teachers. This further exasperates the shortages that already exist in the teaching

profession and limits the possibilities for our students to learn from diverse perspectives.4. The Program Alignment: Standardized testing that is focused on specific state

curricular standards also does not fit the broader goal of the program, which focuses on cultural exchange and enhanced mutual understanding. By requiring it, an unnecessary barrier is being established that ultimately has a negative effect on the J-1 Visa Program.

5. Five-Year Exemption as a Reasonable Timeframe: A five-year exemption would provide us, J-1 teachers, with sufficient time to get acquainted with the state's curriculum

framework, to adjust our teaching methods, and to settle into the school community. We can have our energies concentrated on what is most important - teaching our children.

After this period of time, we would be expected to take the testing like everyone else.

This exemption will indeed not affect the educational quality in Hawaii State. We, J-1 visa holders, in this country are thoroughly screened during the visa processing for English competency and qualifications that make us good fits for hiring in different teaching areas. We, J-1 visa holders, are similarly obligated for evaluation through regular activities set by school and district authority for accountability to standards.

Quite frankly, exempting J-1 teachers from state testing for the first five years of service in Hawaii sends a clear message that you value our contributions, are supportive of our professional growth, and believe that we should focus on what is important: educating our students. I urge the committee to view this proposal favorably.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD 1

Submitted by: Joana Marie G. Anonuevo

7th Grade Science Teacher, Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School, Kauai

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joana Marie G. Anonuevo, and I am a 7th-grade Science teacher at Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School on the beautiful island of Kauai. I am writing to express my strong support for SB SB819, SD 1 which would honor the experience and qualifications of teachers like myself who have earned teaching credentials in our home countries.

As a J1 teacher from abroad, I've had the privilege of teaching for nine years, and I am confident that my experience, skill set, and dedication to my students are what truly define my ability to provide quality education. However, I am also faced with significant challenges as I strive to meet the licensing requirements here in Hawaii, most notably the Praxis exams.

The cost of the Praxis exams is an ongoing burden. With fees totaling hundreds of dollars per exam, it places a financial strain on teachers like me who are already adjusting to a new culture and working hard to provide our students with the best education possible. Furthermore, access to these exams is not readily available. In some cases, I have to travel all the way to Oahu to take the exams, which not only involves additional costs but also time away from my classroom and students. These logistical and financial challenges make it even harder to focus on what truly matters: teaching and supporting my students.

In my nine years of experience, I have continually refined my craft, and I am certain that the knowledge and skills I bring to my classroom make me more than equipped to provide my students in Kauai with the high-quality education they deserve. I am fully committed to my students' growth and success, ensuring that they meet the necessary standards before advancing to the next grade level.

In addition to my teaching, I have also been fortunate to contribute to our community here in Kauai. I had the opportunity to perform with other J1 teachers at the Visayan Club Organization's fundraising event, which helped raise funds for Kumu's Cupboard, a nonprofit organization that provides free supplies to both students and teachers. This is just one example of how, as international educators, we bring more than our teaching expertise to the table—we bring our passion for community involvement and our commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of those we teach and work with.

I absolutely love teaching here in Hawaii. The connection I have with my students, the joy I feel when they grasp complex concepts, and the relationships I've built within the school and community are incredibly rewarding. The professional development opportunities we receive through monthly seminars and PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) have been invaluable, and I am continuously growing as an educator. These opportunities help me improve my practice, but they also make me feel supported and valued as a teacher.

It is my belief that SB SB819, SD 1 will be an important step forward in allowing teachers like me to focus on what we do best—teaching. The requirements to pass the Praxis exams should not be an obstacle that prevents us from continuing our work, especially when we have already demonstrated a high level of competence and professionalism in our home countries. The International Visiting Teacher License will acknowledge the strengths we bring to our schools and communities, and will allow us to focus on our students and on our ongoing growth as educators, rather than spending excessive time and money on exams that do not truly reflect our abilities or our dedication.

I wholeheartedly support SB SB819, SD 1 and urge you to consider the positive impact this bill will have on both teachers and students across Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joana Marie G. Anonuevo

7th Grade Science Teacher, Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School, Kauai

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD 1

Aloha, my name is Lyra Bertillo, and I am a 7th-grade Home Economics teacher at Kapaa Middle School on the beautiful island of Kauai, Hawaii. I am here to express my strong support for SB819, SD 1 .

This bill is critical for teachers who are on J1 visas, like me, as it eliminates the need to take the PRAXIS exam. For many of us, the PRAXIS exam is a significant financial burden, costing hundreds of dollars, and in some cases, requiring travel to Oahu just to take the test. Given that many international teachers, including myself, hold degrees and professional licenses from our home countries, I believe that the PRAXIS exam is an unnecessary and inadequate measure of our teaching capabilities.

I have been teaching for eleven years and hold a master's degree from the Philippines, in addition to my teaching license from my home country. I am committed to continuously improving my skills, attending seminars, and participating in professional learning communities offered by my school and the Kauai District. I believe my experience and dedication as a teacher should be the focus, rather than a standardized exam that doesn't fully reflect my abilities or the value I bring to my students.

SB819, SD 1 will not only benefit international teachers but also the communities we serve. It will allow us to focus on what truly matters—providing quality education to our students. I strongly urge you to support this bill.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 12:34:54 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shanika Mae Isagan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha:

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license, SB 819, SD1 - Relating to Education.

My name is Shanika Mae Isagan, a 6th grade teacher at Pearl Harbor Kai Elementary School. I wholeheartedly support SB819, SD1 - Relating to Education, which proposes an International Visiting Teacher License. This bill is incredibly important to me, and to teachers like me who have already earned our teaching licenses in the Philippines. We came to Hawaii with a deep passion for education and a desire to share our knowledge and experience with your children. We've poured our hearts into our training and dedicated ourselves to the profession, yet we face significant hurdles, like the Praxis exams, to continue serving students in the Hawaii Department of Education. It feels like an unnecessary obstacle placed in our path when all we want is to nurture and inspire the young minds in our classrooms.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have streamlined/reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without additional exams, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

As international teachers, we are deeply committed to providing the best possible education for our students here in Hawaii. We see their potential and are driven to help them succeed. However, the reality of balancing our teaching responsibilities with the intense pressure of preparing for multiple licensure exams is incredibly challenging. It pulls us away from what we love most – lesson planning, engaging with our students, and creating a positive and supportive learning environment. While I understand the need to demonstrate subject knowledge, I truly believe that our existing qualifications, experience, and the dedication we demonstrate in our classrooms every day should be recognized. Requiring us to take numerous standardized tests adds a financial and emotional strain that ultimately takes away from our students.

The limited duration of our visas, ranging from three to five years, adds another layer of uncertainty and anxiety. It's difficult to fully invest in our students and our communities when we're constantly worried about the future. I've also heard that extending our stay to the full five years is contingent upon obtaining licensure, which only compounds the pressure we face. The high cost of the Praxis exams, combined with the limited time we have, makes it incredibly difficult to focus entirely on what truly matters: our students. We are here to share our love of learning and contribute to the vibrant educational landscape of Hawaii, but these bureaucratic hurdles make our mission so much harder.

I urge you to consider the impact of SB819, SD1 - Relating to Education on dedicated teachers like myself. We are not just numbers or statistics; we are individuals with a genuine passion for teaching and a deep desire to make a difference in the lives of Hawaii's children. Passing this bill would not only streamline the licensing process but also show international teachers that their skills and experience are valued and respected. It would allow us to focus on what we do best: inspiring the next generation.

I fell in love with Hawaii the moment I set foot on this beautiful island. I adore the school where I currently teach; it feels like home. I've never felt like I don't belong because the aloha spirit, the 'ohana, is so strong here. Every single day, I wake up before sunrise with one goal in mind: to help my students become the best versions of themselves. That's what drives me, what inspires me, and what makes me excited to face each new day.

My heart is here, with my students, in this community. I wish to continue inspiring and supporting them, nurturing their dreams, and helping them reach their full potential. However, the burden of excessive testing requirements threatens to pull me away from that core mission. It takes time, energy, and focus away from what truly matters: my students.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. SB819, SD1 - Relating to Education ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community.

I respectfully urge you to pass SB819, SD1 - Relating to Education. This bill is not just about paperwork and procedures; it's about allowing dedicated teachers like myself to focus on what we do best: teaching, mentoring, and shaping the future of Hawaii's students. It's about ensuring that the children of Hawaii have access to passionate and qualified educators who are fully present and engaged in their learning. Please, let us focus on our students, on building relationships, and on fostering a love of learning. Please, support SB819, SD1 - Relating to Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,
Shanika Mae Isagan
6th Grade Teacher - Pearl Harbor Kai Elementary School

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz,

My name is Reynosa Madlangbayan, and I am a Special Education Teacher with 13 years of experience in the field of special education. I am writing in strong support of HB819, SD1 be amend, which proposes the creation of an International Visiting Teacher. My experience has provided me with comprehensive understanding of the needs of students with diverse learning challenges.

I firmly believe that an International Visiting Teacher License would allow our students to learn firsthand from educators with diverse cultural backgrounds and teaching experiences. This exposure is invaluable in preparing students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. It foster cultural understanding, empathy and appreciation for different perspectives, enriching the learning environment of the students. Also, addressing critical teacher shortages, like many other states facing on going teacher shortages particularly in Special Education. I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license. I recommend that HB819, SD1 be amended.

By supporting this, offers a potential solution by providing a streamlined pathway for qualified international teachers to contribute our expertise to our school. We would help fill critical vacancies and ensure that all students have access to high-quality institution. Thus, International teacher like me will bring them a wealth of knowledge and innovative teaching methodologies from our home countries. This exchange of best practices can benefit our existing teaching force, leading to improved instructional strategies and better outcomes for students. It allows us to learn from different educational systems and adopt successful approaches. This can also attract talented teachers from around the world, further enhancing the quality of our educational system and boosting our state state's reputation.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have streamlined/reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without additional exams, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. HB819, SD1 ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on HB819, SD1.

I urge the committee to favorably consider HB819, SD1. This legislation represents a significant investment in the future of our students and our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Reynosa Madlangbayan
Special Education Teacher
Lihikai Elementary School

Aloha!

May I take this opportunity to extend my deepest gratitude to the Chair of the Board, esteemed members of the committee and/or legislatures for giving us the opportunity to provide testimonies in support of HB 439.

My name is Florante D. Romero a J1-Teacher at Mauka Lani Elementary School, Kapolei. I am submitting this testimony in support to the said Bill. This testimony emphasizes the importance of supporting international teachers, not just for our own benefit, but for the overall improvement of the educational system in the State particularly in Hawaii.

It cannot be denied that we, the J1 teachers, sacrificed our teaching positions in the Philippines to provide enough needs for our own families and of course our 'will' to serve as an international teacher. Of course, as an international teacher, I don't just serve as a teacher but to be an exemplary in all aspects. Being committed to provide the best education possible for our students in my/our utmost priority. However, many of us faces significant barriers such as taking the Praxis tests to continue serving the students. This is so because taking the said test requires time, effort and money especially in the application process. I would say that our qualifications should be recognized without undergoing state's standardized tests, and financial constraints.

May I humbly request the Chair, members of the committee, legislatures and other significant individuals to support this Bill to provide international teachers with a clear and fair path to licensure. With this, it will also create a more inclusive, diverse and effective educational system for all. This bill is not just an investment in international teachers for today's generation but in the future of education itself. Consequently, this Bill is an essential step toward strengthening the quality of education that may benefit the students because international teachers bring unique perspectives, skills, and expertise that enrich the learning environment in the State as a whole.

Thank you for your time and effort in this endeavor.

Mahalo!

Much Aloha,

Florante D. Romero
Elementary Teacher
Mauka Lani Elementary
Kapolei, HI

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2025 7:34:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Berly Ann G. Cular	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I am Berly Ann G. Cular, a J-1 Cultural Exchange Teacher currently teaching 7th Grade Math at Kalama Intermediate School in Maui. I am honored to testify in strong support of the International Visiting Teacher License Bill, which would provide much-needed recognition and stability for international educators like myself, who are dedicated to serving Hawaii's students.

I have been teaching for 18 years, with extensive experience in mathematics education in the Philippines. Through rigorous training, professional development, and classroom practice, I have developed effective teaching strategies that not only enhance students' mathematical skills but also foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and a growth mindset. Since arriving in Hawaii, I have worked hard to bridge learning gaps, build students' confidence in math, and create an inclusive, culturally responsive learning environment.

While I am fully willing to take the Praxis exam, I firmly believe that my credentials, training, and years of experience should also be valued. International teachers like me have already met high standards in our home countries, and we continue to demonstrate excellence in our teaching practices here in Hawaii. By supporting this bill, you acknowledge the contributions we bring and provide us with the opportunity to continue making a difference in our students' lives.

Additionally, extending the teaching period to a maximum of five years is a crucial step in supporting international educators. The impact we make does not happen overnight—it takes time to build relationships, adapt to the educational system, and contribute meaningfully to student learning. Allowing us to stay for up to five years means we can further strengthen our teaching, mentor students effectively, and contribute to the long-term success of Hawaii's schools.

Hawaii faces an ongoing teacher shortage, and international educators help fill this gap with dedicated, highly trained professionals who bring valuable perspectives to the classroom. By passing this bill, you are not only recognizing our commitment but also ensuring that students continue to receive high-quality instruction from passionate and experienced educators.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony. I urge you to support this bill, as it will not only benefit international teachers but also strengthen the entire education system in Hawaii. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

BERLY ANN G. CULAR

Math 7 Teacher

Kalama Intermediate School

Maui, Hawaii

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:24:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liza Resurrecion	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Liza Resurrecion, and I am a 6th-grade math teacher at Kalama Intermediate School. I am writing to express my strong support for SB 819, which would establish an International Visiting Teacher License.

I hold a professional teaching license in the Philippines and hope that our credentials will be recognized, just as they are in other states. Despite having proven my qualifications, I am still unable to obtain a full Hawaii teaching license without additional testing.

The high cost of living, especially housing, takes up a significant portion of my income. In addition, I send financial support to my children back home, making it a constant challenge to make ends meet. The cost of Praxis exams and review materials adds another financial burden, making the path to full licensure even more difficult.

If passed, this bill would grant international teachers a full teaching license, removing unnecessary testing requirements. It would also allow us to extend our stay for five years, providing students with stability in their education while allowing us to fully invest in our schools and communities.

Filipinos have long been an integral part of Hawaii's culture, demonstrating dedication and excellence in everything we do. I am truly grateful for the warm welcome I have received in Hawaii, and I hope that by passing SB 819, international teachers like myself can continue to serve Hawaii's keiki and communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Liza Resurrecion

6th Grade Math Teacher, Kalama Intermediate School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:27:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maria Glenda Ventura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license. I recommend that HB 439, HD1 be amended to match SB 819, SD1 - Relating to Education.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have streamlined/reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without additional exams, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. HB 439, HD 1 ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's

schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai‘i’s keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai‘i’s global community.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 819, SD1.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 2:29:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
CHRISTOPHER M KANYI	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Testimony in Support of Streamlining Teacher Licensure for International Educators in Hawai‘i without doing the Praxis exam

Aloha Chair and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Christopher Kanyi, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of legislation that would streamline the teacher licensure process for qualified international educators in Hawai‘i, specifically by waiving the requirement for the Praxis exam.

Hawai‘i faces a critical teacher shortage, particularly in specialized subjects like STEM, world languages, and special education. This shortage directly impacts the quality of education our children receive and limits their opportunities for future success. International teachers represent a valuable and untapped resource that can help address this urgent need.

Many international educators possess extensive experience, advanced degrees, and specialized knowledge gained from rigorous training and teaching in their home countries. Requiring these experienced professionals to pass the Praxis exam creates an unnecessary barrier to their licensure. This requirement does not accurately reflect their teaching abilities or their potential to contribute to our schools.

By waiving the Praxis exam for qualified international teachers, we can:

- **Expand the pool of qualified teachers:** We can attract experienced and highly skilled educators who are eager to share their expertise with Hawai‘i's students.
- **Address critical teacher shortages:** We can fill vacancies in high-need subject areas, ensuring that all students have access to quality instruction.
- **Promote diversity and global perspectives:** International teachers bring unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds that enrich the learning environment and prepare students for a globalized world.
- **Streamline the licensure process:** We can reduce bureaucratic hurdles and make it easier for qualified international educators to begin teaching in Hawai‘i's classrooms.
- **Focus on relevant qualifications:** We can prioritize alternative measures of teacher competency, such as demonstrated teaching experience, educational credentials, and successful completion of a rigorous background check.
- **Support our keiki:** ultimately, the beneficiaries of this action will be Hawai‘i's students.

I understand the importance of ensuring teacher quality. However, I believe that the Praxis exam is not the most effective way to assess the qualifications of international educators. Alternative methods, such as portfolio reviews, teaching demonstrations, and interviews, can provide a more comprehensive and accurate evaluation of their teaching abilities.

I urge the Senate to consider the benefits of streamlining the teacher licensure process for international educators and to support legislation that would waive the Praxis exam requirement. By doing so, we can strengthen our schools, support our students, and build a brighter future for Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher Kanyi,

6th Grade SPED teacher,

Pearl Harbor Kai Elementary School.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 3:25:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randall John Francisco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of this bill as the J-1 Teachers have demonstrated their ability to more than meet the teaching credentials needed to teach having gone through an already rigorous review process not to mention their education-teaching credentials; years of experience and, most of all, dedication to their profession. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:22:47 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Ruiz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD 1– International Visiting Teacher License

I, DORIS M. RUIZ and I strongly support of SB819, SD 1, which seeks to establish an international visiting teacher license for qualified visa holders.

As an educator, it's not just about teaching facts, but about nurturing the whole child – intellectually, socially, emotionally, and ethically. It is my privilege to be a part of their journey, celebrating their successes and supporting them through challenges. Also, I am consistent in building a harmonious relationship in the school community, collaborating with colleagues, and parents as well to foster a healthy environment for both academic and culture excellence. However, obtaining a teacher state license remains a challenge on my part due to the financial and emotional strains of the numerous Praxis exams. These barrier do not reflect the expertise, years of training, and foreign credentials that international teachers like me have already earned. This bill acknowledges the rigorous education, qualifications, and experience we bring from our home countries and provides a just and reasonable pathway for us towards a meaningful impact in Hawai'i's schools. Hawai'i, like many states, faces an ongoing teacher shortage, particularly in rural and underserved communities. The establishment of an international teacher license would help address this shortage by recognizing the qualifications of dedicated educators who are already contributing to the state's educational landscape.

I humbly urge you to pass SB819, SD 1 to ensure that international teachers can focus on what we do best—teaching, mentoring, and shaping the future of Hawaii's students. By passing this bill, Hawai'i will be honoring diversity, inclusion, and the value of international talent, ensuring that our children continue to receive the best possible education. Together, we create a brighter future!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Doris M. Ruiz

Lihikai Elementary School

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun and Members of the Committee, my name is Zhylaine Dacoron, and I am writing to express that I firmly support the SB819, SD 1. I am a dedicated educator here in Hawai'i, and I firmly believe that this bill will not only honor the exceptional experience and qualifications that teachers like me bring to our schools, but also allow us to continue making a meaningful impact on our students.

I have had the privilege of teaching in Hawai'i for 6 months now, and during this time, I've worked hard to create an inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environment for my students. I'm proud to have contributed to their growth and success, whether it's through personalized instruction, fostering a love of learning, or helping them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. My background and diverse experience as a teacher—honed in my home country, where I earned my teaching license and underwent rigorous training—have equipped me to offer unique perspectives and methods in the classroom.

However, as a foreign-trained educator, I've faced significant challenges when it comes to obtaining a teaching license in Hawai'i. While my qualifications have been evaluated and recognized, the process of taking and passing the required exams is expensive and logistically difficult. In some cases, scheduling the exams locally on Maui can be difficult. I have often found myself running out of available exam dates here, which means I need to travel to Oahu in order to take exams that are not available locally. This will result in additional financial burdens and time away from my students, which is particularly challenging for teachers who are committed to being present for their students' learning. This often means I must wait for an open exam slot on Maui before I can proceed with the testing. These barriers create unnecessary hardships for teachers like me, who are committed to making a difference here in Hawai'i but are limited by the current system.

This bill will alleviate these challenges by providing a clear and accessible path for international teachers to earn a license that reflects their expertise and qualifications. Having a specific international teacher license will streamline the process for teachers who have already demonstrated their abilities abroad and make it easier for us to continue contributing to the Hawai'i educational system. The ability to teach without unnecessary barriers would allow us to focus on what truly matters—our students' success.

I truly believe that the diverse backgrounds and experiences of international educators add significant value to our classrooms, and this bill recognizes that value. By establishing criteria for an international teacher license, we can ensure that more highly qualified educators have the opportunity to share their knowledge, enhance the learning experience, and contribute to the future success of our students and communities.

Thank you for considering this important bill. I hope that you will support it so that teachers like me can continue making a positive and lasting impact here in Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui loa,
Zhylaine Dacoron
6th grade ELA/ Social Studies/ Reading Workshop Teacher
Lokelani Intermediate School
zhylainecdacoron@gmail.com/ 8083853349

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 4:59:41 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Taeza Macadangdang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Ryan Taeza Macadangdang, and I am a dedicated 6th-grade teacher at Lokelani Intermediate School. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 439, which seeks to establish an International Visiting Teacher License. This legislation is essential in recognizing the contributions of experienced international educators and ensuring they can continue to serve Hawai‘i’s students effectively.

For nearly a decade, I have been devoted to shaping young minds and fostering a passion for learning. Prior to teaching in Hawai‘i, I taught in the Philippines and earned an out-of-state teaching license in Illinois. Through years of training and professional experience, I have developed and implemented effective teaching strategies that enhance student learning and achievement.

At Lokelani Intermediate, I strive to create an engaging and inclusive learning environment where all students feel supported and motivated to succeed. Working with a diverse student population, I provide high-quality instruction tailored to their individual needs. As an international educator, I also bring unique cultural perspectives into the classroom, broadening students’ understanding of the world and enriching their educational experience.

Despite my extensive qualifications, obtaining a full teaching license in Hawai‘i has been a challenge. Although I applied for reciprocity, my credentials were not fully recognized, and I was still required to take multiple PRAXIS exams. This additional testing requirement imposes both financial and logistical burdens, despite my proven experience and prior licensure.

This has had a direct impact on my ability to support myself. As an international teacher classified as an emergency hire, I receive a lower salary than fully licensed educators. The high cost of living in Hawai‘i, including housing and daily expenses, makes it challenging to make ends meet while dedicating myself to my students.

Hawai'i is facing a critical teacher shortage, and international educators are already here, filling these essential roles with dedication and expertise. We are committed to the success of Hawai'i's keiki, but we need stability and support to continue making a meaningful impact in our schools and communities.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 439, removing unnecessary barriers and enabling highly qualified international teachers to contribute fully to Hawai'i's education system.

Mahalo for your time and support.

Respectfully,

Ryan Taeza Macadangdang

6th Grade Teacher, Lokelani Intermediate School

A Testimony in Support to SB 819, SD 1
The Creation of International Visiting Teacher License

To the Honorable Chair, Vice Chairs and Members of the Committee,

I am LOIDA S. CORPUZ, , a dedicated and passionate J1 teacher currently working as Mathematics Teacher at James Campbell High School, Leeward District, Hawaii. I am writing to highly and strongly support Bill SB819,SD 1, which aims to create an international visiting license for J1 teachers like me.

Teaching in Hawaii is a dream come true. A dream which I am enjoying now. Learning about American culture while sharing my teaching expertise in this diverse educational landscape of the State of Hawaii are something I consider milestones of my teaching career and personal experiences. However I am facing significant challenges in obtaining a Hawaii teaching license, which is required for my continued participation in the J1 Program. The cost and the preparation for the licensing examination requires a considerable investment of money, time and effort which may affect my primary responsibility and that is to provide high-quality education to my students.

Bill SB 819 offers a practical and sensible solution to my predicament. Creating an international visiting license would enable J1 teachers like me to continue contributing to Hawaii's educational community as well as to enjoy the promises of its culture. I urge each and everyone of you Honorable Members of the Committee to support this bill which would not only benefit us J1 teachers but also to enrich the learning journey and some other educational acquaintances for our students as they share international culture and experiences with us. This bill would foster a more inclusive and diverse educational environment aligning with the values of aloha and ohana that Hawaii embodies.

Mahalo! I look forward to having a longer teaching journey in Hawaii and contributing to the educational growth and success of my students.

Sincerely,



LOIDA S. CORPUZ
Mathematics Teacher

,

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee

I am Ligaya R. de Vera, and I am an Inclusion Teacher of Math, Grade 7 and 8 at Lokelani Intermediate School. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB819 which seeks to create an international teacher license for qualified visa holder. My time as a J-1 teacher at Lokelani Intermediate School has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I've been consistently impressed by the dedication of the staff, the resilience of the students, and the supportive atmosphere within the school community. I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this positive learning environment. This exchange has broadened my understanding of education and has allowed me to develop more culturally responsive teaching practices. I have seen how exposure to different cultures and viewpoints can spark curiosity, promote empathy, and prepare students to thrive in an increasingly globalized society.

And from the day 1, I felt welcomed and supported by the faculty and staff, fostering a collaborative environment that encourages growth and innovation.

As an educator, I have dedicated my career to nurturing young minds and ensuring that each of my students receives a high-quality education tailored to their needs. Whether it's helping a student grasp a challenging concept, witnessing their confidence grow as they master a new skill, or simply providing a supportive presence during a difficult day, I strive to make a positive difference in their lives. I've focused on creating a classroom where every student feels safe, respected, and empowered to learn. It's truly inspiring to witness their growth, both academically and personally.

Our training and experience as J-1 teachers have provided us with a solid foundation for this work. We've been equipped with valuable strategies for differentiated instruction, classroom management, and building positive relationships with students. We've learned how to adapt our teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of our learners, recognizing that each student has unique strengths and challenges. This training has been essential in helping us create an inclusive and engaging learning environment for all. Furthermore, the collaborative environment at Lokelani has allowed us to learn from experienced educators and share best practices, further enhancing our skills and knowledge.

Beyond the classroom, I've actively engaged with the school and wider Filipino community. This has included participating in events like cultural festivals, community center events, church gatherings like the Feast of Sto. Niño. I've enjoyed contributing to extracurricular activities, including a J1 teacher cultural dance group and the church choir. These experiences have provided valuable opportunities for cultural exchange, allowing me to share my heritage while immersing myself in the local traditions. I firmly believe that a thriving school community is crucial, and I'm dedicated to contributing to that sense of belonging and support.

In conclusion, my time at Lokelani Intermediate School has been a mutually experience. I'm confident that the work we're doing is making a lasting impact on our students, preparing them for success in high school and beyond. This experience has been invaluable, both professionally and personally, and I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow alongside the students and staff at Lokelani.

My experiences and involvement within the Hawaiian educational system have highlighted the challenges faced by international teachers. As a dedicated teacher licensed in the Philippines, I've witnessed firsthand the struggles in navigating the Praxis examination requirements. While I appreciate the value of standardized assessments like the Praxis, many Filipino teachers, myself included, encounter significant hurdles in meeting these requirements. These challenges create both a financial and emotional burden, adding stress and complexity to the process of obtaining licensure in Hawaii.

I believe that HB439 is a vital step towards strengthening Hawaii's educational system and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality teachers. It will create a more inclusive and diverse teaching workforce, which will ultimately benefit our learners and our communities. I urge you to support HB439 and help bring this important legislation to reality.

Sincerely,

LIGAYA R. DE VERA
Inclusion Teacher
Lokelani Intermediate School
Kihei, Hawaii

Aloha,

My name is Ligaya R. de Vera, I am writing in strong support of HB439, which proposes establishing an international teacher license for qualified visa holders in Hawaii. As a J-1 visiting teacher at Lokelani Intermediate School, I have experienced firsthand the value and contributions that international educators bring to our classrooms and communities.

My time at Lokelani Intermediate School has been incredibly rewarding. I have had the opportunity to share my [mention your area of expertise or cultural background] with my students, enriching their learning experience and exposing them to diverse perspectives. I've also learned so much from my colleagues and the local community about Hawaiian culture and educational practices. This cultural exchange has been invaluable, broadening my understanding of teaching and fostering a deeper appreciation for the diverse backgrounds of our students.

However, the current process for international teachers seeking licensure can be challenging and complex. HB439 offers a crucial solution by creating a clear, accessible, and fair pathway for qualified visa holders to obtain licensure in Hawaii. This will not only benefit international teachers like me, but also, more importantly, it will benefit our students.

By streamlining the licensure process, HB439 will make it easier for Hawaii's schools to attract and retain qualified international teachers. These teachers bring unique skills, experiences, and perspectives that enhance the quality of education for all students. They can fill critical teaching shortages, particularly in specialized subjects or underserved areas. Moreover, they serve as cultural ambassadors, promoting global understanding and preparing our students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

I believe that HB439 is a vital step towards strengthening Hawaii's educational system and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality teachers. It will create a more inclusive and diverse teaching workforce, which will ultimately benefit our learners and our communities. I urge you to support HB439 and help bring this important legislation to fruition.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ligaya R. de Vera
J-1 Visiting Teacher
Lokelani Intermediate School

January 31, 2025

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I Arnel Dayame a Math Teacher in Kulanihako'i High School, formally writing a request the recognition of my teaching credentials as a license educator in the Philippines for the purpose of applying for a teaching license within the State of Hawaii.

I am a licensed professional teacher in the Philippines, holding the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Mathematics and Master of Arts in Education major in Mathematics from University of the Visayas, main campus, Colon Street, Cebu City, Philippines and have successfully passed the Philippine Licensure Examination for Teachers(LET). I have been teaching at University of the Visayas, College students for 4 years, specializing in Research and Mathematics and also in Ocana National High School, senior high school level for 3 years specializing research and Mathematics.

Throughout my career, I have demonstrated a commitment to fostering student growth and achieving academic success. I have continually adhered to professional standards, participated in ongoing professional development, and maintained strong connections with students, parents, and colleagues. Furthermore, I have been involved in research presentations and coach for different Math competitions. I have two international Research publications about enhancing students academic performances in Mathematics. I have been also dedicated to creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment that encourage students to embrace diversity and explore global perspectives. I have successfully implemented the Interactive Math Garden: Outdoor Classroom to Enhance Student's Math Academic Performance (IMG:OCTESMAP) project that promote cultural awareness and appreciation among students.

My enthusiastic interest in participating the cross-cultural exchange program as international teacher as an educator is deeply committed to fostering cross-cultural understanding and enriching educational experiences. I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to this esteemed program. Currently I am teaching Algebra 1 and Statistics and Probability in Kulanihako'i High School, 9th, 10th and 11th grade students. I am eager to immerse myself in a new cultural environment. I firmly believe that engaging with diverse community not only enhances my teaching abilities but also broaden my perspective, enriching the learning experiences of both myself and my students. I also proposed the same project in my current school which is the Interactive Math Garden: Outdoor Classroom to Enhance Student's Math Academic Performance (IMG:OCTESMAP) to successfully helps students math academic performance here in Hawaii.

The prospect of collaborating with educators from different cultural backgrounds excites me as it aligns with my belief in the transformative power of cultural exchange in education. I am confident that my experiences, combine with my adaptability and eagerness to learn will enable me to contribute meaningfully to the Hawaii state educational program. I am committed to leveraging this opportunity to not only

enhance my teaching skills but also to foster meaningful connections with students, educators, and the community in Hawaii.

As a Filipino teacher in Hawaii, I believe in the power of community and the importance of giving back. Outside of the classroom, I am honored to volunteer as a Liturgical Master of Ceremony at our local Catholic church. This role allows me to serve the community by assisting in the smooth flow of religious services, fostering a sense of reverence, and helping parishioners connect spiritually.

Through this volunteer work, I've been able to deepen my own faith while also bringing a sense of cultural richness to the church, especially as a Filipino. The values of service, compassion, and community are central to both my heritage and the teaching of the church, guide my approach to teaching and involvement in the community. Being engaged in this way allows me to connect with my students and their families on a deeper level, offering them a space where faith, culture, and education can intersect. It's an experience that has enriched my life and has strengthened the bonds between myself, my students, and the wider Hawaii community.

Being a Filipino teacher in Hawaii has been a deeply rewarding experience, especially because of the strong sense of community here. As an educator, I believe that teaching extends beyond the classroom; it is about making meaningful connections and supporting the diverse cultural fabric that shapes Hawaii.

Ultimately, being a Filipino teacher here in Hawaii has reinforced the idea that education is not just about imparting knowledge; it is about connecting, building relationships, and making a positive impact within the community.

As with the experiences and involvement in the Hawaii Educational System and community, as a dedicated Filipino teacher who has earned my teaching license in the Philippines, I would like to share some of the struggles we face when attempting to gain certification in Hawaii, particularly with the Praxis exam.

While I understand the importance of standardized assessments like the Praxis, many Filipino teachers, including myself, face significant challenges when trying to meet the requirements set by Hawaii. Our professional training, teaching experience, and licensure from the Philippines are not always fully acknowledged, which often places us at a disadvantage compared to other local teachers.

The process of preparing for and taking the Praxis exam can be financially and emotionally burdensome, especially for teachers who have already spent years in the classroom. It is particularly disheartening when our qualifications and experiences, which are recognized in the Philippines, are not immediately accepted in Hawaii, despite the fact that we are trained in the same core principles of effective learning.

I respectfully urge you to consider the possibility of recognizing our Philippines teaching license as equivalent to Hawaii teaching license. Many of us are passionate about continuing our careers in education and contributing to Hawaii's diverse and vibrant community, but we are hindered by these regulatory challenges.

By recognizing the value of our teaching experiences and credentials, we can more effectively serve Hawaii's students and bring unique cultural perspective to the classroom.

Respectfully yours,

Arnel Dayame
Grade 9 Adviser
Math, Teacher
Kulanihako'i High School
Kihie, Maui, Hawaii

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 5:53:57 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
RODRIGO DOMINGO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rodrigo T. Domingo, and I am a Science and AVID teacher at Henry Perrine Baldwin High School. I also serve as the adviser of the Bayanihan Club (Filipino Club) and the choreographer and Dance Director of Maui's first-ever Naragsak Dance Troupe—an organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Filipino culture among young Filipinos born and raised in Hawaii. Our dance troupe includes retired educators who are passionate about cultural education and community engagement.

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 819, which would establish an International Visiting Teacher License.

As a J-1 teacher, I bring years of experience and dedication to the classroom, enriching the educational landscape of Hawaii. I also hold professional teaching licenses from the Philippines. However, despite my qualifications and unwavering commitment, international educators like myself face significant challenges that hinder our ability to thrive and contribute fully.

While I am honored to teach Hawaii's students, it has also come at a great sacrifice. The high cost of living, especially housing expenses, makes financial stability nearly impossible. Classified as emergency hire teachers, we receive lower salaries than fully licensed educators, even though we perform the same responsibilities and meet the same demands.

SB 819 would be a transformative solution. If passed, this bill would:

- ✔ Grant international teachers a full teaching license, eliminating unnecessary testing barriers.
- ✔ Ensure equal pay and differentials comparable to licensed teachers, allowing us to provide for our families.
- ✔ Extend our stay for five years, ensuring students receive consistency in their education and allowing us to invest more deeply in our schools and communities.

Hawaii is grappling with a severe teacher shortage, and international educators are already here, filling critical gaps and making a meaningful impact. We are dedicated, highly qualified, and committed to the success of Hawaii's keiki. However, without the stability and recognition that SB 819 provides, our ability to continue serving Hawaii's students remains uncertain.

I respectfully urge you to pass SB 819 and support international teachers in their mission to educate and uplift Hawaii's students. This bill is not just about fairness—it is about ensuring that every student has access to the high-quality education they deserve.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

RODRIGO T. DOMINGO

Science & AVID Teacher | Henry Perrine Baldwin High School, Wailuku, Maui

Bayanihan Club Adviser | Choreographer & Dance Director, Naragsak Dance Troupe

My name is Lara Escoto, and I am a J-1 teacher at Kahakai Elementary. I have had the privilege of experiencing firsthand the profound impact that dedicated teachers can have not only on their students but on the entire school community. The support and collaboration from my fellow educators have been invaluable, and together we've cultivated a warm, inclusive, and engaging campus climate. Our shared commitment to student success has created an environment where both students and staff feel empowered to grow, learn, and contribute meaningfully.

One of the most significant benefits of the current system is the opportunity for J-1 teachers like myself to stay in Hawaii for up to five years if we are able to obtain licensure. This stability enables us to form deep, long-lasting relationships with our students and their families, which is essential for creating an effective and supportive learning environment.

However, the process of obtaining a full teaching license can be particularly challenging for teachers with internationally recognized credentials. I am proud of my qualifications and the experience I bring from abroad, yet the additional requirement of passing multiple Praxis exams is a significant burden. While I am deeply committed to my role as a teacher, preparing for and taking eight Praxis exams takes up an immense amount of time and effort. This is especially difficult when I am already dedicating my full focus to lesson planning and ensuring that I am providing the best possible education to my students.

The time and energy spent on preparing for these exams could be better used to enhance classroom instruction and build stronger connections with students. As a teacher, my ultimate goal is to be as effective and efficient as possible in my role. Unfortunately, the demands of the Praxis exams take away from this focus, as I find myself dividing my time between test preparation and lesson planning.

Moreover, ensuring equal pay for equal work is essential to retaining highly qualified teachers. Providing access to differentials for those who are licensed would show a true commitment to the value educators bring to the classroom—particularly those like myself, who bring diverse international perspectives and expertise.

Ultimately, recognizing internationally accredited credentials and simplifying the licensure process would allow teachers like me to dedicate more of our time and energy to supporting our schools, students, and communities—without the added stress of navigating a complex and burdensome exam process.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am deeply committed to providing the best possible education to my students and look forward to continuing to make a positive impact in our school and community.

Mahalo.

To The Honorable Members of the Senate

I am Ely Boy B. Antofina, currently a part of the Cultural Teaching Exchange Program of the United States of America. I have personally witnessed the shortage and demand of educators of many of the schools in the United States specifically here in Hawaii, and I believe coming here to teach and serve the State's educational sector is a huge addition to the teaching force whose main goal is shaping the future of the young generation. Hence, I am writing this; to ask favorable support from this respected body on SB 819, SD1, this would enable our Philippine Teaching License equivalent to the Hawaii State Standard Teaching License.

As an educator, I committed myself into helping students' reach their full self, by providing varied learning experiences that caters their individual differences, engaging them in a learning environment where everyone is given the equal opportunity to showcase their skill while guiding them to acquire knowledge and skills applicable in the real world. I also make sure that kids are provided with the needed learning supports through the integration of different multi-media to teaching and implementing innovative teaching strategies where student thinking skills are challenged helping them become a critical thinker and problem solver person.

Moreover, I also selflessly engage and work with my colleagues, stakeholders and parents on programs that would improve the academic performance of the students' and on related activities that will help them grow and develop into a person that can be a contributing asset to the community where they live and to their country at large. I know that far beyond the lessons that I taught are many lives that I touched and changed, perspectives that were redirected. My sincere care for my kids nurtured them to believe what they are capable of and the difference that they can make.

We respect, that each state and or country has standard that they hold to maintain excellence; Yes, we are trying to meet this standard, however taking Praxis to acquire a full license here seems a very big challenge due to several constraints financial to mention one. This also gives us additional load instead of focusing most of our time figuring out best strategies that would help our students. It is divided into thinking of approaches to pass the test.

And with SB819, SD1, we believe that we can best exert our effort in providing the best and quality education to the amazing and talented kids of Hawaii. We know that the technical know-how, teaching experiences, rigorous education, and the teaching license that we have with us from our country can be of equivalent qualification for us to be considered as Highly Qualified Educator. Approving our "International Visiting License" will lessen the load that we are carrying every day, hence assuring that we are doing our best in teaching and shaping the future of the Hawaii's future generation.

Thank you Very Much!

Long Live Hawaii!

Ely Boy B. Antofina
Math Teacher and Class of 2028 Co-Adviser
Aiea High School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:14:18 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Arnie Calamaya	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I am writing in support of SB819, which seeks to provide fairness and opportunity to us J-1 teachers in Hawaii. As a first-year J1 teacher in Hawaii, I understand the challenges of navigating a new education system and the uncertainty that comes with it. However, despite these challenges, I am deeply committed to staying and growing as an educator here. I have seen how we J-1 teachers navigate similar transitions, bring invaluable experience, cultural diversity, and global perspectives that enrich the community both inside and outside the schools. One of the greatest challenges for me as a J-1 teacher is the requirement to take the Praxis exam, despite already holding internationally recognized teaching license and undergraduate or graduate degree. Taking this test is an undue burden, as it either requires me to travel from Kauai to Oahu for an in-person exam, an expensive and time-consuming trip for me and those on other islands, or dealing with the difficulties of the online version , which demands a setup with strict technological and environmental conditions. These obstacles for me not only create unnecessary stress but also divert time and energy away from what truly matters--teaching and supporting students. Lastly, I strongly urge you to support this this bill as it allows me and the other J-1 teachers to stay for five years, ensuring continuity for students and helping the community. Mahalo nui loa!

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license. I recommend that SB819, SD1, will be passed at this time.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Alaska, Nevada, Florida and North Carolina, which have streamlined licensing processes for international educators, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. SB819, SD 1 ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB819, SD 1.

Respectfully,

EMELYN M. BARBA
5th GRADE TEACHER
LIHIKAI SCHOOL

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 6:45:09 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aljhon Tamondong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Aljhon King Tamondong, a third grade teacher at Wailuku Elementary School. Today, I am writing to express my strong support for HB 819 SD1, which would establish an International Visiting Teacher License.

As an educator, I have demonstrated unwavering dedication to my students' academic success and personal growth. Teaching in a diverse and multicultural environment has strengthened my passion for inclusive education, cultural exchange, and student-centered learning.

I am committed to nurturing a supportive classroom environment where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to achieve their full potential. By integrating innovative teaching strategies, technology, and culturally relevant materials, I ensure that learning is both engaging and meaningful.

Beyond the classroom, I actively participate in school events, mentorship programs, and cultural activities that foster cross-cultural understanding between my home country, the Philippines, and my Hawaiian community. I take pride in sharing my Filipino heritage while embracing the rich traditions of Hawaii, strengthening the bond between our cultures.

Despite challenges such as financial adjustments and being away from family, my dedication to my students keeps me motivated. I believe that education is a powerful tool for transforming lives, and I am grateful for the opportunity to make a lasting impact on my students and school community.

It is essential to recognize educators like myself to promote quality education and acknowledge the Invaluable contributions of dedicated J1 teachers. I respectfully encourage you to support HB 439, allowing us to persist in our crucial roles of teaching, mentoring, and inspiring learners throughout Hawaii. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Aljhon King Tamondong
3rd Grade Teacher

Wailuku Elementary School, Maui

Testimony for SB 819

My name is Rowena Aldana, and I am a J-1 teacher currently teaching 9th Grade Science at Henry Perrine Baldwin High School in Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii. I am honored to share my perspective as an international educator directly benefiting from the provisions that SB 819 seeks to enhance.

As a J-1 teacher, I have the privilege of bringing diverse cultural perspectives into the classroom, enriching the educational experiences of my students while also fostering global awareness and cross-cultural understanding. This program not only allows me to share my knowledge and heritage but also to learn from my students and colleagues, creating a dynamic, inclusive learning environment.

SB819 is critical because it supports the professional growth and well-being of J-1 teachers like myself. Specifically, this bill addresses the process for obtaining an international teacher license in Hawaii, which is essential for ensuring that qualified educators from around the world can continue to teach and contribute meaningfully to Hawaii's classrooms. By streamlining licensing procedures, reducing bureaucratic barriers, and enhancing access to resources, SB 819 will make it more feasible for passionate, qualified educators to thrive both professionally and personally.

Moreover, this bill recognizes the value of cultural exchange as a cornerstone of educational excellence. In an increasingly interconnected world, exposing students to diverse perspectives prepares them to be thoughtful, informed global citizens. The presence of international teachers helps bridge cultural gaps and promotes mutual respect and understanding among students from different backgrounds.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support SB819. This legislation will not only benefit J-1 teachers by facilitating the international teacher licensing process but also enrich the educational experiences of countless students across Hawaii.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

ROWENA ALDANA

J-1 Teacher

H.P.BALDWIN HIGH SCHOOL

February 24, 2025

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 7:26:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vicdona Domingo Reyes	Testifying for Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 819, which aims to enhance educational opportunities by supporting J-1 teacher programs. As our schools continue to face teacher shortages, J-1 teachers play a crucial role in bringing cultural diversity, global perspectives, and high-quality instruction to our classrooms. These educators not only help fill critical gaps but also enrich students' learning experiences by fostering cross-cultural understanding and preparing them for a globalized world. By passing SB 819, we can ensure that our schools have access to qualified, passionate teachers who contribute significantly to student success. I urge you to support this important legislation for the benefit of our students and the future of education.

Sincerely,

Vicdona Reyes, J1 Teacher

Mauka Lani Elementary

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 7:28:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mayvelyn Estacio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD 1

Mayvelyn Estacio

GenEd Teacher/Kihei Elementary

February 23, 2025

Chair Dela Cruz:

I am honored to testify in support of SB 819, SD1 which seeks to establish an International Visiting Teacher License. As an exchange teacher, I have had the privilege of serving students in Hawaii and making a meaningful impact not only in the classroom but also beyond it.

In addition to my role as a general education teacher, I dedicate my time to tutoring students in our After-School Program, ensuring they receive the extra academic support they need to succeed. Through this experience, I have seen firsthand the difference that dedicated and highly qualified teachers can make in students' lives.

Throughout my teaching journey, I have actively participated in professional development and training to enhance my skills and align with the standards set by Hawaii. However, the financial burden of certification exams is significant, making it challenging for international teachers like me to continue contributing to the education system. SB819, SD1 would provide a pathway to honor my experience, qualifications, and dedication while also recognizing the critical role that international teachers play in filling teacher shortages.

The need for qualified educators in Hawaii is urgent. If this bill does not pass, teachers like myself may be forced to leave, disrupting students' learning and exacerbating the existing teacher shortage. Passing SB819, SD1 will not only help retain passionate educators but also ensure that students continue to benefit from diverse perspectives and high-quality instruction.

I respectfully urge you to support SB819, SD1 and provide international teachers like me the opportunity to continue serving the students and communities of Hawaii for longer years.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mayvelyn Estacio
Kihei Elementary/BKKM

My name is Emelito Ortillo, and I am a Special Education Teacher at Kalama Intermediate School in the Maui District. I am writing to express my strong support for SB819, SD1 which proposes the establishment of an International Teacher License.

This bill would significantly benefit Filipino teachers who have relocated from the Philippines by allowing them to obtain licensure in Hawaii without the necessity of passing the Praxis exam as a major requirement. The burden of taking this test can be substantial, as it not only incurs a considerable financial cost but also demands extensive study time in preparation for the exam. I firmly believe that the licensure we hold from our home country, the Philippines, should suffice for obtaining a teaching license in another country or state. Our educational qualifications include degrees that are equivalent to U.S. standards, as evidenced by our transcripts of records. Furthermore, we have successfully passed the board examination, which qualifies us for an international license with U.S. equivalency. In addition, we have engaged in various training sessions and workshops aimed at enhancing our effectiveness and efficiency as educators. These experiences have equipped us to be not only competent teachers but also globally competitive professionals. Consequently, we are recognized as international teachers with foreign credentials, and we possess the qualifications and experience necessary to excel in our roles.

Being an international teacher empowers me to be a globally competitive educator, dedicated to fostering a rich learning environment for all students. I believe that my role as an international teacher profoundly impacts my students by enriching their understanding of the world beyond their immediate surroundings. By employing various teaching strategies and sharing experiences from different cultures, I promote personal growth while cultivating a deeper appreciation for diversity.

Through sharing my experiences, students gain valuable insights into the cultures and traditions of various countries. My cross-cultural exchange and experience equip my students with the skills necessary to thrive in a multicultural and interconnected world, enabling them to discover the unique values and perspectives of people across the globe. By exploring and learning about different cultures and traditions, students are better prepared for success in various aspects of life, including becoming responsible and responsive citizens of the United States of America.

Thank you for considering this important matter. I urge you to support SB 819, SD1 for the betterment of our educational community and the recognition of the contributions of Filipino educators.

Sincerely and with respect,

EMELITO ORTILLO
SPED Teacher / J1 Teacher
Kalama Intermediate School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:41:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Franchette Alodia Ferrer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD1**Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,**

My name is Franchette Alodia Ferrer, Special Education teacher at Kahului Elementary School. I am writing to express my strong support for SB819, SD1, which would establish an International Visiting Teacher License. As a special education teacher, I have seen firsthand the challenges that schools in Hawaii face in recruiting and retaining qualified educators, particularly in specialized fields like special education. This bill provides an important solution to address our critical teacher shortages while enriching our education system with diverse, highly skilled professionals.

As a special education teacher, I bring patience, adaptability, and a deep commitment to individualized instruction to ensure that every student reaches their full potential. My role requires strong problem-solving skills, collaboration with families and other professionals, and the ability to differentiate instruction to meet diverse learning needs. I work with students who require specialized support, helping them develop academic, social, and life skills in a nurturing and structured environment. These same qualities—dedication, compassion, and resilience—are shared by many international educators who are eager to contribute to our schools and state.

Many educators in Hawaii struggle with housing affordability, high transportation costs, and the overall expenses of living in the state. These financial burdens contribute to frequent teacher turnover and unfilled positions, which directly impact student learning. Additionally, the Praxis exam poses another significant barrier for many potential educators, including myself. While subject-matter expertise and teaching experience are critical, standardized tests do not always accurately measure a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Many talented educators who have years of experience and specialized training struggle with the financial and logistical challenges of the Praxis exam. Providing

alternative pathways for international educators through SB819, SD1 would help address this issue while maintaining high teaching standards.

I strongly urge you to support SB819, SD1. Addressing our teacher shortages, particularly in special education, is crucial for the success of Hawaii's keiki and the future of education in Hawaii. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 9:42:38 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Freddie Abulencia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Freddie Abulencia, and this is my second year participating in a cultural exchange program as an international teacher. One of my goals is to promote cross-cultural collaboration with my colleagues and equip students with global perspectives. As a J1 teacher, I strongly support the SB819, SD 1, which recognizes our years of experience and teaching certification from our home country without requiring additional and costly tests, allowing us to focus on our role in the international visiting teacher program. This will help us to complete our 5-year program, maximizing our contributions as international educators. This bill ensures excellent classroom stability and continuity, benefiting learners through more profound cultural exchange and enhanced global awareness. I appreciate your support.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 819

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for S.B. 819, which aims to create a fair licensing pathway for international teachers like me. As a Filipino J-1 teacher at Wailuku Elementary School, I've seen how my presence has made a positive impact, especially on my Filipino students. Having a teacher who understands their language, culture, and experiences helps them feel more connected, confident, and motivated to succeed in school. This connection fosters not just academic growth but also a stronger sense of identity and belonging.

Despite these contributions, the current licensing process poses challenges that limit our potential as educators. The complex and costly requirements take time away from what truly matters—helping students thrive. By passing S.B. 819, Hawaii will not only recognize the skills and dedication of international teachers but also ensure that students continue to benefit from a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

Thank you for considering this important bill, which will support both educators and students across the state.

Respectfully submitted,

MANUEL JAYJAY D. ASUNCION III

Filipino J-1 Teacher

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:00:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Annie Baltazar	Testifying for DOE - Lanai High and Elementary School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee,

I am Annie Baltazar, a second grade teacher at Lanai High and Elementary School for two years. I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of an international visiting teacher license and to recommend amending HB 439, HD1 to align with SB 819, SD1.

The J-1 Teacher Exchange Program has been instrumental in addressing teacher shortages across the United States, including here in Hawai'i. By bringing qualified international educators into our classrooms, we not only fill critical teaching positions but also enrich our students' learning experiences with diverse cultural perspectives. We educators serve as cultural ambassadors, fostering cross-cultural understanding and preparing our students to thrive in a global society. Our presence encourages the exchange of innovative teaching methodologies and ideas, benefiting both students and faculty.

Currently, Hawai'i requires us J-1 visa teachers to pass the Praxis exams in basic skills, pedagogy, and content knowledge to obtain licensure. While these exams are designed to ensure teaching competency, they present significant challenges for us. The financial burden of these exams can exceed \$1,000, a substantial expense for many. Additionally, the time and effort required to prepare for these exams detract from our primary responsibilities, such as lesson planning, student engagement, and community involvement. This process can be particularly daunting for those who have already demonstrated their qualifications and teaching proficiency in our home countries.

International educators participating in the J-1 program like me are required to have our academic credentials evaluated by recognized agencies to ensure we meet U.S. educational standards. We also provide valid copies of our current teaching licenses from our home countries. These steps confirm that we possess the necessary qualifications and experience to teach effectively. However, despite these verifications, the additional requirement of passing the Praxis exams in Hawai'i creates an unnecessary barrier, potentially discouraging highly qualified teachers from contributing to our education system.

By amending HB 439, HD1 to align with SB 819, SD1, Hawai'i can establish an international visiting teacher license that acknowledges the existing qualifications of J-1 educators. This

change would not only alleviate undue burdens to us j1 teachers but also enhance our ability to attract and retain diverse, talented educators who enrich our students' learning experiences.

Mahalo for considering my testimony on this important matter.

Respectfully,

Annie Baltazar

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:07:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jamiefel Pungtilan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I'm Jamiefel P. Pungtilan, a Math teacher at James Campbell High School. I'm submitting this testimony in support of SB 819, SD1 - the bill that seeks to establish an international teacher license for qualified J1 visa holders.

As a teacher handling Grade 9 Inclusion class, I'm deeply committed to the success of my students, especially those with diverse learning needs. In our classroom, I'm working closely with students from various backgrounds, including those who have special education needs and accommodations. Together with my co-teacher, we often stay after school to offer additional support to these students. This after-school tutoring is helpful for our inclusion students, as it gives them the extra time and attention they need to grasp key concepts.

As an educator committed to providing quality instruction to my students, particularly those in the inclusion program, I recognize the significant impact this bill could have on addressing the teacher shortages in the schools in Hawaii. One of the most important aspects of this bill is the acknowledgment of the equivalent education that international teachers possess, which meets the standards required in the United States. Many qualified international educators hold degrees and credentials that are fully comparable to those required here. However, despite this equivalent qualification, we international teachers often face numerous financial and logistical barriers.

The current requirement for passing the Praxis exams places a significant burden on us, not only financially but also in terms of the extra time and preparation it demands instead of focusing on the preparation for our lessons. This bill acknowledges the high standards of education, qualifications, and experience we possess from our home countries and creates an equitable pathway for us to continue making a positive and meaningful impact in Hawaii's schools.

By establishing the International Visiting Teacher License, this can remove many of the barriers that we international educators face. This will not only help address teacher shortages but also expose students to diverse teaching methods and global perspectives, which are vital in today's interconnected world. The value international teachers can bring to our classrooms is immense, and by supporting this bill, we are ensuring that students will have access to high-quality, culturally rich educational experiences.

I strongly urge you to support this bill and help create more opportunities for international collaboration in Hawaii's schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:17:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angelie Mae Galario	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB819, SD1, which aims to establish an international teacher license for specific visa holders.

Teaching is more than just a job; it is a mission that empowers students from all walks of life. As a SPED teacher, I understand the profound impact that quality education can have on individuals with diverse needs. It is essential that we recognize and honor the credentials and training that educators like myself bring from our home countries while also pursuing an international teaching license. In Hawai'i, I have dedicated myself to meeting the needs of my diverse students, despite holding a license not recognized here. My local training and the teaching license I earned in my home country have provided me with invaluable skills in effective teaching strategies and behavioral management. These skills have been pivotal in nurturing an inclusive and supportive learning environment—something every student deserves.

However, the added burden of obtaining an international teaching license by taking the PRAXIS exam continues to weigh heavily on educators like myself. The financial and emotional toll of this process is significant, especially given that we must pay for the exam each time we attempt it. This is a barrier that hinders our ability to fully engage and support our students.

By approving this bill, we can remove this obstacle and allow dedicated educators to focus on what truly matters—the success of our students. Integrating our diverse qualifications and rich experiences will enable us to create dynamic and inclusive classrooms that celebrate the unique backgrounds of every student. I urge you to consider the positive impact this legislation will have on countless educators and, most importantly, the students we serve. Together, we can foster an educational environment that empowers all learners.

Thank you for your consideration.

Honorable members of the committee,

I am Heriel Jhon S. Bravo, teaching as 5th Grade Teacher at Konawaena Elementary School. I've been at Konawaena ES for only 6 months, but this is already my 2nd year in the program. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to teach and be part of the Konawaena Elementary School family. Being welcomed into this community has been an incredibly rewarding experience, and I am thankful for the support, collaboration, and encouragement that surround me every day. It's a privilege to contribute to the growth and development of such bright and talented young minds, and I look forward to continuing this amazing journey with the Konawaena family.

That is why I, Heriel Jhon S. Bravo, one of the International Teachers, stand before you in strong support of SB819, SD 1, the International Visiting Teachers License. As a visiting teacher, I am deeply committed in providing the best possible education for my students, yet I face a significant challenge when it comes to obtaining the proper licensure to do so.

The process of earning a teaching license in this state is not only time-consuming but also financially burdensome. Many of us international teachers are already highly trained and experienced in our home countries, and we bring valuable perspectives and expertise to the classroom. We also underwent training and workshops in our home country and before we can practice our profession as a teacher, we also took Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers which focused on fundamental teaching concepts like classroom management, child development, learning theories, teaching methodologies and basic academic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

However, in order to teach here, we must navigate a complex system of exams, fees, and documentation. These requirements often do not consider our unique qualifications, and the cost of taking multiple exams just to qualify is prohibitively expensive. These fees add up quickly, with no guarantee of success, and they place an enormous financial strain on teachers who are already contributing to the community in meaningful ways.

By supporting SB819, you would be providing us with a streamlined process that recognizes our expertise while ensuring that we meet the necessary standards to teach effectively. This license would allow us to focus on our primary goal: educating and inspiring students. The current system creates unnecessary obstacles, and the financial burden on teachers like myself can often outweigh the benefits of continuing to pursue a license. With the passage of this bill, we would be able to focus more on our students and less on the financial and bureaucratic hurdles.

I ask that you please consider the immense value that international teachers bring to our classrooms, and the challenges we face in obtaining licensure. SB819 represents a fair and sensible solution to this issue, and I urge you to support its passage.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2025 10:50:22 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glysa Cadano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! I am Glysa Cadano, a J-1 teacher at Lanai High and Elementary School. As an international educator currently teaching in Hawaii, I wholeheartedly support SB819. This bill is a critical step forward in providing a fair and streamlined licensing process for educators on J-1 visas. It not only acknowledges our significant contributions to Hawaii's educational system but also eases the financial and administrative burdens that currently impede our ability to stay in the classroom and continue our work without the unnecessary obstacle of costly exams and additional requirements.

As international teachers, we come with unique perspectives, diverse experiences, and a commitment to enriching the lives of our students. However, the current system creates barriers that make it difficult to continue serving in the classroom, despite our passion for teaching and dedication to our students' success. SB819's creation of a provisional international teacher license would eliminate these challenges, providing us with a clear and accessible pathway to continue teaching without interruption.

This bill not only addresses the ongoing teacher shortage, which is especially critical in rural areas like Lanai, but it also supports the values of cultural exchange and inclusivity that make Hawaii's schools so special. By passing this bill, we can build a more diverse and equitable educational environment that benefits both educators and students. I strongly urge you to support SB819 and take action to ensure a more inclusive and fair system for all educators in Hawaii, both local and international. Thank you!

Testimony in Support of SB819 SD1

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I wholeheartedly endorse the establishment of an international visiting teacher license. I propose that SB819 SD1 be revised to align with SB 819, SD1 pertaining to education.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has proven to be immensely beneficial for the children of Hawai'i. To date, 218 certified educators with degrees comparable to those trained in the U.S. are serving in 55 schools throughout Hawaii, mainly in challenging-to-fill positions and in special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators participating in the Department's J-1 Visa Program have eagerly stepped forward to deliver exceptional education to the students of Hawai'i while also acting as cultural ambassadors within their communities. For the 2025-2026 school year, the Department plans to hire an additional 116 international educators as part of its Strategic Plan aimed at fostering students who are "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

Nevertheless, the current licensing regulations in the State impede the full potential of aspiring teachers in the J-1 visa program. Unlike states such as Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have simplified and reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without requiring extra exams, Hawai'i categorizes J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This classification obligates prospective participants to undergo a series of additional comprehensive tests that can cost more than \$1,000. The time spent preparing for these exams detracts from their ability to analyze formative assessments, engage with families, and develop curriculum. Furthermore, J-1 teachers do not qualify for extra compensation available to educators in hard-to-fill roles, despite performing equivalent responsibilities.

The J-1 Visa Program offers valuable educational and cultural experiences to schools across Hawai'i. SB819 SD1 guarantees that qualified international teachers in Hawaii's schools can stay for up to five years, ensuring continuity in instruction and providing high-quality learning and cultural experiences for Hawaii's keiki. By instituting an international teacher license that does not require additional examinations, the State can fully utilize the skills, expertise, and experience of international educators, resulting in a more diversified workforce that reflects Hawai'i's global community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony regarding SB819 SD1.

Respectfully,

Dean Patrick R. Espiritu

Special Education Teacher

Samuel E. Kalama Intermediate School

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD- International Visiting Teacher License

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for SB819, SD, the International Visiting Teacher License. As a teacher currently serving in the Hawaii public school system, I understand firsthand the challenges we face in recruiting and retaining qualified educators, particularly in specialized areas.

I am originally from the Philippines, where I was a licensed and experienced special education teacher. I am now teaching in Honouliuli Middle School, contributing to easing the teacher shortage in the United States. My background and experience in the Philippines have provided me with a solid foundation in effective teaching practices, which I have been able to apply successfully in my current role. I currently work as a resource and inclusion special education teacher, and I firmly believe I am making a positive impact on the lives of students with special needs. I am passionate about helping these students reach their full potential, and I am dedicated to providing them with the support and resources they need to succeed. My school has been incredibly supportive of my professional development, providing me with opportunities to attend various training sessions. These training sessions have been invaluable in enhancing my skills and knowledge, ultimately benefiting the keiki of Hawaii. I am committed to continuing my professional growth and staying abreast of the latest research and best practices in special education.

While I am deeply committed to teaching in Hawaii and obtaining a Hawaiian teaching license, I must acknowledge the significant challenges involved. The cost of the required examinations and the time needed for adequate review are substantial burdens, especially while working full-time as a teacher. These obstacles can make it difficult for qualified international teachers like myself to fully integrate into the Hawaiian education system.

I believe that SB819,SD 1 would be immensely beneficial, not only for teachers like myself but, more importantly, for the students of Hawaii. By streamlining the licensing process for qualified international teachers, this bill would help ensure that our keiki have access to the best possible education. It would allow us to focus on what matters most – our students. This bill would open doors to a wider pool of experienced educators, enriching our schools and providing our students with diverse perspectives and expertise.

Therefore, I urge you to support SB819,SD 1. It is a crucial step in addressing the teacher shortage and ensuring a brighter future for Hawaii's children.

Sincerely,

Hazel I. Jordan

(808) 6206415



TESTIMONY

As a current SPED teacher of Kahului Elementary School, Maui, Hawai'i, may I humbly express my strong support for the passage of SB No. 819 – International Visiting Teacher.

I am Rosa Mae Felida Lumbo from the Philippines who had been qualified to be a part of the Teacher Exchange Program of Hawaii.

Generally, I strongly believe that having passed with my fellow foreign teachers, the high qualifications set by the department of Education of Hawaii, we are generally equipped with the skills, competencies and capabilities, acceptable by your international standards. Thus, we are globally competitive.

Personally, with the rich and substantial professional experience that I gained in my country, I would humbly say that I have the attributes of a teacher, specifically a SPED teacher demanded by international standards and guidelines. My exposure as Head of the Values Education Department of one of the biggest public schools in our locality coupled with my degree in the Masteral program major in in Special Education together with my more or less 20 years of teaching experience in the graduate, tertiary and secondary levels of our educational system, and as a Guidance counselor, I am optimistic and confident that I have the international qualifications set by the standards of your educational system.

As a teacher for the past six (6) months in Kahului Elementary School, I am handling young learners with Special Educational Needs. With such limited time that I have handled these kind of learners, I know that I have created, to some extent, an impact in the lives of my learners as evidenced by the various comments, remarks of the parents of my learners during IEP meeting sessions. Parents would overwhelmingly and gratefully tell me that their children have tremendously incurred positive changes through my guidance and competence in dealing, training and responding to

the needs of their children. One major duty that we do as SPED teachers is to prepare IEP. This is the Individualized Educational Plan/Program (IEP) of a certain learner with special educational needs. It is with humility that I say that the IEP's that I prepare are mostly commended by our school vice principal as "well written" and "well prepared." This is reflected further by the positive results on the behavior of our learners as professed by their parents through their open comments. Furthermore, one of my learner has been even awarded as "EAGLE of the month" in our school for the month of January. "EAGLE of the month" is an award given to our learners who exemplifies the THREE (3) core values of our school which are, ALOHA, KULEANA, and 'IMI NA'AUAO. This positive result, I believe, is made possible by applying the appropriate techniques in dealing with my learners that resulted to a consistent and harmonious relationship that I have established with my special learners. Inspired by these feedbacks, I am further motivated to continue with this endeavor in my professional life, that is to continuously touch lives of other people in my own little way. And this could only be done through a longer working relationship that I will forge with my school. One way therefore to establish such working relationship is by allowing us to exercise our profession as SPED teachers without undergoing additional examination administered by your State. Allowing us to continue with our profession without requiring us to undertake an additional examination is a way of nurturing further a strong bond and relationship that we have with our special learners. As special learners, they need, consistency, stability and tranquility in dealing with them. By requiring us to undertake additional examination for us to further qualify to continue as their teachers might distort and stir negatively the already stable orientations we have built with our learners, leading our learners to a more traumatic and adverse behavioral conditions.

Moreover, I believe that such positive results would not also be realized if we are not professionally qualified to handle these kinds of learners in our school.

On the other hand, taking the examination demands additional cost on our part. The examination is expensive, and it is also a fact that we have our respective families that we are supporting back in our home countries. The cost to be incurred, the fees, the transportation going to OAHU and accommodation expenses shall mean a substantial economic burden for us, who have families who are economically depending on us.

With all the foregoing, we beg for your consideration and understanding, we fervently pray that our plight as foreign teachers under this program shall be favorably considered. We vow that we shall continue to render our services with much fervor, and utmost competence and efficiency. May our substantial academic qualifications, robust professional work experience, and positive manifestations of our services as SPED teachers, be sufficient to be considered, for us to be no longer required to hurdle an additional examination. We fervently pray that this bill shall be passed and approved, for us to be able to continuously provide quality and excellent educational service to our learners. The approval of this bill shall be a strong indication of the high standards already set by your State's educational system and a recognition of our substantial qualifications to those high standards.

Again, may we sincerely appeal for your profound consideration and deepest appreciation on this matter.

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD1

Hearing Date: February 26, 2025, at 10:00 AM

Honorable members of the committee, I am John Paulo Rivera, a High School teacher at HP Baldwin in Maui, Hawaii, representing international teachers, and I am here today to express my **strong support for exempting J-1 visa teachers from state-mandated standardized testing (Praxis) requirements to continue serving the students in Hawaii Department of Education for 5 consecutive years.** Before being a qualified international teacher, we have already earned our teaching licenses in the Philippines and did an equivalent evaluation of our Transcript of Records (TOR) to identify if we are qualified to teach in the United States of America.

I would say that the state of Hawaii benefits immensely from the presence of J-1 teachers in our classrooms. We bring diverse cultural perspectives, enrich our students' understanding of the world, and often fill critical teaching shortages, particularly in STEM fields, foreign languages, and special education. We, as dedicated educators, invest our time, energy, and passion in shaping the minds of our future generations.

However, requiring us, J-1 teachers, to undergo state standardized testing within our initial years of service places an unnecessary burden on and, ultimately, on our schools and students. The following are the key factors that contribute to this:

1. **Cultural and linguistic differences:** Many of us are J-1 teachers coming from different educational backgrounds, with different pedagogical approaches. While we do possess strong English proficiency to qualify for the program, nuances in standardized testing often focused on specific state curriculum frameworks can be hard to navigate in our initial years. Not to mention the added pressures brought on by adjusting to a new culture, a different school system, and often an unfamiliar language environment.
2. **Center Everything on Classroom Instructions:** As a J-1 teacher, I want to give my very best of my ability, concentrate on instructing and building relationships with students in a personal relationship. Those time consumed in preparing for and administering standardized tests could better be used in focusing on our core duties in planning classroom lessons and helping the students-and even professional development that benefits our student populations.
3. **Recruitment and Retention Issues:** This will create a strong deterrent for qualified international teachers to teach in the state of Hawaii. It adds another layer of complexity and cost to an already hard and costly process, thus making it even more difficult for the schools to recruit and retain valuable, experienced, and most importantly, adjusted teachers. This further exasperates the shortages that already exist in the teaching profession and limits the possibilities for our students to learn from diverse perspectives.

4. **The Program Alignment:** Standardized testing that is focused on specific state curricular standards also does not fit the broader goal of the program, which focuses on cultural exchange and enhanced mutual understanding. By requiring it, an unnecessary barrier is being established that ultimately has a negative effect on the J-1 Visa Program.
5. **Five-Year Exemption as a Reasonable Timeframe:** A five-year exemption would provide us, J-1 teachers, with sufficient time to get acquainted with the state's curriculum framework, to adjust our teaching methods, and to settle into the school community. We can have our energies concentrated on what is most important - teaching our children. After this period of time, we would be expected to take the testing like everyone else.

This exemption will indeed not affect the educational quality in Hawaii State. We, J-1 visa holders, in this country are thoroughly screened during the visa processing for English competency and qualifications that make us good fits for hiring in different teaching areas. We, J-1 visa holders, are similarly obligated for evaluation through regular activities set by school and district authority for accountability to standards.

Quite frankly, exempting J-1 teachers from state testing for the first five years of service in Hawaii sends a clear message that you value our contributions, are supportive of our professional growth, and believe that we should focus on what is important: educating our students. I urge the committee to view this proposal favorably.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 5:33:52 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zenaida P. Guillermo	Testifying for J1 Teacher	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of SB 819 – International Visiting Teacher License

Hearing Date: February 26, 2025, at 10:03 AM

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Zenaida P. Guillermo and I am writing to you in strong support of SB819, the bill that seeks to create an International Visiting Teacher License. I stand with many of my colleagues who have worked tirelessly in classrooms across Hawaii but face insurmountable barriers due to the requirement to pass the Praxis exams in order to secure full licensure. The time, stress, and financial cost involved in meeting these requirements are not just burdensome—they are overwhelming.

As an educator who has already obtained a teaching license in my home country the Philippines I can attest to the high level of dedication, training, and expertise that we bring to the classroom. However, the additional requirement to pass multiple exams—often at great financial expense—places an unnecessary and unfair strain on international teachers. The financial burden of exam fees alone is substantial, and this does not even account for the cost of test preparation materials, travel expenses, and the time spent away from students. Every moment spent studying for a standardized test is time taken away from lesson planning, student engagement, and community involvement—three critical aspects of teaching that cannot be measured by an exam.

What is even more challenging is the stress of balancing the rigorous demands of teaching with the pressure of securing licensure in a limited time frame. Many of us have visas that last only three to five years, and the requirement to obtain licensure in order to extend our stay adds yet another layer of anxiety. We are constantly faced with the uncertainty of whether we will be able to continue our work here, despite the fact that we are already dedicated to the success of our students and the broader educational community.

We are not asking for special treatment; we simply ask for fairness and recognition of our qualifications and experience. The high cost and stress associated with the current licensure requirements only distract from what should be our focus: the students we teach, the relationships we build, and the future we help shape. SB 819 represents an opportunity to remove these unnecessary barriers and allow international teachers to continue contributing to Hawaii's education system without the additional burden of costly and time-consuming exams.

I urge you to support SB 819 and help ensure that international teachers can continue doing what we do best: teaching, mentoring, and inspiring the next generation of learners in Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Zenaida P. Guillermo
Special Education Inclusion Teacher
King Kekaulike High School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:08:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marie Jane B. Agcaoili	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Marie Jane B. agcaoili,a Science teacher and 6th Grade Adviser at Lokelani Intermediate School in Kihei, Maui. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB819, SD 1, which seeks to establish an international teacher license for qualified visa holders.

As an educator, my impact and role extend far beyond the traditional confines of the classroom. I am an instrumental in igniting a passion for learning, shaping personal identities, fostering community values, and cultivating a generation equipped to face the challenges of tomorrow.

Having the opportunity to teach in US, I have worked diligently to provide an engaging and effective instruction, contribute to the school community, and support my students in their academic and personal growth.

Being a homeroom and Science teacher, I am fostering a positive classroom culture, encouraging critical thinking, supporting emotional development and taking on leadership roles, I have sought to leave a lasting impact on my students and the school as a whole. Teaching is not just a profession for me; it's a vocation, and I am committed to continually growing and contributing to the educational community in meaningful ways.

I humbly want to obtain a teacher's license in Hawai'i but it remains a challenge due to the financial and logistical burdens of the Praxis exams. These exams are expensive and not readily available across the islands, often requiring travel to O'ahu, which further increases costs. These challenges do not represent the expertise, extensive training, and international qualifications that teachers like me have already obtained. This bill recognizes the rigorous education, qualifications, and experience we bring from our home countries and offers a fair and reasonable pathway for us to continue making a significant contribution to Hawai'i's schools.

Passing this bill will allow Hawai'i to honor diversity, inclusion, and the value of international talent, ensuring that our keiki receive the highest quality education.

I am pleasing you to support this bill and offer international teachers like myself a clear, accessible, and fair pathway to licensure. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Marie Jane B. Agcaoili

Science Teacher

Lokelani Intermediate School, Maui

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:21:14 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alvin Montecalto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is **Alvin Montecalto**, and I am writing in strong support of **SB819 SD1** that seeks to honor the credentials and experience of Filipino teachers by establishing criteria for obtaining an international teacher license. As a dedicated educator who has been teaching in Hawaii, I have firsthand experience with the challenges foreign teacher face when trying to continue our careers here. This is a significant step forward for countless talented educators who have dedicated their lives to nurturing and shaping the minds of young students in the Philippines.

Many of us have completed extensive training, obtained advanced degrees and earned teaching license in our home countries, all of which have been evaluated and recognized by the foreign credential evaluation agencies. Despite this, we are still required to take additional certification exams, which present unnecessary financial and logistical barriers.

Since arriving in Kauai, I have had privilege of teaching Middle School Mathematics at Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School. My own journey as a Filipino educator in Hawaii has been incredibly rewarding. I decided to continue my career here in this beautiful state with a passion for teaching, bringing with me not only my credentials but also a wealth of cultural knowledge and experiences that enrich the classroom environment. I have worked tirelessly to support my students, many of whom face unique challenges. In my school, I have sought to create an inclusive and dynamic learning atmosphere where students feel validated in their backgrounds while being challenged academically. My students not only acquire knowledge but also develop an appreciation for cultural diversity, which ultimately prepares them for success in a global society. My colleagues and administrators have recognized my commitment and effectiveness, yet I, like many other foreign teachers, still face barriers that prevent us from continuing our careers seamlessly.

The unique perspectives and methodologies that Filipino teachers bring have contributed to a more comprehensive educational approach. Our diverse pedagogical strategies encourage students to think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively—skills they will carry with them long after they leave the classroom.

The exclusionary test requirements currently in place serve as a barrier for many capable Filipino teachers who desire to contribute to Hawaii's educational system. Exempting them from unnecessary testing will lead to greater workforce diversity and improved educational outcomes.

By recognizing the credentials, we have already earned and eliminating redundant testing requirements, Hawaii will create a more inclusive, efficient and fair process for dedicated teachers who want to continue serving students.

In conclusion, my testimony serves as a passionate plea for the passing of the bill to honor and recognize Philippine teaching licenses in Hawaii. By valuing and validating the contributions of Filipino teachers, we underpin a commitment to diversity and excellence in education. Together, we can forge a brighter future, nurturing the hearts and minds of students across Hawaii, and equipping them for a world ever in need of compassionate, capable, and innovative leaders.

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Esteemed Committee Members,

I fully support the creation of an international educator licensing framework and recommend the SB 819, SD1 - Relating to Education. The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been highly successful, with 218 certified international educators contributing to 55 schools across Hawai'i. These educators, who hold degrees equivalent to U.S. counterparts, are especially valuable in high-need areas such as special education and rural schools, enriching communities with cultural insights.

However, the current licensing system creates unnecessary obstacles for J-1 educators. Unlike other states, such as Nevada, Minnesota, and North Carolina, Hawai'i classifies J-1 educators as "emergency hires," requiring them to take multiple costly exams—often totaling over \$1,000. This process takes time away from their core responsibilities, such as curriculum development and family collaboration, and they are also excluded from additional compensation typically offered to teachers in high-need positions.

Supporting SB 819, SD1 will allow qualified international educators to stay for up to five years, ensuring consistency in instruction and enhancing the educational experience for Hawai'i's students. Streamlining the licensing process to eliminate unnecessary exams will help the state better utilize the skills and diverse perspectives of these educators.

Thank you for considering my testimony regarding SB 819, SD1.

Sincerely,
Rizza Verina
J1 Teacher
Chiefess Kamakahalei Middle School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:25:52 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jan Mariae Margaret Labadan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD1

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jan Mariae Margaret M. Labadan, and I am a J-1 teacher in Hawaii. I am writing to express my strong support for SB819 SD1, a bill that will significantly benefit Hawaii's students and schools by addressing the challenges faced by J-1 teachers.

As a J-1 teacher, I have witnessed the great contributions my colleagues make to our educational system. We bring various outlooks, improving classrooms with global experiences and promoting cross-cultural understanding. We introduce creative teaching methodologies, ignite a passion for learning in students, and provide critical support to those with diverse learning needs. My fellow J-1 teachers serve as mentors, actively participate in extracurricular activities, and become deeply integrated members of our school 'ohana. Outside of the classroom, we expand horizons and reinforce community ties by sharing our cultures through storytelling, activities, and culinary adventures. We act as role models by exhibiting fortitude, flexibility, and a strong dedication to education. Nonetheless, there are a number of difficulties with the existing J-1 visa regime. We are unable to properly invest in our students and the communities we serve because of the ongoing uncertainty caused by the temporary nature of our permits. Our mid-year departures produce disruptions that have a detrimental effect on student learning and deprive schools of committed, experienced teachers. We are also unable to adequately support our schools' long-term objectives and strategic plans because of this volatility. SB819 SD1 provides an important remedy. It would give teachers and schools much-needed stability if J-1 teachers were allowed to stay in Hawaii for five years after receiving their license. Fundamental justice and a fair assessment of our abilities and knowledge require equal compensation for equal labor, which includes differentials for certified teachers. It shows respect for our professional status and expedites the licensing procedure when we acknowledge our globally recognized credentials as proof of our qualifications and waive the expensive and time-consuming Praxis exams when we already hold international degrees and licenses. Enacting SB819 SD1 is an investment in the future of Hawaii's educational system, not just a way to help J-1 teachers. It guarantees that we can keep improving our students' lives and adding to Hawaii's dynamic educational environment. This law enables us to concentrate on the things that really count: fostering student development, fortifying our school communities, and creating a welcoming and stimulating learning environment for everyone. With all due respect, I implore the legislature to back SB 819 SD1 and give Hawaii's keiki's future top priority.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:29:59 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grezylen O. Lalusin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Grezylen Lalusin, and I am currently a Math Teacher here in Hawaii. I am writing to express my strong support for SB819, SD1. As an international educator, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to teach in Hawaii and to contribute to the academic growth and personal development of my students. However, I am also aware of the significant challenges faced by international teachers under the current licensing requirements, which this bill aims to address.

Teaching is more than a profession for me—it is my calling and my passion. Every day, I strive to help my students not only excel in Mathematics but also develop critical thinking skills, confidence, and a love for learning. I take pride in fostering an environment where students feel supported and encouraged to succeed.

As an international teacher, I bring a unique and valuable perspective to my students. My training and experiences in the Philippines allow me to enrich their learning by exposing them to new ways of thinking and problem-solving. By teaching Mathematics through real-world and globally relevant examples, I help my students develop a broader understanding of the subject while also preparing them to thrive in a multicultural world. This cultural exchange is not only beneficial to students academically but also helps build a classroom environment of mutual respect and diversity.

Despite these contributions, the current licensing process creates unnecessary obstacles for international teachers. While my qualifications and teaching experience have been thoroughly evaluated in my home country, I am still required to pass costly and time-consuming exams. These exams place an additional financial and emotional strain on educators who are already giving their all to support their students.

The International Visiting Teacher License is a fair and practical solution. It acknowledges the professional training, expertise, and dedication of international teachers, allowing us to focus on our primary goal: providing high-quality education for Hawaii's students. This license would also bring much-needed stability to our roles, ensuring that we can continue contributing to our schools and communities without the looming uncertainty of licensing hurdles.

Without this bill, many of us will face the difficult choice of leaving Hawaii, interrupting the progress and relationships we have built with our students, their families, and our colleagues.

The passage of this bill would provide the recognition and support we need to remain in our schools and continue making a difference.

I respectfully urge you to support this bill and to recognize the exceptional value that international teachers bring to Hawaii's education system. By removing unnecessary barriers and granting this license, you will be empowering us to dedicate ourselves fully to our students and to help them achieve their fullest potential.

Thank you for your time, attention, and commitment to the future of education in Hawaii.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:31:28 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Neil Christian T. Corales	Testifying for Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz and respected members of the committee, my name is Neil Christian T. Corales, a J-1 teacher from the Philippines and currently a first-grade generalist teacher at Mokulele Elementary School in the Hawai‘i State Department of Education. As one of the J-1 visa holders, teaching the children of our dedicated military families stationed on Oahu, I offer my strong support for SB 819 SD 1. I believe this bill is essential for the future of our public schools and the well-being of our students.

My experience as a J-1 teacher in Hawai‘i has been deeply rewarding. I've seen firsthand the positive impact we have on our students, schools, and communities. I and other Filipino teachers bring a unique perspective, combining cultural understanding, diverse teaching methods, and a profound commitment to nurturing young minds. We build strong connections with our students, often resonating with local families through shared values of respect, family, and hard work. We contribute to a more diverse and inclusive learning environment, enriching the educational experience for all. Many of us are also actively involved in local cultural and community activities, further strengthening the ties between our schools and families.

SB 819 SD1 addresses a critical need - retaining qualified and experienced teachers within the Hawai‘i State Department of Education. My current J-1 visa limits my time in Hawai‘i. If this bill will be approved, this will offer a pathway for me and to other J-1 teachers to remain for up to five years by obtaining an international teacher license. This stability is crucial for our students. Consistency in education, particularly in the early grades, is fundamental to their success. The disruption and emotional impact on children when a beloved teacher suddenly departs due to visa restrictions is significant. SB 819 provides a solution, allowing us to maintain these vital student-teacher relationships and contribute to the long-term stability of our schools.

Furthermore, this bill promotes fairness and equity. It ensures "equal pay for equal work" by granting internationally licensed teachers access to the same salary differentials as locally licensed teachers. This recognition of our qualifications is not simply about fair compensation; it acknowledges the expertise and experience we bring to the classroom. We have dedicated years to our education and professional development, earning undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate degrees and credentials. This bill recognizes the value of that investment and affirms our status as highly qualified and experienced educators.

Currently, the process of obtaining a local teaching license often requires us to take the Praxis exams, even when we already hold licenses and degrees from our home countries. This

requirement places an unnecessary financial and logistical burden on teachers, especially those coming from overseas, and doesn't always accurately reflect our teaching abilities or experience. SB 819 SD1 offers a more streamlined approach, recognizing the validity of our international credentials and allowing us to focus on what truly matters: supporting our students and contributing to the Hawai'i State Department of Education.

The Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) in the Philippines is a rigorous, nationally standardized exam designed to ensure teacher competency. It covers many of the same core areas as the Praxis, including professional education, subject-specific content knowledge, and pedagogy. Both exams aim to assess a teacher's readiness to effectively instruct students. Specifically, both the LET and relevant Praxis exams evaluate understanding of educational psychology, teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and classroom management. Furthermore, the LET, like the Praxis, requires aspiring teachers to demonstrate their knowledge in their specific subject area of expertise, ensuring they are qualified to teach the content.

Requiring J-1 teachers to take the Praxis creates an unnecessary barrier. A lot of us have already proven our competency through a comparable, government-mandated examination process in our home country. This not only creates a financial burden for us teachers, but it also delays our entry into the classroom, potentially exacerbating existing teacher shortages. Instead of requiring the Praxis, Hawaii could explore reciprocity agreements with the Philippines, acknowledging the rigor of the LET.

While specific course titles and institutional structures may differ, the fundamental knowledge and pedagogical skills required to be an effective educator are universal. This is precisely why Foreign Credential Evaluation (FCE) exists. Organizations like those belonging to the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) meticulously assess international educational credentials, including teaching degrees. These evaluations compare the curriculum, coursework, and overall educational experience to US standards, determining equivalency. A positive FCE outcome demonstrates that the Philippine teaching degree meets the requirements for licensure or further study in the US, effectively proving its equivalence. Therefore, a teaching degree from the Philippines, when favorably evaluated by a NACES member, is indeed recognized as equivalent to a US teaching degree.

This bill is not just about individual teachers; it's about strengthening our entire public school system. It's about ensuring that our keiki have access to the best possible education by retaining qualified and experienced teachers. It's about strengthening our communities by fostering stability and continuity in our schools. It's about acknowledging the valuable contributions of international educators who are dedicated to serving the students and families of Hawai'i.

I strongly urge you to support SB819 SD1. It is an investment in our children, our schools, and the future of Hawai'i. Mahalo.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:31:35 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raymart Jayson M. Fundal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony Regarding J-1 Visa Extension Exception for Teaching License in Hawai'i

My name is Raymart Jayson M. Fundal, and I am a Special Education Teacher currently in Hawai'i on a J-1 visa. I am writing to express my sincere desire to extend my J-1 visa and to respectfully request an exception regarding the teaching license requirement for this extension.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in Hawai'i and have developed a deep love for the islands and the community. This experience has been invaluable, both personally and professionally. I am passionate about making a positive impact on the lives of children with special needs, and I believe I have made significant contributions to the students I serve here in Hawai'i. I am eager to continue this important work.

My primary motivation for extending my J-1 visa is twofold. First and foremost, I am committed to supporting my family back in the Philippines. The opportunity to work in Hawai'i allows me to provide much-needed financial assistance to them. Secondly, I am deeply invested in building a legacy of positive change in the lives of the children I teach here in Hawai'i. I have formed strong bonds with my students and their families, and I am dedicated to continuing to provide them with the high-quality special education they deserve. Extending my visa would allow me to continue nurturing these relationships and further develop my skills as an educator within this unique and diverse environment.

I understand the requirements for extending a J-1 visa, including the teaching license requirement. I am respectfully requesting an exception to this requirement in my specific case. I know what's needed to stay, the teaching license, the rules. But I'm asking, pleading, for a chance, a break. The license...it's just out of reach right now. Too much, too many IEP meetings, too much on my plate at school. I'm drowning, and this deadline is another weight pulling me under.

I am confident that my skills and experience as a Special Education teacher, coupled with my dedication to my students, make me a valuable asset to the Hawaiian educational system. I am a responsible and committed individual, and I am confident that I will continue to uphold the highest professional standards.

Thank you for considering my request. I am hopeful that I will be granted the opportunity to continue my work here in Hawai'i and contribute to the well-being of its children.

Sincerely,

**Raymart Jayson M. Fundal
Special Education Teacher
Kainalu Elementary School
+ (01) 808-286-8642**

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:34:08 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sannylee Ermac	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sannylee Ermac, an English Language Arts teacher at Maui Waena Intermediate School. My educational mission is to guide and inspire students toward a high-quality education. For more than a decade in education, I've focused on building a strong school community, and supporting student growth...and that's what I'm doing in my present school. However, despite my experience and license from the Philippines, I still need to take and pass the Praxis exams which adds to my financial burden and preparation stress.

Hence, I am writing to express my strong support for SB819, SD1 or the creation of an International Visiting Teacher License. This legislation is a vital step toward addressing the ongoing teacher shortage and enriching the educational experiences of students across the state. It also acknowledges the extensive training and qualifications international teachers possess, offering a fair pathway to continue our positive impact on Hawai'i schools.

I urge your support for SB819 SD1, extending our visas for five years to promote stability for our students and enable us to become fully integrated members of our schools and communities, guaranteeing equal pay and benefits to ensure we can adequately support our families, and providing international teachers with full teaching licensure to remove additional testing requirements. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Sannylee Ermac

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:36:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jocelle Ale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Jocelle Cina Ale, and I am writing to strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license, the SB819, SD 1.

I am currently a Math and Math Work Shop Teacher at Lokelani Intermediate School in Maui District through the J1 Visa Program. I hold a Bachelor of Secondary Education and also Master's Degree in Teaching Mathematics in the Philippines and I have 11 years of teaching experience in Philippines and this year in Mau, Hawaii USA . During this time, I have had the privilege of working in diverse educational systems and have developed a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and educational exchange.

As J1 educator - an international teacher, I am dedicated to offering the highest quality education to my students. I have devoted my career to shape their minds and ensuring they receive an exceptional learning experience. As a middle school Math and Math Workshop teacher, preparing five lessons a day with differentiated instruction was exhausting, but it never discouraged me. My passion for providing the best education for my students kept me going. I strongly believe that education should be inclusive, engaging, and adaptable to the needs of each student, and I consistently strive to create a learning environment that reflects these values.

Beyond my responsibilities in the classroom I offer a free tutorial in Math to some of my students after school to further practice their learning in Math. I actively engage in the school community, working together with colleagues, parents, and stakeholders to cultivate a culture of excellence.

My role as an international teacher through J1 – Visa Program has allowed me to broaden my professional knowledge and teaching skills. However, balancing my teaching duties and preparing for the PRAXIS exams creates unnecessary stress and takes precious time away from lesson planning and engaging with my students. I believe that our qualifications, experience and dedication should be acknowledged without the need for multiple standardized tests, which place both financial and emotional strain on teachers, especially those who manage five or more subjects in a day. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. The impact of my work goes beyond academics; I instill values, build self- confidence, and prepare my students for lifelong success.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB819 SD1.

Sincerely,

Jocelle Cina Ale

Math and Math Work Shop Teacher

Lokelani Intermediate School

Maui District

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:45:59 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lyn Nicole Chua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chairperson, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lyn Nicole M. Chua, one of the proud J-1 teachers deployed last year and I am a dedicated Science Special Education teacher with extensive experience in the field of education. I would like to express my strong support for SB 819, SD1 which seeks to recognize international teaching licenses—specifically granting equivalency to the Philippine teaching license here in Hawaii to teachers like us.

In the 6 months of stay here in Hawaii, I would like to believe that I have proven that I am capable and highly qualified for the teaching job. I have performed to the best of my abilities to deliver quality education to the learners here, have been an asset to the school and contributed to the community by participating in activities outside the four corners of the classroom. My skills and contribution to the school have been regarded highly by the school and the learners. With all the workload, activities, I have had a burden to carry-like all other J-1 teachers, which is to survive. Survive with the current pay that is lower than entry level since we are not categorized as Highly Qualified Teachers, study and pay for every Praxis test that we have to take and still provide quality education that is expected of us. Hawaii being the most expensive state in the country has become not just expensive for us but as if we almost cannot afford.

As an educator with the necessary credentials, experience, and a deep passion for teaching, I firmly believe that this bill would not only benefit qualified international teachers and alleviate some of the burdens we have but also enrich Hawaii's diverse educational landscape. Many of us come with years of experience, a strong commitment to student success, and a genuine love for fostering cross-cultural learning in the classroom. By allowing internationally licensed teachers to contribute to Hawaii's education system, I believe we can help address teacher shortages and bring valuable perspectives that enhance the learning experience for all students.

With all that being said, I believe our presence in the education system supports cultural exchange and global understanding, which are essential in preparing students for an interconnected world. Recognizing the Philippine teaching license would ensure that skilled educators are not hindered by unnecessary barriers but are instead empowered to serve Hawaii's students effectively.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support and pass this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Lyn Nicole Chua

J-1 Teacher

Aiea High School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:52:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Ann Ureta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am Rachel Ann Ureta currently stationed at Moanalua Middle School and part of the J-1 Cultural Exchange Program for teachers. I am an educator with 13 years of experience teaching in the Philippines and have been teaching in Hawaii for 2 years. I am writing to express my strong support for SB 819, SD1 which seeks to grant equivalency to the Philippine teaching license in the State of Hawaii and allowing J-1 teachers to stay for 5 years in Hawaii to provide quality education and fulfill our cultural exchange program requirements.

As an international teacher, I have come with the proper credentials as stated in my foreign credentials evaluation that conforms to the US Standards, 15 years of professional teaching experience, and an unwavering dedication to shaping young minds. I am eager to contribute to Hawaii's education system—not just by filling critical teaching positions, but by enriching classrooms with diverse perspectives and cultural understanding and contribute positively to the community.

Hawaii is a place of diversity, and our presence as international educators fosters inclusivity and global awareness among students. By recognizing our teaching qualifications, this bill would provide more opportunities for dedicated teachers like myself to serve the students of Hawaii effectively and more efficiently, without unnecessary barriers like dedicating our valuable time in studying and preparing for the multiple Praxis tests when we could have utilized that time to prepare and produce quality materials and practices for our students and also personally pay for each test. This would definitely alleviate most of the burdens we carry while being expected to perform to the best of our abilities.

I strongly believe that passing this bill would benefit the educators, the students we serve, the community and moreover, the educational system of Hawaii. I respectfully urge you to support this legislation and help ensure that qualified, passionate teachers can continue making a difference in Hawaii's schools and moreover to the world.

Many mahalo!

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 7:57:10 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carla Angelica Acoba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support SB819. I believe that Filipino teachers make a difference in the Hawaiian classrooms. Their passion and love for teaching radiates among students who find joy in learning. They are excited in the classroom and have fun discovering new things. They are also one of the most patient and compassionate people who spread love to all students. SB819 will increase their morale and confidence as teachers who bring out the best in all keikis.

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:03:09 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lanz Arana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Committee, My name is Lanz S. Arana, and I am honored to write in strong support of SB819, SD 1, a bill that seeks to establish an International Visiting Teacher License. As a dedicated educator from the Philippines, I have already earned my teaching license and devoted my career to shaping young minds. However, the additional barriers imposed by standardized tests like the Praxis create unnecessary challenges that hinder my ability to fully focus on what truly matters—my students.

Teaching is not just a profession for me; it is a calling. Since arriving in Hawaii, I have poured my heart into ensuring my students receive quality education, cultural enrichment, and unwavering support. Yet, balancing my responsibilities in the classroom while preparing for multiple licensure exams is an overwhelming burden—one that diverts my time and energy away from lesson planning, student engagement, and meaningful learning experiences. While I recognize the need for teacher accountability, I firmly believe that my qualifications, experience, and dedication should speak for themselves. The Praxis exams, aside from being financially and emotionally taxing, do not necessarily measure the passion, adaptability, and commitment that international teachers bring into Hawaii's schools.

Additionally, the constraints of our three- to five-year visas make the process even more daunting, as our ability to continue teaching here is often tied to passing these tests within a limited timeframe. Hawaii has become my second home. I have come to love its people, culture, and the vibrant school community that has welcomed me with open arms. My greatest hope is to continue making a difference in the lives of my students without being held back by excessive testing requirements.

By passing SB819, SD 1, you would not only be supporting teachers like me but also ensuring that Hawaii's students benefit from passionate, experienced educators who can dedicate themselves fully to their success. I respectfully urge you to consider the profound impact of this bill and to support international teachers who are deeply invested in the future of Hawaii's education system. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

JUN,

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license and recommend aligning HB 439, HD1 with SB 819, SD1. It highlights the success of Hawai'i's J-1 Visa Program, which currently employs 218 certified international educators in 55 schools, primarily in hard-to-staff areas and special education. An additional 116 teachers will join in the 2025-26 school year as part of the state's strategic plan.

In addition, Hawai'i's current licensing rules limit the potential of J-1 visa teachers by classifying them as "emergency hires." Unlike states such as Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which offer streamlined licensing processes without extra exams, and as J1 educator, I must take additional comprehensive tests costing over \$1,000. This not only consumes valuable time needed for curriculum planning, family engagement, and formative assessments but also leaves me ineligible for extra compensation in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

However, existing licensing rules hinder the program's effectiveness. Unlike other states, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires," requiring costly and time-consuming exams. This designation limits my ability to focus/pay attention to instruction and excludes me from additional compensation for hard-to-fill roles.

Furthermore, HB 439, HD1 would allow qualified international teachers to stay for up to five years, ensuring continuity in instruction and cultural enrichment. Removing unnecessary examination requirements would maximize the contributions of international educators and create a diverse workforce that reflects Hawaii's global community.

I am thankful and privileged for the opportunity to provide my testimony on HB 439 HD1.

Mahalo,

JUN LESTER C. PAUNEL

J1 Teacher Waianae Intermediate School

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:19:29 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JOMAR MAESTRE MENDEZABAL	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

I am Jomar Mendezaba J1 teacher at Kalama Intermediate School. I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license SB819, SD 1.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has been a resounding success for Hawai'i's keiki. To date, 218 certified educators with equivalent degrees to U.S trained educators, work in 55 schools across Hawaii, predominately in hard-to-staff locations and special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators employed through the Department's J-1 Visa Program have enthusiastically answered the call to provide the highest quality education to Hawai'i's students while serving as cultural ambassadors in their communities. For school year 25-26, the Department will employ an additional 116 international educators as part of the Department's Strategic Plan to prepare students to be "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, the State's existing licensing rules hinder the full potential of prospective teachers for the J-1 visa program. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, or North Carolina, which have streamlined/reciprocal licensing processes for international educators without additional exams, Hawai'i classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires prospective participants to take a series of additional comprehensive examinations that can exceed \$1,000 in costs. Preparing for these exams significantly reduces the time to analyze formative assessments, meet with families, and plan curriculum. Further, J-1 teachers are ineligible for additional compensation offered to educators in hard-to-fill positions despite performing equal work.

The J-1 Visa Program provides high-quality educational and cultural opportunities to schools across Hawai'i. SB819, SD 1 ensures that qualified international teachers working in Hawai'i's schools can remain for up to 5 years, providing continuity of instruction and high-quality learning and cultural opportunities for Hawai'i's keiki. By creating an international teacher license without additional examinations, the State can fully leverage the skills, knowledge, and experience of international educators and provide a more diverse workforce representative of Hawai'i's global community.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB819, SD 1.

Mahalo,

Jomar Mendezabal

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 9:25:00 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
April D. Asuncion	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony to SB819,SD1

Aloha to the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is April D. Asuncion, a J1 teacher from the Philippines and currently working as a teacher at Haiku Elementary School. I am in my second year now working with diverse teachers and pupils who have contributed to my growth and well-being.

For somebody who has been passionate since I had my job, I have been in search for the best measures to suffice the needs of students for them to grow the way our society would need them, somebody who is well-rounded, ready to face life in its greater heights and become an asset of the society as much as possible.

Since last year, I have been scratching all means to meet the demands of our school of providing quality education to everyone. This was backed up by exposing myself to different seminars and trainings offered by the Department of Education. This, I believed, also helped me bring out the best in my learners as manifested in their achievements.

However, my desire to bring out the best from my learners is being distracted by the demand of having to take the Praxis test which I think should not be since we have license in the Philippines, and we had been teaching there for almost a decade now. Not to discredit but we have been exposed to experiences which shaped us to what we are right now. Our focus is being diverted to that which bothers us.

With this, may I urge everyone to please consider us so we can still take part in providing the much-needed help and support for everyone.

Thank you so much.

Very truly yours,

April D. Asuncion

J1 Teacher

LATE

Subject: Support for International Teachers and Reciprocity in Licensing

Dear Members of the Hawaii Legislature,

I am an international teacher who began my U.S. teaching experience in Florida before relocating to Hawaii to be closer to my relatives. I would like to share my positive experience in Florida regarding the certification process, which may serve as a helpful model for consideration in Hawaii.

In Florida, I encountered no issues obtaining my teaching certification, as the state honored my credentials. Florida's system allowed for the issuance of temporary teaching certificates for up to three years, with the option for renewal, as long as my school district endorsed my renewal and I maintained an effective teaching rating. Several of my friends, who are international teachers as well, are now in their 4th and 5th year of teaching, and their certifications continue to be acknowledged by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), as long as their renewals are endorsed by their school districts and they maintain effective ratings.

Additionally, Florida does not require international teachers to take expensive certification exams, which makes the process more accessible and fair for those of us who have already demonstrated our teaching effectiveness. The cost of these exams can be a significant barrier, and it would be helpful if Hawaii could adopt a similar approach, as Florida has done, to ensure that international teachers are not burdened by these additional financial challenges.

Given my positive experience in Florida, I kindly request that the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board (HSTB) consider offering a reciprocal or temporary certification for international teachers, similar to Florida's system. This would recognize our credentials, allow us to continue teaching effectively, and ensure that we are not required to incur additional expenses for exams. By following a system similar to Florida's, we can focus on our teaching roles while contributing to the educational community in Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope that the HSTB will take action to create a more flexible and supportive certification system for international teachers.

Sincerely,

M.B. ALVAREZ

BALDWIN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

Testimony in Support of SB819, SD 1.
Hearing Date: February 25, 2025.

LATE

Aloha!

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee:

A story of J1 Filipino teacher's journey in Hawaii
(My success, challenges and hope)
by *Melvin T. Osorno*

I am Melvin T. Osorno, a J1 Filipino teacher from Cebu City, Philippines and a Grade 10 Biology Science teacher of Maui High School. I graduated Cum Laude in 2008 with a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education, focusing on General Science, from Cebu Normal University. This institution is recognized as a leading university for teacher education in the Philippines, known for producing many top performers in the country's teacher board examinations. It is a world-class institution committed to human transformation, creating globally competitive, efficient, and effective educators who positively impact lives around the world, particularly in the United States. I have also completed the required 30 academic units for my Master of Arts in Education, with a major in Science Education, and I am currently working on my thesis for graduation.

I have passionately devoted 15 impactful years to the field of education. Graduating with top honors in March 2008, I was fortunate to secure a teaching position just two months later. My journey began at San Roque College de Cebu (formerly San Roque Child Development School Montessori), a prestigious private institution in Cordova, Cebu, Philippines, where I spent six transformative years. There, I served as the Academic Coordinator for four years and the High School Coordinator for one year, delivering instruction in various Science subjects to students in Grades 4 to 10, along with Social Studies and Computer Education in Grade 7. My role extended beyond the classroom, as I took on the responsibilities of an event host and choreographer for numerous institutional activities.

In 2014, I embraced a new challenge at Talamban National High School, a large, esteemed integrated school nestled in the heart of Cebu City. Known for producing globally competitive graduates and excelling in regional and national educational contests, this institution allowed me to teach Science in the Junior High School department for nine years, while also serving as the Special Science Class Coordinator for four years. My active participation in event hosting and significant contributions to various institutional activities underscored my commitment to fostering academic, professional, social, and cultural growth in our teaching environment.

My proudest achievement came during the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. I took the initiative to create, compile, and author the Grade 7 Earth and Environmental Science learning modules. These comprehensive resources were employed by numerous schools across the Division of Cebu City, enabling effective distance learning during this critical time. My modules not only met the immediate educational needs but also underwent rigorous quality assurance procedures by Master Teachers in Science at the Division Office, ensuring their excellence and reliability.

In December 2023, my father underwent a major gastrectomy, a surgical procedure to remove part of his stomach. This event deeply affected our family and inspired me to pursue my American dream of becoming a teacher abroad. Prior to this, it had always been my aspiration to teach in the USA. This challenging experience motivated me to leave my teaching career in the Philippines and do everything possible to achieve my goal and support my family.

Through prayer, enthusiasm, and hard work, I am given the opportunity to teach at Maui High School as a Biology teacher teaching essential concepts with real-world applications while considering students' learning interests and styles without compromising the Next Generations Science Standards and its learning competencies. I have done my best to create an inclusive, student-centered learning environment that fosters curiosity, critical thinking and a love for learning. Beyond my responsibilities as a science teacher, I also serve as one of the advisers for the Filipino Cultural Club, which aims to promote Filipino culture among students at our school. We accomplish this through various activities, such as teaching traditional dances, integrating Filipino folktales into our lessons and encouraging students to share their personal stories about their heritage. Students can learn more about their roots and share their knowledge with others. Through this program, I have discovered that many students at Maui High School are Filipinos, particularly Ilocanos.

With my academic credentials, accomplishments, and 15 years of teaching experience in the Philippines, as well as a year-long position as a science teacher at Lokelani Intermediate School in Kihei, Maui, I am currently a Biology teacher at Maui High School in Kahului, Maui. I feel honored and grateful to have served with commitment and dedication in both my home country, the Philippines, and the United States of America.

I am writing this testimony to strongly advocate for the passage of HB 439. This bill stands to make a profound and positive difference for Filipino teachers who aspire to join the Cross-Cultural Exchange Program for five years here in Hawaii. By facilitating their participation, it not only enhances educational exchange but also ensures that these dedicated teachers can secure equivalent international teaching licenses, similar to those obtained by Filipino teachers in states like Nevada and New Mexico.

These teachers have already demonstrated their capability by successfully acquiring their equivalent teaching licenses through authenticated Philippine teaching licenses issued by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), as well as their undergraduate and master's Transcripts of Records (TORs) and Foreign Credential

Evaluation (FCE) documents from reputable and reliable foreign credential evaluators such as WES, SpanTran, CAREE, and others. HB 439 will remove barriers and create opportunities, allowing these educators to flourish in a global environment and contribute even more richly to the educational landscape.

Despite possessing the necessary credentials, accomplishments, and teaching experiences essential for professional growth and development, achieving full licensure in Hawai'i by passing all five learning areas—major and core subjects—poses significant challenges. These challenges stem from factors such as inadequate preparation time, the complexity of test content, and cultural considerations. Furthermore, the process is not only costly but also inequitable, highlighting the urgent need for reform in the licensure system.

Before I received my job offer to teach in America, I diligently submitted a range of essential documents to demonstrate my qualifications and capabilities. These included my Philippine teaching license with comprehensive test scores from the examination for teachers conducted by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), as well as my undergraduate and master's degree transcripts (TOR) from a prestigious university in the Philippines. Additionally, I provided foreign credential evaluation (FCE) documents from an internationally recognized evaluator which specializes in verifying academic and professional credentials and converting them into their U.S. equivalents based on established guidelines. Based solely on these authenticated documents, I firmly believe I am fully deserving of an equivalent U.S. teaching license. If teachers in states like Nevada and New Mexico have successfully obtained their equivalent teaching licenses as J-1 Filipino educators, then I am hopeful that the same opportunity exists for me here in Hawaii. It is crucial to recognize that teachers across these states, including Hawaii, share a common background. We all come from the Philippines, have taken the same rigorous teaching examination administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and possess diverse teaching experiences and credentials. Furthermore, we submitted identical documentation, which was meticulously verified by the same reputable credential evaluator, and we underwent the same rigorous screening processes, including interviews and teaching demonstrations. In light of these facts, I passionately advocate for my peers and myself, who are equally qualified, to be granted equivalent teaching licenses here in Hawaii. It is not just a matter of fairness; it is about recognizing the dedication and expertise of educators who have committed to teaching and shaping the futures of students, regardless of where they come from.

As I delved into the relevant literature on the impacts of international examinations required for placement, I discovered a wealth of insights that underscore their significance and implications. I have encountered and realized something and that is cultural considerations. Cultural considerations play a significant, though often overlooked, role in the success of test-takers in international examinations like the Praxis. These considerations encompass a broad range of factors that can create systematic disadvantages for individuals whose cultural backgrounds differ from the dominant culture assumed by the test. Here's a breakdown of these factors:

1. Language and Communication Styles:

- **Language Proficiency:** Even if the test is offered in multiple languages, nuances in language can pose challenges. Test questions often use complex sentence structures, idioms, and vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to non-native speakers, even those who are otherwise proficient. Translation inaccuracies can also occur.
- **Communication Styles:** Different cultures have different communication norms. Some cultures are more direct, while others are more indirect. Test questions may assume a specific communication style, potentially confusing test-takers from cultures that favor a different approach. For example, a question might require inferential reasoning that is not commonly used in some educational settings.
- **Test-Wiseness:** Test-wiseness refers to strategies for approaching and answering test questions. These strategies are often culturally specific and may not be universally understood. Test-takers from some cultures may be less familiar with multiple-choice formats, time management strategies for standardized tests, or the process of eliminating incorrect answers.

2. Educational Background and Pedagogical Approaches:

- **Curriculum Alignment:** International test-takers may have studied different curricula that do not align perfectly with the content covered by the Praxis. Even if the core concepts are similar, the specific examples, applications, and emphasis may differ, putting some test-takers at a disadvantage.
- **Teaching Styles:** Educational systems vary significantly across cultures. Some cultures emphasize rote memorization, while others focus on critical thinking and problem-solving. If the Praxis emphasizes skills that are not emphasized in a test-taker's educational background, they may struggle, even if they possess the underlying knowledge.
- **Test Familiarity:** Test-takers who are unfamiliar with standardized testing formats may experience anxiety and perform poorly, even if they are well-prepared in terms of content knowledge. This is particularly relevant for individuals from cultures where standardized testing is less common.

3. Cultural Values and Beliefs:

- **Time Orientation:** Different cultures have different perceptions of time. Some cultures are more punctual and time-conscious, while others are more flexible. Test-takers from cultures with a more flexible approach to time may struggle with the time constraints of the Praxis, even if they know the material.
- **Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Some cultures emphasize individual achievement, while others prioritize group harmony. Test-takers from collectivist cultures may be less accustomed to the competitive nature of standardized testing and may feel uncomfortable with the focus on individual performance.
- **Test Anxiety:** Test anxiety can be exacerbated by cultural factors. For example, in some cultures, failure on a high-stakes exam can be seen as a reflection on the entire family, leading to increased pressure and anxiety.

4. Socioeconomic Factors:

- **Access to Resources:** Test preparation resources, such as study guides, practice tests, and tutoring, may not be equally accessible to all test-takers. Individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be at a disadvantage due to limited access to these resources.

- **Test Fees:** The cost of taking the Praxis can be a barrier for some individuals, particularly those from developing countries.
- **Environmental Factors:** Factors such as noise levels, temperature, and access to a quiet study space can impact test performance. These factors may be more challenging for individuals from certain cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds.

5. Cultural Bias in Test Content:

- **Contextual Relevance:** Test questions may use examples, scenarios, or references that are more familiar to individuals from certain cultural backgrounds. This can inadvertently create bias against test-takers from other cultures.
- **Stereotypes:** While efforts are made to avoid stereotypes, they can sometimes unintentionally creep into test questions or answer choices, potentially disadvantaging certain groups.

Addressing Cultural Considerations:

Addressing these cultural considerations requires a multi-faceted approach:

- **Sensitivity Review:** Thorough review of test content by individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to identify and eliminate potential biases.
- **Test Preparation Resources:** Development of culturally sensitive test preparation materials that address the specific needs of diverse test-takers.
- **Accommodations:** Consideration of appropriate accommodations for test-takers with diverse needs, such as extended time or the use of assistive technologies.
- **Research:** Ongoing research to identify and address cultural factors that may be impacting test performance.
- **Educator Training:** Training educators to be aware of cultural considerations in testing and to provide appropriate support to their students.

The Praxis exam is a standardized test used by many states to assess the knowledge and skills of aspiring educators. While it can provide valuable information about a test-taker's readiness for the classroom, it's important to understand that it offers a limited snapshot of an individual's overall capability as an educator. Here's a breakdown of what the Praxis can and cannot tell you:

What the Praxis CANNOT show:

- **Classroom Management Skills:** The Praxis cannot directly assess your ability to manage a classroom, build relationships with students, or create a positive learning environment. These skills are best demonstrated through real-world teaching experience.
- **Instructional Creativity:** The Praxis primarily focuses on assessing knowledge and understanding. It does not fully capture your ability to be creative and innovative in your teaching methods.
- **Adaptability:** The Praxis cannot measure your ability to adapt your teaching to meet the diverse needs of all learners, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from different cultural backgrounds.
- **Passion and Dedication:** The Praxis cannot quantify your passion for teaching, your commitment to student success, or your ability to inspire and motivate students. These qualities are crucial for effective teaching but are not easily measured by a standardized test.

- **Experience:** The Praxis is a test of knowledge and skills, not experience. It cannot replace the valuable learning and growth that comes from actual teaching experience in a classroom setting.

(Sources: <https://tinyurl.com/w3ct3zs7>, <https://tinyurl.com/jmm2kuh5>, and <https://tinyurl.com/bdf69hrv>)

The Praxis exam can be a useful tool for evaluating a prospective teacher's foundational knowledge and skills. It can help ensure that individuals entering the teaching profession have a solid understanding of their subject matter and basic teaching principles. However, it's crucial to recognize that the Praxis is just one measure of a teacher's potential. Many other factors, such as classroom management skills, instructional creativity, adaptability, passion, and experience, play a significant role in determining a teacher's overall effectiveness.

Therefore, while a good score on the Praxis can be a positive indicator, it should not be the sole factor used to evaluate a person's capability as an educator. It's essential to consider a range of factors, including observations of teaching, student feedback, and other measures of professional growth, to get a more complete picture of an individual's potential as an educator.

(Source: <https://tinyurl.com/yckbtt97>)

The high cost of living in Hawaii presents an enormous challenge to me. As an emergency hire teacher, my salary falls significantly short of what fully licensed teachers earn, and this disparity exacerbates our financial struggles. With housing costs skyrocketing, a substantial portion of our income is consumed, leaving me with scant resources to support myself during the program. I find myself constantly grappling with the obligation to provide for my family while striving for a stable future.

It has the potential to revolutionize our education system. If passed, this critical legislation would grant international teachers full teaching licenses, thereby eliminating the restrictive exam requirements that currently impede our ability to serve our students effectively. It would ensure that we receive the same salary and differentials as licensed teachers, allowing us to properly support our families and uplift our communities. Furthermore, it would extend our work permits for five years, offering essential stability for our students' learning and enabling us to commit fully to our schools. This change is not just an improvement for educators; it's a vital investment in the future of our students and the entire educational landscape.

Hawaii truly needs highly proficient, efficient, and effective teachers. I am immensely grateful that I am here in Hawaii fueled by passion, commitment, and dedication to create positive and lasting impacts on the lives of our keikis, preparing them for a constantly changing world.

I support the intent of SB819, SD 1. I sincerely pray and hope that you will support the passage of SB819, SD 1. which encourages and motivates our J1 Filipino teachers to contribute positively to the educational success of diverse learners in Hawaii.

"Mahalo nui loa no kou manawa a me kou no'ono'o".

Melvin T. Osorno

Grade 10 Biology teacher

Maui High School

"Those who love to learn must never cease to learn,"

February 24, 2025

LATE

To: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Graciela Esguerra

Position: Science Teacher

Institution: Henry Perrine Baldwin High School

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB819 SD 1

To the Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education and the Hawaii State Legislature:

I am writing this testimony in strong support of SB819 SD 1. This bill will significantly benefit Hawaii's educators and students.

As a J-1 teacher on Maui, I am committed to fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment. I am passionate about providing a high-quality education for our keiki.

While I hold a Professional Teacher License from the Philippines, I am required to take the Praxis exams for Hawaii licensure. These costly tests are often only offered on Oahu, requiring expensive inter-island travel and leave time, as they are not available on weekends. Aside from that, as an "Emergency Hire" teacher, my salary is lower than fully licensed teachers. I am also responsible for my own housing, which consumes a significant portion of my income.

Hawaii urgently needs qualified teachers, and J-1 teachers are dedicated to serving our students and the community of these beautiful islands. However, we need stability to continue this service.

I urge you to support this bill, SB819 SD 1, to ensure Hawaii's students and educators receive the necessary support. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo for all that you do!

Respectfully,

Graciela Esguerra
Science Teacher (Grade 9)
H.P. Baldwin High School

LATE

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee,

My name is Anna Marie Monares, and I am an international teacher in Hawaii. I strongly support SB819, SD1, but ask for an amendment to remove unnecessary examination requirements for visiting international teachers.

Despite my years of experience, I was disheartened to learn that I must take costly and time-consuming tests that other licensed teachers are not required to take. These barriers create stress and discourage qualified educators from coming to Hawaii at a time when they are needed most.

I urge you to amend HB439, HD1 to make the process fairer while maintaining high teaching standards. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Anna Marie Monares

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 11:46:43 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JERIC SABADO GALDICAN	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Jeric S. Galdican, a science teacher at Henry Perrine Baldwin High School.

I'm here today to testify in strong support of SB819 SD1, which seeks to establish an international teacher license for qualified visa holders. J1 teachers like myself are incredibly passionate about teaching the children of Hawai'i, bringing diverse perspectives and a deep commitment to enriching their educational experience. However, the current licensing requirements, specifically the Praxis exam, create significant obstacles, hindering our contributions and exacerbating the teacher shortage. I believe SB819 SD1 offers a vital solution, and here are six key reasons why:

1. The Praxis exam is prohibitively expensive: As J1 visa holders, we face financial constraints. The Praxis, study materials, and retake fees create a substantial burden, stretching limited resources and discouraging qualified international teachers.
2. The Praxis exam negatively impacts teacher mental health: The pressure to pass adds stress to demanding jobs. Studying while managing a classroom is overwhelming, and the fear of failure takes a toll on our well-being.
3. The Praxis exam contributes to Hawai'i's teacher shortage: Hawai'i already faces a critical shortage. Requiring the Praxis limits the pool of available educators, forcing some J1 teachers to leave and depriving children of dedicated professionals.
4. Licensure without the Praxis exam would lead to better compensation: Licensure qualifies us for higher salaries. The high cost of living makes it difficult for J1 teachers to make ends meet, and increased compensation would ease burdens.
5. Licensure without the Praxis exam would provide job security: J1 teachers face uncertainty about future employment. An international license would offer security, allowing us to invest long-term in our schools and communities.
6. The Praxis requirement forces us to consider leaving Hawai'i: We love Hawai'i, but the Praxis pushes us to consider other states. Other states offer easier licensure pathways, allowing us to stay longer and contribute to their schools.

In conclusion, SB819 SD1 offers a practical solution to address the teacher shortage. By establishing an international license, we can remove barriers, attract and retain educators, and ensure our children have access to the best education. I urge you to support SB819 SD1. Mahalo.

LATE

Aloha! My name is NORMAN RUELO MARQUEZ, I am a highly motivated with a strong background in teaching science and other related fields and integrating research into my teaching. I finished my master's degree major in science teaching. Furthermore, I've been in the teaching profession for almost 14 years and this experience allowed me to develop strong skills in communication, teamwork, and problem solving made me passionate and enthusiastic. I am submitting this testimony and strongly support the establishment of an international visiting teacher license and recommend that **SB 819, SD1** – Relating to Education.

Hawaii Department of Education J-1 Visa Program has been a tremendous success for our keiki. Currently, 218 certified educators—holding degrees equivalent to U.S.-trained teachers—are serving in 55 schools across the state, primarily in hard-to-staff areas and special education. From Waimea to Lahaina to Naalehu, international educators have answered the call to provide high-quality instruction while enriching their communities as cultural ambassadors. In the 2025-2026 school year, the Department plans to expand the program by hiring an additional 116 international educators, further advancing its Strategic Plan to prepare students to be Globally Competitive and Locally Committed.

Despite its success, the program is hindered by the State's current licensing requirements, which create unnecessary barriers for prospective J-1 visa teachers. Unlike states such as Nevada, Minnesota, and North Carolina, which offer streamlined or reciprocal licensing processes without additional exams, Hawaii classifies J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation requires them to take costly and time-intensive examinations often exceeding \$1,000 before we can teach. The time spent preparing for these exams detracts from critical instructional responsibilities, such as analyzing student assessments, meeting with families, and planning lessons. Additionally, me myself as J-1 teacher ineligible for the extra compensation provided to educators in hard-to-fill positions, despite performing the same work.

The J-1 Visa Program plays a vital role in providing high-quality educational and cultural opportunities across Hawaii. SB 819, SD1 ensures that qualified international educators can remain in Hawaii's schools for up to five years, fostering instructional continuity and enriching students' learning experiences. By creating an international teacher license without redundant examinations, the State can fully leverage the expertise of international educators while fostering a more diverse workforce that reflects Hawaii's global community.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 819, SD1.

Sincerely,

Norman R. Marquez
Physics Teacher
Kaua'i High School

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 11:52:31 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amira Rae R. Bonifacio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Amira Rae R. Bonifacio, and I am a special education teacher at Princess Nahienaena Elementary School in Lahaina, Maui. I am writing to express my strong support for HB819, which seeks to establish an international teacher license for certain visa holders through the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board.

As an educator, I provide individualized instruction to students with learning challenges, equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in reading, writing, and mathematics. My professional training and teaching experience in the Philippines have prepared me to meet diverse student needs, and I am honored to bring my expertise to Hawai'i's classrooms. Filipino teachers are highly skilled, dedicated, and well-prepared to contribute meaningfully to the state's education system.

Beyond my role in the classroom, teaching in Hawai'i enables me to support my family in the Philippines, reinforcing the broader impact of this opportunity. However, the current licensure process presents significant financial and logistical challenges. The required exams are costly and, in many cases, only available on Oahu, requiring inter-island travel that further increases expenses. These barriers make it difficult for qualified international teachers to obtain the necessary credentials to continue serving Hawai'i's students.

Passing HB819 would provide a more equitable and accessible pathway for dedicated international educators. I am especially committed to continuing my service to the students of Lahaina, many of whom have faced immense hardship following the devastating August 2023 wildfire. These children need stability, guidance, and compassionate educators who are committed to their growth and recovery.

I respectfully urge you to support HB819 to ensure that passionate and qualified international teachers can continue making a lasting difference in the lives of Hawai'i's keiki. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

Amira Rae R. Bonifacio

Special Education Teacher

Princess Nahienaena Elementary School, Lahaina, Maui

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 11:57:04 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vince Patrick Pastor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz , Vice-Chair Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of the creation of an international visiting teacher license and respectfully support **SB 819, SD1 – Relating to Education**.

Hawai‘i’s **J-1 Visa Program** has been a tremendous success for our keiki. Currently, 218 certified international educators—with qualifications equivalent to U.S.-trained teachers—serve in 55 schools across the state, primarily in hard-to-staff locations and special education programs. From **Waimea** to **Lahaina** to **Na‘alehu**, these educators not only provide high-quality instruction but also act as cultural ambassadors within their communities. Looking ahead to the **2025-2026** school year, the Department plans to welcome an additional 116 international educators, advancing its Strategic Plan to prepare students to be “*Globally Competitive and Locally Committed*.”

However, Hawai‘i’s current licensing rules limit the full potential of the J-1 Visa Program. Unlike states such as **Nevada, Minnesota, and North Carolina**, which offer streamlined or reciprocal licensing for international educators without extra examinations, Hawai‘i classifies J-1 teachers as “*emergency hires*.” This designation requires them to complete a series of costly exams—often exceeding **\$1,000**—while also making them ineligible for additional compensation offered to teachers in hard-to-fill positions. The time and resources spent preparing for these exams detract from essential tasks like analyzing student assessments, engaging with families, and planning curriculum.

SB 819, HD1 would allow qualified international teachers to remain in Hawai‘i’s schools for up to **five years**, promoting instructional continuity and enriching cultural exchange. By establishing an international teacher license that eliminates unnecessary exams, Hawai‘i can better utilize the expertise of global educators while fostering a more diverse and representative workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill.

Mahalo,

Vince Pastor

8th Grade Science Teacher
Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:01:51 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Princes Joy Calingangan	Testifying for Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the creation of an international visiting teacher license. I recommend the SB819.

I am Princes Joy V. Calingangan, a Special Education Teacher at August Ahrens Elementary School. I strongly support SB819, which would establish an international visiting teacher license for Filipino teachers. This legislation is crucial in addressing the critical teacher shortage, particularly in special education, and offers mutual benefits for both Filipino teachers and American students.

Teaching in Waipahu, with its strong Filipino community, has been a truly heartwarming experience. The predominantly Filipino student population has created a sense of belonging, making it feel like a home away from home, especially for special education teachers like myself. We've been deeply touched by the appreciation from parents, who often commend our patience and dedication to their children with disabilities. The strong rapport we've built with families here is incredibly rewarding and reinforces the positive impact we're able to make.

This positive experience underscores the eagerness of many qualified Filipino teachers, like myself, to contribute to addressing the critical teacher shortage and ensuring all students have access to a quality education. The establishment of the proposed international visiting teacher license, as outlined in SB819, would streamline the process for us to share our expertise and fill these vital roles.

My time teaching in the US has been invaluable, providing me with the opportunity to immerse myself in a different educational system, explore diverse teaching methodologies, and adapt to new classroom environments. This professional growth has significantly enhanced my skills and broadened my teaching repertoire, ultimately benefiting my students.

In turn, Filipino teachers bring unique skills, knowledge, and perspectives to American classrooms. We offer specialized expertise in various subjects and teaching approaches, enriching the learning experience for all students. Moreover, we foster cross-cultural understanding by sharing our cultural heritage and perspectives, promoting global citizenship and broadening students' worldviews. The interaction between Filipino teachers and American students creates a rich learning environment that benefits everyone involved. SB819 would facilitate this vital exchange and ensure a more equitable and enriching educational experience for all students.

Princes Joy V. Calingangan

SPED-FSC Teacher

August Ahrens Elementary School

Waipahu, Hawaii

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:21:17 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rowella Angeles	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the establishment of the International Visiting Teacher License in Hawai‘i. As a Math teacher at Waimea Canyon Middle School in Kauai, I have dedicated my professional career to fostering a passion for mathematics in my students, helping them build critical thinking skills, and equipping them with the tools they need to succeed academically and in life. This bill represents a significant step toward recognizing the contributions that international teachers like myself make to the educational community, while also addressing the barriers we face in obtaining full licensure.

I earned my teaching credentials in Philippines, where I underwent rigorous training in pedagogical practices and mathematics instruction. Over the years, I have worked diligently to adapt and refine my approach to teaching, ensuring that I meet the diverse needs of my students. At Waimea Canyon Middle School, I strive to make Math both accessible and engaging. I recognize that for many students, Math can be a challenging subject, so I focus on creating a classroom environment that encourages collaboration, problem-solving, and perseverance. I work tirelessly to develop lessons that not only cover the content thoroughly but also ignite curiosity and allow students to see the relevance of Math in their everyday lives.

However, as much as I am committed to my students’ learning, I face significant challenges in pursuing licensure here in Hawai‘i. The exams required to obtain full certification are both financially burdensome and difficult to access. The time needed to prepare for these exams takes away from the time I could be spending creating meaningful, well-planned lessons for my students. The exams are demanding, requiring an in-depth review of material that I already know through my international experience. Instead of spending that time developing engaging lessons and assessments, I am compelled to dedicate significant time and energy to preparing for exams that, while important, do not always reflect the practical skills and expertise I have developed through years of teaching and international experience.

Moreover, the logistical challenges of taking these exams—such as the need to travel to Oahu for testing—add unnecessary strain. This process is exhausting, both mentally and financially. As a dedicated teacher, I would much rather invest the time I spend on preparing for exams into my classroom, where I can actively contribute to the academic growth and success of my students. This bill will alleviate these obstacles and provide an opportunity for teachers like me to focus more on the classroom and less on the complexities of the licensing process.

The International Visiting Teacher License will offer a much-needed pathway for teachers with international qualifications and experience to continue their work without unnecessary delays. It would recognize the knowledge and skills we bring to the table—skills that are the result of years of professional development and hands-on teaching experience. Rather than being consumed by the requirements of expensive, time-consuming exams, we would be empowered to channel our energy into lesson planning and innovative teaching strategies that benefit the students we serve.

At Waimea Canyon Middle School, my goal as a Math teacher is not just to teach concepts but to help students develop a deep understanding and appreciation of mathematics. I encourage my students to approach problems with confidence, to collaborate with peers, and to approach challenges with resilience. The ability to focus on these aspects of teaching—rather than the administrative hurdles tied to licensure—would enable me to make an even greater impact on my students' lives.

I firmly believe that passing the International Visiting Teacher License bill will not only support international teachers in navigating the licensing process but will also benefit students across Hawai'i. The education system will be strengthened by the continued contributions of educators who bring diverse perspectives, innovative teaching methods, and a passion for student success. This bill will honor our qualifications, enhance our ability to teach effectively, and ultimately create a better learning environment for all students in Hawai'i.

I respectfully urge you to consider the positive impact this legislation will have on teachers, students, and the broader community. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Rowella J. Angeles

Teacher/Waimea Canyon Middle School

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:23:42 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grace Marie Hatton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Members of the Committee:

My name is Grace Marie Hatton, and I am a licensed professional teacher from the Philippines with firsthand experience in the field of education. I was a teacher in the Philippines for 8 years, graduated with a Bachelor of Elementary Education Major in Special Education and also with a Master's degree in Special Education. Currently, I am a kindergarten fully self-contained Special Education Teacher at Kahului Elementary School, Maui, Hawaii. I am here today to express my strong support for the creation of an international visiting teacher license SB 819, SD1. This initiative is vital not only for addressing the global teacher shortage but also for empowering educators like myself to contribute meaningfully to diverse classrooms while navigating fewer barriers.

As a Filipino educator, I understand the passion and dedication that teachers from around the world bring to their profession. J-1 teachers, in particular, come to the United States with a mission to share expertise, promote cultural diversity, and support student learning. Through the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, we international teachers serve as ambassadors of knowledge, enriching classrooms with their unique perspectives on education and life.

This program is a two-way street: while us J-1 teachers contribute to addressing teacher shortages in critical subject areas, we also bring global awareness to U.S. students, preparing to thrive in an interconnected world. However, our ability to serve effectively is often hindered by licensing challenges.

As an educator, I am aware of the complexities associated with obtaining state-specific teaching licenses. For J-1 teachers, these challenges are amplified as we navigate unfamiliar systems and requirements while trying to adjust to a new country. These barriers often result in delays, frustration, and even lost opportunities for international educators who are already highly qualified in their home countries. Without a streamlined international license, a lot of us are struggling to fulfill our roles effectively, which not only impacts our careers but also deprives schools and students of valuable contributions. The current

process discourages many skilled educators from pursuing opportunities abroad, perpetuating the teacher shortage in the U.S.

As a professional teacher from the Philippines, I know the value of being able to share my expertise beyond my home country. The cultural exchange between educators and students is a powerful tool for building bridges between nations. However, this exchange can only thrive if teachers are given the tools and support they need to succeed. An international teaching license would honor the qualifications and dedication of J-1 teachers while ensuring that they remain focused on their mission: educating and inspiring students.

In closing, I urge you to pass this important bill SB819, SD 1 to grant J-1 teachers an international teaching license. This measure will not only address pressing teacher shortages but also foster global collaboration and innovation in education. Let us break down the barriers that prevent skilled educators from making a difference in the lives of students worldwide.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions or share further insights.

GRACE MARIE HATTON

808-500-4394

Kahului Elementary School

449 Kaao Circle, Maui, Hawaii 96732

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:25:26 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erick Medrano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 819
Establishing International Teacher License Criteria**

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

My name is Erick L. Medrano, an international teacher from the Philippines, currently serving in Hawai'i's public school system, particularly in Highlands Intermediate School. Today, I offer my strong support for House Bill 819, which seeks to establish an international teacher license for certain visa holders.

Hawai'i's keiki deserve the best education possible, and House Bill 819 represents a visionary solution to the teacher shortage crisis. By establishing an international teacher license, this legislation will ensure that qualified educators fill critical gaps, while also bringing the benefits of cultural exchange to our classrooms and communities.

Mahalo nui loa for considering this testimony. I urge you to pass this bill and invest in the future of Hawai'i's children and schools.

Sincerely,

**Erick Medrano
Science Teacher**

Highlands Intermediate School

Hired J1 Teacher

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 12:41:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Adrian Ardiente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! I am Adrian Ardiente, a J-1 teacher holding a Hawaii teaching license for Grades 6–12. I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of HB 439, a bill that seeks to establish an international visiting teacher license. In 2021, I was granted the opportunity to teach at Waimea Canyon Middle School, where I continue to serve today. I was among the first international teachers given the privilege to work in Hawaii public schools and was the sole J-1 educator in the Kauai district from 2021 to 2023. Being an international teacher comes with unique challenges—being far from home and family, adjusting to a new education system, and navigating cultural differences. However, I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support from my school administrators and colleagues, who have guided me throughout my transition and continue to equip me with the necessary tools for success in my classroom. The Department of Education (DOE) Kauai District has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to ensuring that J-1 teachers are well-supported. Through various professional development initiatives at both the school and district levels, I have gained invaluable training in classroom management, teaching strategies, and understanding the Hawaii public school system. This school year, a specialized, ongoing professional development program tailored specifically for J-1 Filipino teachers has been implemented, further strengthening our capacity to contribute effectively to our students' education. Through the J-1 program, I have had the privilege not only to teach but also to share and learn new cultural perspectives within my school and the broader community. I take great pride in serving students of Filipino heritage, as Filipinos represent one of the largest ethnic groups in Hawaii. Beyond the classroom, I actively engage in school and community initiatives. I am a member of the Waimea Canyon Middle School Community Council (SCC), an integral leadership body that collaborates with administrators, teachers, staff, parents, students, and community members to enhance student achievement. Additionally, I serve as a board member of the Kauai Visayan Club Organization, a distinguished nonprofit dedicated to preserving and promoting Visayan cultural heritage through educational programs and cultural exchanges. On October 26, 2024, I had the honor of chairing the International Costume Ball, themed "Investing in Tomorrow's Leaders." This fundraising event supported Kumu's Cupboard, a nonprofit organization in Kauai that provides free school supplies to students and teachers. Through such initiatives, I have been able to give back to the community that has warmly welcomed me. The passage of HB 439 would be a transformative milestone for my fellow J-1 educators. This bill would not only extend their stay for up to five years but also provide them with the same invaluable opportunities I have experienced. By alleviating the burden of passing the Praxis exam, international teachers could focus entirely on delivering meaningful and impactful learning experiences for their students. I am just one of many J-1 teachers striving to make a difference in Hawaii's public schools—one lesson, one student, and one day at a time. My

journey in Hawaii, both within the classroom and in the community, has been deeply enriching, fostering my personal and professional growth. As cliché as it may sound, Kauai has truly become my home away from home. Mahalo for your time and consideration. I sincerely hope for your support in passing HB 439, which will empower more international educators to contribute meaningfully to Hawaii's schools and communities. With gratitude, Adrian Ardiente

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 1:25:01 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
LORALIE N BAGASBAS	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of SB 819 – International Visiting Teacher License

Hearing Date: February 26, 2025, at 10:03 AM

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Loralie Bagasbas, and I am an international educator currently serving in the Hawai‘i Department of Education as a 2nd Grade Teacher at Kahului Elementary School. I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of SB 819, legislation that seeks to establish an International Visiting Teacher License.

As a dedicated educator from the Philippines, I arrived in Hawai‘i with a deep commitment to sharing my expertise and passion for teaching. However, despite holding a valid teaching license from my home country and possessing extensive classroom experience, I have encountered significant challenges in obtaining licensure in Hawai‘i. One of the most pressing obstacles is the Praxis exam requirement, which not only imposes a financial burden but also adds undue stress, diverting valuable time and energy away from my students.

International educators, including myself, have undergone rigorous training and met high teaching standards in our respective countries. We bring extensive professional experience to the classroom, yet we are required to complete additional standardized assessments that do not always serve as an accurate measure of our competencies. Furthermore, the temporary nature of our visas, typically ranging from three to five years, further complicates our situation, as securing an extension is often contingent upon passing these examinations. This uncertainty not only places additional strain on educators but also disrupts the stability and continuity of education for the students and schools that depend on our dedication and expertise.

Hawai‘i has welcomed me with open arms, and I remain deeply committed to my students and the local community. However, without reforms like SB 819, many qualified and passionate international teachers may find it increasingly difficult to continue their work here. By passing this bill, the state of Hawai‘i can remove unnecessary barriers and ensure that international educators remain focused on what truly matters delivering high-quality education and shaping the future of Hawai‘i’s students.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support and pass SB 819 to provide international teachers with the opportunity to continue making a meaningful impact on Hawai'i's education system.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Loralie Bagasbas
2nd Grade Teacher, Kahului Elementary School

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 2:00:08 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JOY HERMOSO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 25, 2025

Aloha Sir/Madam:

My name is Joy Hermoso, and I am currently a J1 teacher working in Solomon Elementary School at Oahu Hawaii. I am writing to express my strong support for SB819. As a J1 teacher, I have had the privilege of bringing diverse perspectives to the classroom, which has enriched the learning experiences of my students and contributed to a more globalized understanding of culture, language, and education.

SB819 is crucial in supporting the continued exchange of ideas and educational practices between nations. This bill acknowledges the invaluable contributions that international teachers like myself make to the Hawaiian education system, especially in schools that may face challenges in filling hard-to-recruit positions. By expanding opportunities for J1 teachers and ensuring more streamlined processes for their participation, this bill will strengthen the educational framework across our state.

Additionally, the opportunity to teach in Hawaii has allowed me to share my unique teaching methods and experiences with local educators and students, fostering a deeper sense of cultural exchange. This collaboration not only benefits students in the classroom but also broadens the professional development of all involved. By supporting SB819, you are not only advocating for J1 teachers but also advocating for the future of diverse and globally-conscious education.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. I am confident that passing this bill will enhance the educational experience for students, teachers, and communities alike.

Sincerely,
JOY HERMOSO
J1 Teacher/SOLOMON ES

Testimony in Support of SB819 SD1

*Submitted by Roxanne M. Tano, 8th Grade Science Teacher
Waimea Canyon Middle School, Kauai, Hawaii*

LATE

Date: [Insert Date]

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Roxanne M. Tano, and I am an 8th Grade Science Teacher at Waimea Canyon Middle School on Kauai. I have been teaching for 13 years in the Philippines, where I developed extensive experience in science education. Now, in my role here in Hawaii, I have the privilege of using the Open SciEd Curriculum to engage students in hands-on scientific inquiry, fostering critical thinking skills, and preparing them for the future.

I hold a Professional License from the Philippines, and my credentials have been evaluated through foreign transcripts. I am deeply committed to making a meaningful impact on my students here in Hawaii. I also cherish the opportunity to participate in Hawaii's cultural exchange programs, sharing my Filipino heritage while learning from the rich cultural traditions of the islands.

However, Hawaii is currently facing a teacher shortage, and SB819 SD1 offers a much-needed solution. This bill would establish an international teacher license for qualified visa holders like myself, enabling us to contribute to Hawaii's education system more effectively.

To continue teaching in Hawaii, I must pass the Praxis exam, which presents a financial burden, especially as I must travel from Kauai to Oahu to take the test. Despite these challenges, I am determined to earn my license and continue supporting my students and school community.

I strongly support SB819 SD1 as it would not only allow me to continue my work in the classroom but also help address Hawaii's teacher shortage. By creating a path for teachers like myself, this bill would provide the resources needed to support our schools and students.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am committed to the success of my students and excited to continue growing both as an educator and a cultural ambassador in Hawaii.

Sincerely,
Roxanne M. Tano
8th Grade Science Teacher
Waimea Canyon Middle School, Kauai, Hawaii

LATE

My name is Richel Taduran, and I am a 6th Grade Social Studies Teacher at Waimea Canyon Middle School in Kauai, Hawaii. Before coming to Hawaii, I dedicated 10 years to teaching English in the Philippines, where I developed strong skills in classroom management, student-centered learning, and cross-cultural education. Now, as a Social Studies teacher, I am passionate about helping students understand history, cultures, and perspectives that shape the world around them.

In my classroom, I strive to create an engaging learning environment where students connect past events to present realities. Using inquiry-based instruction and interactive discussions, I encourage critical thinking and meaningful conversations. I am grateful to be part of a school that values collaboration among students, teachers, administration, and families, fostering a supportive community for learning.

I hold a Professional Teaching License from the Philippines, and my credentials have been evaluated for international teaching. Beyond academics, I am eager to embrace Hawaii's rich cultural diversity, sharing my Filipino heritage while learning from the local traditions and values of the islands. I believe that education is not just about knowledge but also about building connections and understanding between cultures.

Hawaii is currently experiencing a teacher shortage, and HB439 presents a vital opportunity by establishing an international teacher license for qualified visa holders. This initiative would enable teachers like me to continue making a meaningful impact in schools across the state.

However, to remain in my position, I must pass the Praxis exam—a costly requirement that also demands travel from Kauai to Oahu. Despite these challenges, I am determined to obtain my teaching license and continue serving my students and school community.

I strongly support HB439, as it would not only provide relief for international teachers but also help address the urgent need for educators in Hawaii. Teaching is my passion, and I am committed to growing as an educator and cultural bridge for my students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Richel Taduran
6th Grade Social Studies Teacher
Waimea Canyon Middle School, Kauai, Hawaii

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 5:20:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivy Macawili	Testifying for Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz,

I am Ivy Macawili, a J1 Special Education Teacher at Lanai High and Elementary School. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to be a part of Hawai‘i’s educational system, where I have had the privilege of working with students who inspire me every day. As a J1 teacher, I bring years of experience and internationally recognized foreign credentials, which have been thoroughly evaluated and confirmed through the Foreign Credentials Evaluation process to meet U.S. educational standards.

However, as an emergency hire teacher, I currently earn a lower salary than fully licensed teachers, despite performing the same duties and responsibilities. It is vital that teachers like me are recognized for our contributions to the school community and treated equitably in terms of compensation. Equal pay for equal work is a principle that should be prioritized. I have witnessed firsthand how J1 teachers positively impact students, school culture, and the overall campus climate. The diverse perspectives we bring enrich the learning experience, and we are deeply committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for all students.

SB819’s proposal to create an international visiting teacher license is an essential step in ensuring that J1 teachers can continue contributing to Hawai‘i’s education system for an extended period of time. By allowing us to remain for up to five years if licensed, this legislation provides stability for both students and teachers, enabling us to focus on what matters most—supporting our students, colleagues, and school communities.

Moreover, providing access to differentials for licensed teachers and recognizing foreign credentials as highly qualified will help eliminate unnecessary barriers for international educators. The elimination of costly and burdensome Praxis exams would allow us to focus on what we do best—teaching and supporting students—without the added financial strain.

I am honored to be part of this wonderful community and sincerely hope that SB819 will support the continued professional growth and recognition of J1 teachers in Hawai‘i, ensuring that we can fully contribute to the success of our students and schools. Thank you for considering this important issue.

Aloha,
Ivy Macawili

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 5:25:41 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Uy	Testifying for Department of Education	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz,

My name is Sherry Uy, and I am a J-1 Math middle school teacher at Lanai High and Elementary. I am here to express my strong support for SB819, SD 1 which proposes the creation of an international visiting teacher license. This legislation will allow J-1 teachers like myself to remain in Hawai‘i for up to five years if licensed, and I believe it will significantly benefit our students, school community, and the overall educational environment in our beautiful state.

The presence of J-1 teachers has had a profoundly positive impact on our students. Our diverse backgrounds and international experiences enrich the classroom environment, fostering cultural understanding and global perspectives. We bring innovative teaching methods and fresh ideas that engage students, inspire curiosity, and foster a love for learning. This diversity not only enhances the educational experience but also prepares our students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. In addition to enriching the curriculum, J-1 teachers contribute to a positive campus climate. We actively engage with the community, participate in school events, and collaborate with our colleagues to create inclusive spaces for all students. By supporting the social and emotional needs of our students, we help build a cohesive and supportive school culture.

It is crucial that J-1 teachers receive equal pay for equal work. Our commitment to education and the dedication we demonstrate in our roles should be recognized and compensated fairly. Furthermore, access to differentials for being licensed would reflect the value of our international credentials and experience, allowing us to contribute even more effectively to our schools.

Many J-1 teachers possess internationally recognized foreign credentials that demonstrate our qualifications as highly skilled educators. We have undergone extensive training and have a wealth of experience in our respective fields. It is essential that this expertise is acknowledged, and that we are not subjected to burdensome and expensive Praxis exams, especially when we already hold valid international licenses and degrees. This will allow us to focus on what truly matters—supporting our students and the school community.

By creating an international visiting teacher license, we can ensure that J-1 teachers can continue to make a meaningful impact in Hawai‘i’s classrooms without unnecessary barriers. Together,

we can strengthen our educational system, foster diversity, and provide our students with the best possible learning experiences.

Mahalo for your support!

LATE

SB-819-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2025 8:24:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/26/2025 10:03:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Joy Fernandez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for SB819 SD1, which seeks to establish an International Visiting Teacher License in Hawaii.

As an 8th-grade special education teacher at Kalama Intermediate School and a holder of a professional teaching license from the Philippines, I strongly advocate for the recognition of international teaching credentials, allowing us to obtain a Hawaii teaching license without the need to take additional exams.

Granting international teachers the ability to serve the Department of Education for up to five years would be mutually beneficial. Having fully adapted to the norms and school culture, I am committed to continuing my service. In turn, the department would benefit from retaining experienced educators without the additional costs and efforts required to recruit and train new teachers.

The current requirement to pass the Praxis test—covering at least five and up to eight different categories—is both time-consuming and financially burdensome. Additionally, international teachers are initially granted only a three-year stay, with the possibility of an extension to five years contingent upon passing Praxis. This limitation makes it difficult for dedicated educators to continue serving Hawaii's students without undue hardship.

If passed, SB819 SD1 would grant international teachers a full teaching license by recognizing the rigorous licensure process we have already completed in our home countries, which aligns with the Praxis assessment standards. Furthermore, it would allow us to stay for the full five years, providing greater stability for our students and enabling us to make a lasting impact in Hawaii's schools.

I urge you to support this bill and provide international teachers like myself with a clear, accessible, and fair path to licensure.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Joy M. Fernandez

8th-Grade SPED Teacher
Kalama Intermediate School