



STATE OF HAWAII

HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

February 26, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

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

DATE: February 26, 2026

TIME: 2:00 pm

LOCATION: Conference Room 329 and Video Conference

TITLE OF BILL: HB 1840HD1 J-1 Visa Program; Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board; Visiting International Educator Permit

POSITION: Opposes HB1840HD1

Chair Matayoshi and Members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully opposes HB1840HD1, relating to education, which would require the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

In the preamble of this bill, it states that the purpose is to expose Filipino children to Filipino educators, which, in turn, would inspire them to consider careers in education. This statement is conclusory and pigeonholes all ethnically Filipino children together, regardless of whether they have been born and raised in Hawai'i or in the Philippines.

The bill states that since the implementation of the J-1 Visa program, it has been a resounding success. The HTSB responds by questioning what is meant by the term "resounding success" as it applies to the increase in the number of internationally certified teachers currently employed in public schools statewide, as well as those set to arrive in 2026-2027. What are the measurable gains and improvements in the students' improved academic performance, and how is this attributed to the J-1 visa program instructors directly? This bill aims to increase students' productivity merely by increasing the number of teachers, qualified or not, in classrooms, rather than focusing on improving their intellectual development.

This bill incorrectly states that the State's existing rules limit the full potential of prospective international teachers participating in the J-1 visa program. The HTSB shall issue licenses, provided that the applicant meets the criteria set forth by law. Under the current policy, International applicants have applied for licenses and permits, and those who have met the requirements for licensure have been issued the appropriate licenses.

HTSB is tasked by law to establish licensing and certification standards that govern teacher licensing and certification in Hawai'i, ensuring that public school children are taught by teachers who are qualified to engage in the teaching profession without negatively impacting their pupils' educational process.

HTSB is only administratively attached to the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE). The legislature intentionally separated HTSB from the HIDOE to ensure that the licensing body would not be the same department or entity as the employer, as this would pose an inherent conflict of interest. This bill deprives HTSB of its ability and autonomy to establish its own licensing and certification standards and instead mandates HTSB to lower its licensing requirements for internationally certified teachers.

HTSB notes that, while this bill was well-intentioned, it is not the answer to the problem. Part of the solution could be for individuals interested in teaching in our state to take their Praxis exams before they even come to the U.S., as Praxis is international and offers testing in their home countries. In fact, some individuals have started taking at least one Praxis test before they move here. The Praxis tests they struggle with most are the Praxis Core Reading and Writing tests, which are foundational skills aligned with our standards and taught in our schools. Currently, 34 J1 Visa holders have also been placed in classrooms that are outside their teaching license in their home country. For example, an individual might be licensed in their country in Secondary Mathematics, but in Hawai'i, they have been placed in a 2nd-grade elementary classroom. This is concerning for our students who need the foundational reading and writing skills. We are glad that HIDOE is now offering Praxis study support for these J-1 Visa holders, as they all need to take the Praxis Core, and the reading and writing tests are what they struggle with most. It has been reported that principals have also been reimbursing them for passed Praxis tests, but this is at the principal's discretion and depends on their Title II funding.

At the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) a few years back, there was a labor session and a resolution specifically addressing protections for those with J-1 visas. **They decided to add language to the NCSL resolution to protect J1 teachers from 3rd party companies offering J1 Visa holders these high-interest loans (up to 50% compounded interest loans).** These companies even charged J1 Visa holders a licensing fee even when states, such as ours, **have no licensing fee.** Other states have had major problems with this type of activity, before we even heard about it in Hawai'i, so these states have let us know. NCSL passed this resolution with those protections for J1 teachers. This is how our J1 visa holders should be protected. They need to be protected 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 include citations 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 recruiting tactics that are being used.]

There is no licensing fee for all who apply for a license or permit in the State of Hawai'i, 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. While these foreign certified teachers have to pay for testing fees, they do not have to pay any licensing or permit fees, as we do not charge any.

Other states, like Alaska, do charge a licensing fee (About \$200), along with Nevada, and North Carolina.

It is HTSB's understanding that J-1 teachers are being paid as provisional license holders, despite only holding an Emergency Hire Permit. They may also be paid at a higher rate because of their years of teaching experience, but you would have to find out from their employer, HIDOE, for more information.

Any other profession requires international license holders to meet the licensure requirements of the profession in that state. This is true of professions such as physicians, pilots, attorneys, engineers, nurses, and mental health counselors, and the list goes on. They must demonstrate proficiency in the language and pass tests that verify their skills and knowledge meet local standards.

Teaching is a profession that should be held to the same standards. Our students deserve quality teachers.

This bill undermines HTSB's authority to determine licensing and certification standards for all teachers in the State of Hawai'i, thereby ensuring that children in public schools are provided with qualified teachers. HTSB is fully capable of licensing and issuing permits to teachers from in-state, out-of-state, and other countries, in accordance with the current licensing and permit laws outlined in Hawaii Revised Statutes §302A and Hawaii Administrative Rules Chapter 54.

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: 02/26/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 329 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: CPC

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1840, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program. Repeals 6/30/2031. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education supports HB 1840, HD 1, which would align Hawaii's emergency hire permit for international teachers with the full duration of the federal J-1 teacher exchange program. Federal law allows J-1 teachers to serve for up to five years, yet Hawaii's current three-year permit forces effective, authorized teachers out of classrooms early. Aligning state policy with the full J-1 term ensures students benefit from the complete period of service these educators are approved to provide.

Students benefit from stability when teachers can remain in classrooms without disruption, particularly in hard-to-staff schools. J-1 teachers are fully trained and licensed professionals in their home countries and are placed in high-need areas such as special education, secondary math and science, English language development, and rural schools. For many campuses, they serve as core instructional staff.

The Hawaii Administrative Rules §8-54-9. 6 "Limited duty special permit" allows for permits to extend past three years in both Career and Technical Education and Hawaiian Language Immersion fields. Providing a pathway for visiting international teachers recognizes the accomplishments of the teacher in their respective country, while recognizing the five-year federal guidelines of the J-1 system.

Allowing teachers to serve the full authorized term improves retention, strengthens workforce stability, and ensures Hawaii's students receive the greatest benefit from these experienced educators.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony/comments on HB 1840, HD 1.



Testimony in Support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125

Submitted by: The Teacher Lounge Team

Position: Support

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

Our organization works closely with schools and educators across Hawai'i, including J-1 teachers who are actively serving in classrooms while working toward full licensure. These educators play a critical role in maintaining instructional continuity, particularly in rural, neighbor island, and high-need schools where staffing challenges are most acute.

These teachers are fully committed to Hawai'i's students and are making documented progress toward licensure. However, the current licensure and permit timelines often do not reflect the practical barriers educators face. Required licensure exams involve multiple components that take significant time to prepare for, schedule, and complete successfully. The cumulative cost of exams and preparation materials can exceed \$1,000, creating a substantial financial burden.

Access challenges further complicate the process. On neighbor islands, limited in-person testing capacity can result in long delays that are outside a teacher's control. Virtual testing options are often not viable due to testing restrictions, technology limitations, or living situations that do not meet strict testing environment requirements.

When permit limits are rigidly applied without accounting for these realities, effective teachers may be forced to leave classrooms despite making steady progress toward licensure. This disrupts student learning, strains school communities, and can discourage educators from continuing to serve in Hawai'i.

While the J-1 teacher program allows educators to serve for up to five years, in practice the combined effects of licensure timelines, testing access, and permit limitations often reduce effective classroom service to no more than three years. This shortened window limits schools' ability to retain experienced teachers and undermines the stability that students and school communities need, as well as limits the cultural exchange and soft diplomacy impact of the J-1 teacher exchange program.

Students benefit most from stability—when teachers are able to remain in their classrooms long enough to build relationships, strengthen instructional practice, and support school culture. Policies that allow reasonable flexibility while maintaining licensure standards help ensure that schools can retain qualified, committed educators while safeguarding educational quality.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125. Mahalo for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's students and schools.

Respectfully submitted,
The Teacher Lounge Team

Your Global Teaching Network

www.teacherlounge.org

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 2:04:26 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	The Legal Clinic	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony in support submitted by

Amy Agbayani, President The Legal Clinic

The Legal Clinic is a non-profit organization that provides legal representation and support for low-income immigrants. We strongly support hb1840 requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a Visiting International Education Permit aligned with the duration of an educators J-1 visa. The bill will help Hawai'i address teacher shortages by providing competent teachers particularly where there are shortages in various geographic areas and disciplines.. In addition, J-1 visa holders with cultural and linguistic skills can work with students from these backgrounds. The Department of Education currently has over 200 J-1 visa teachers from the Philippines and administrators attest the program helps meet teacher shortages and the teachers perform valuable service to their students. My personal contact with some of these teachers and comments from my community contacts makes me confident that these teachers and the students are well-served.

These J-1 visa teachers can serve at any of the public schools and can teach in multicultural classrooms. It is also important to note that they were assigned to some schools with high proportion of local and immigrant Filipino students. As noted, Filipino students are the largest ethnic group in the public schools and immigrants from the Philippines represent the largest country of origin group, making up nearly half—or 45.8 percent—of all immigrants in Hawai'i. Currently there are 32,044 (10%) students who are enrolled in programs to learn English.

We support this bill as it will benefit our schools by having Visiting International Educators available to teach for the duration of their J-1 visa.

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Barbara Tom, and I am the Director of the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center. I submit this testimony in strong support of this measure HB1840 HD relating to the J-1 Visa Program and the Visiting International Educator Permit.

Waipahu Safe Haven works closely with public schools in Waipahu, including Waipahu Elementary and Waipahu High School, where many students are from immigrant and migrant families and a significant number are limited English proficient. Access to culturally responsive, multilingual, and globally experienced educators is critical to student success in these communities.

Requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned with the duration of a J-1 visa program is a practical and thoughtful solution. It recognizes:

- Hawai'i's ongoing teacher shortages, particularly in hard-to-fill areas
- The value that international educators bring in language skills, cultural competency, and global perspectives
- The need for administrative alignment between visa duration and teaching authorization

For many students in Waipahu, seeing educators who share similar cultural or linguistic backgrounds fosters trust, belonging, and academic engagement. International educators often help bridge communication gaps between schools and families, especially in communities with high numbers of immigrant parents navigating the education system in a second language.

Aligning the permit duration with the J-1 visa program creates clarity and stability for schools, teachers, and students, while maintaining appropriate oversight through the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board.

This measure supports educational continuity, strengthens our workforce, and promotes culturally responsive learning environments—outcomes that are essential in diverse communities like Waipahu.

Waipahu Safe Haven respectfully urges you to PASS HB1840 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Barbara Tom
Director
Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center

**Testimony of Megahn Chun and Alejandro Villarino
In SUPPORT of HB1840 HD1**

Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 26, 2026

Dear Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi, Vice Chair Tina Nakada Grandinetti, and members of the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce,

Our names are Megahn Chun and Alejandro Villarino, and we submit this testimony in **support of HB1840 HD1**, which requires the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

We are partners in life and in community work, and co-founders of Mercado de la Raza, a space created to uplift and support Hawai'i's Latino community. Beyond operating a small business, we have worked together to connect families with critical resources during times of crisis — including helping Latino residents navigate aid and support during the Lahaina fires and assisting community members affected by the recent government shutdown. Mercado de la Raza also serves as a gathering place for Latino families and a platform for local Latino entrepreneurs to showcase and grow their businesses. Through this work, we are deeply connected to and invested in the well-being, safety, and dignity of our community.

HB1840 HD1 is important because schools need stable, predictable staffing pathways—and permit timelines should align with the reality of educator exchange programs. When permitting and program duration are misaligned, it creates uncertainty for educators and administrators and can disrupt classroom continuity for students.

By directing the Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway aligned to the J-1 program duration, this bill helps schools plan more effectively and supports qualified visiting international educators who contribute valuable skills, cultural competency, and in many cases multilingual capacity to Hawai'i's classrooms. This is a practical, common-sense fix that improves consistency and reduces unnecessary administrative barriers while maintaining standards.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB1840 HD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Megahn Chun and Alejandro Villarino
Mercado de La Raza
808.593.2226



COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Conference Room 329 and Via Videoconference

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840, HD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Nakada Grandinetti, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veronica Mendoza, Founding Executive Director of Roots Reborn and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui - *The People in Action Maui*. Roots Reborn **strongly supports HB 1840, HD1**, Relating to Education, which requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

Roots Reborn is a grassroots, multicultural immigrant-justice and disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities on Maui and beyond. Born out of the August 2023 wildfires, we immediately stepped in to move aid, navigate systems alongside families, and build the trusted relationships that still anchor our work today. What began as wildfire response has grown into essential infrastructure for immigrant communities facing overlapping crises—from recovery and housing instability to shifting federal policies, increased enforcement, and rising fear.

In our work we have identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers, such as the current limitations for a visiting international educator permit for educators on the J-1 visa program. House Bill 1840, HD1 would add a new Section 302A-802 to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal J-1 program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach grades K - 12 in accredited schools, and federal standards provide for a three year visa term that can be extended to five years if certain criteria are met. House Bill 1840, HD1 would require the Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

House Bill 1840, HD1 seeks to adopt and facilitate the federal standard that allows for J-1 visa extensions from three to five years, helping foreign teachers at our schools stay longer, reducing turnover and building more integrated school communities. For this reason, Roots Reborn respectfully requests that you vote **in support of HB 1840, HD1**.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written over a horizontal line.

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*

El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1840, HD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

House Committee Consumer Protection and Commerce

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 26, 2026 | Conference Room 329 | Letter Date: February 25, 2026

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

The Legal Clinic supports HB1840, HD1, which directs the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for visiting international educators to obtain permits aligned with the duration of their J-1 visas.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing immigrant justice across Hawai'i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy, TLC welcomes and commends the fair and transparent pathway this bill will create for qualified noncitizen professionals to access stability and contribute fully to Hawai'i's schools and communities during their authorized stay.

HB1840, HD1 recognizes the important role international educators play in strengthening Hawai'i's educational system. J-1 educators are experienced, trained professionals who are often placed in hard-to-fill positions and schools facing persistent staffing shortages. Currently, Hawai'i's three-year emergency hire permit often forces effective J-1 teachers to leave prematurely, disrupting student learning, especially in rural and neighbor island schools.

HB1840, HD1 addresses this challenge by allowing permits to remain valid for the duration of an educator's J-1 exchange program participation - reducing unnecessary procedural barriers and legal uncertainty, while promoting instructional continuity. International teachers gain greater clarity and security, and students benefit from the full term of service these teachers are authorized to provide.

TLC urges the Committee to pass HB1840, HD1 to support workforce stability for our schools, strengthen educational continuity for our students, and promote fair treatment and peace of mind for our visiting international educators.

Submitted on behalf of The Legal Clinic and
Board President Amy Agbayani,

Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

LATE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

In SUPPORT of HB1840

Relating to Education

Hearing: Tuesday, February 26, 2026, 2:00pm (CPC), Room 329 & Videoconference

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

My name is Liza Ryan Gill, testifying on behalf of the **Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)**, a coalition of immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations working statewide to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen our shared future. HCIR respectfully submits this testimony **in strong support of HB1840 HD1**.

HCIR is a statewide coalition of immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations working to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen Hawai‘i’s shared future. Education is one of the most powerful tools we have to promote equity, opportunity, and long-term public well-being, and HB1840 represents an important step toward ensuring that Hawai‘i’s education system serves all students fairly and effectively.

HB1840 HD1 supports educational policies that recognize the diverse realities of Hawai‘i’s students and families, including those from immigrant and mixed-status households. When students feel safe, supported, and valued in their learning environments, they are better able to succeed academically, participate fully in school life, and contribute positively to their communities. Conversely, barriers to access, instability, or exclusionary practices undermine not only individual student outcomes but the strength of our public education system as a whole.

For immigrant and migrant families, schools are often the most trusted public institutions. They are places where children develop skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Policies that strengthen inclusivity, clarity, and access in education help ensure that no child is left behind because of language, background, or family circumstances. HB1840 advances these goals by reinforcing Hawai‘i’s commitment to educational equity and student well-being.

Importantly, strong educational policy is also sound public policy. Investments in inclusive and supportive education systems lead to higher graduation rates, a more skilled workforce, and stronger communities. When students are empowered to learn and thrive, Hawai‘i benefits socially, economically, and culturally.

For these reasons, the **Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights respectfully urges the Committee to PASS HB1840 HD1**.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

LATE

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

With gratitude,

Liza Ryan Gill

Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 7:19:45 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. I was informed by Indivisible Hawaii and feel very strongly that we should adopt policies that would make it easier for teachers to extend their visas. We have a severe teacher shortage and these teachers are proven... it doesn't make sense to have them go home and train new ones. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 7:32:28 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125 Submitted by: Gretchen Cacao **Position:** Support

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts in support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

I am currently in my third year of teaching in Hawai‘i as a J-1 exchange teacher. I was fortunate enough to recently obtain my full Hawai‘i teaching license. Looking back, reaching this milestone took a great deal of time and energy, which was often challenging to balance alongside the daily care, attention, and presence my classroom requires.

The current licensure timelines can unintentionally create a stressful environment for educators who simply want to do their best for Hawai‘i’s students. Navigating the required exams involves navigating a few very real hurdles:

- **Financial Costs:** The exams and study materials can easily exceed \$1,000, which is a significant amount to manage on a teacher's budget.
- **Logistical Delays:** Limited in-person testing (especially on neighbor islands) and strict technical requirements for virtual tests often cause delays that are simply out of a teacher’s hands.
- **Time Constraints:** Preparing for and scheduling multiple testing components takes time and energy away from lesson planning and much-needed rest.

If this legislation passes, it would gently lift a heavy weight off the shoulders of newer J-1 teachers going through this process right now. Instead of worrying about strict permit deadlines and testing bottlenecks, they could focus their hearts and minds on what truly matters: their students and their teaching practice.

We all know that students thrive in a stable, calm environment. When teachers can stay in their classrooms longer, they build deeper relationships, contribute to a positive school culture, and make a lasting impact. The J-1 program allows us to stay for up to five years, but current rigid permit limits can sometimes cut that time short, causing unnecessary disruption for the kids.

Adding a bit of reasonable flexibility to the process will help our schools hold onto caring, qualified educators while still maintaining high educational standards.

I kindly ask for your support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125 to help create a smoother, more supportive path for future educators and to ensure the best for our keiki. Mahalo for your time, your thoughtful consideration, and your dedication to Hawai'i's schools.

With gratitude,

Gretchen Cacao

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 7:56:25 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 9:05:57 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Huycke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1840.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 10:05:02 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Espinas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please accept my testimony in strong support of HB1840 HD1. Thank you.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 11:06:34 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ma Arriesa B Tejano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha to All!

I am writing in strong support of establishing an international visiting teacher license. I recommend amending HB1840, to align with SB 123, which addresses education-related matters.

The Department's J-1 Visa Program has proven highly beneficial to Hawai'i's students. Currently, 218 qualified educators, holding degrees comparable to U.S. standards, are employed across 55 schools, primarily in areas facing staffing challenges and in special education. These international educators, from communities like Waimea to Naalehu, have enthusiastically contributed to high-quality education while enriching their communities as cultural ambassadors. For the 2025-2026 school year, an additional 116 international educators will be employed as part of the Department's plan to foster students who are both "Globally Competitive and Locally Committed."

However, current state licensing regulations restrict the J-1 visa program's potential. Unlike states like Nevada, Minnesota, and North Carolina, which have simplified licensing for international educators, Hawai'i categorizes J-1 teachers as "emergency hires." This designation necessitates additional, costly examinations (potentially over \$1,000). Preparing for these exams detracts from essential tasks like analyzing student progress, communicating with families, and curriculum planning. Moreover, J-1 teachers are excluded from extra compensation offered for difficult-to-staff positions despite their equivalent contributions.

The J-1 Visa Program enhances educational and cultural opportunities in Hawai'i's schools. HB1840, is designed to enable qualified international teachers to stay for up to five years, ensuring consistent instruction and enriching learning experiences for students. Establishing an international teacher license without additional examinations will fully utilize the expertise of international educators and diversify the teaching workforce, reflecting Hawai'i's global character.

Thank you for the chance to provide testimony on HB1840.

Ma. Arriesa B. Tejano

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 5:47:11 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kehaulani Coleman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 6:06:45 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith Mura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Judith Mura Strongly Support HB1840 HD1

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 6:22:39 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anngelu Acuna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Anngelu Acuna, and I am currently serving as a visiting teacher at Wahiawa Middle School under the BridgeUSA J-1 visa program. I am writing to express my **strong support** for this bill, which would align state teaching permits with the full duration of our federal J-1 visas.

The Challenge for International Teachers

Coming to Hawai‘i to teach has been a professional dream, but the current licensing system creates significant anxiety for educators like myself.

- **The "Three-Year Wall":** Under current rules, many of us are only granted a three-year permit. However, the federal government allows us to extend our stay to five years. The uncertainty of whether our state permit will be renewed prevents us from fully committing to long-term projects and curriculum planning.
- **Financial and Administrative Burden:** Many international teachers are required to take multiple exams costing over \$1,000 to move beyond "emergency hire" status. For someone already managing the high cost of living in Hawai‘i and the costs of relocation, this is a major barrier to staying for the full five years allowed by our visas.

Why This Matters for My Students

I see firsthand how much my students value the cultural exchange I bring to the classroom.

- **Instructional Continuity:** If I am forced to leave after three years because of a permit expiration—despite being eligible for two more years under federal law—my students lose a teacher they have bonded with, and my school is forced to restart the recruitment process for a hard-to-fill position

This bill is a simple, common-sense fix. It recognizes the qualifications we already hold and allows us to focus on what we came here to do: **teach**. By aligning the permit with the J-1 visa duration, you are choosing stability for our schools and fairness for international educators.

Mahalo for your time and for supporting Hawai‘i’s teachers.

Sincerely,

Anngelu Acuna

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 6:50:37 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

As a classroom teacher who works closely with students, families, and fellow educators, I strongly support the proposed bill relating to the J-1 Visa Program, the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, and the Visiting International Educator Permit.

This bill represents an important step toward strengthening Hawai'i's educator workforce while honoring the cultural diversity that makes our schools unique. By creating a clear pathway through the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board for qualified visiting international educators under the J-1 Visa Program, the state can ensure high standards of professionalism while also addressing ongoing teacher shortages.

Hawai'i has long faced challenges in recruiting and retaining fully licensed teachers, particularly in hard-to-fill areas and rural or neighbor island schools. The Visiting International Educator Permit provides a structured and accountable way to bring in qualified, experienced educators who meet professional standards and are prepared to contribute meaningfully in the classroom. With oversight from the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, students and families can be confident that visiting teachers are properly vetted and supported.

Impact of a Strong J-1 / Cultural Exchange Teacher Program

A well-implemented J-1 cultural exchange teacher program can have a powerful and lasting impact on our schools:

- 1. Greater Stability for Students**
When international educators are able to serve for consistent, multi-year terms under a clear permitting structure, schools avoid the disruption of constantly changing teachers. Students benefit from stable relationships, consistent instructional practices, and long-term academic support. Reducing turnover strengthens classroom culture and improves student achievement.
- 2. Cultural Enrichment and Global Awareness**
J-1 teachers bring authentic cultural knowledge, global perspectives, and multilingual skills into Hawai'i classrooms. In a diverse state like Hawai'i, this cultural exchange aligns with our values and prepares students to thrive in an interconnected world. Students gain firsthand exposure to different traditions,

languages, and worldviews, enriching their educational experience.

3. Professional Collaboration and Capacity Building

Visiting educators share instructional strategies and global best practices with local teachers. This professional exchange strengthens school communities and builds instructional capacity. Rather than simply filling vacancies, J-1 teachers can become collaborative partners who contribute to long-term school improvement.

4. Reduced Recruitment Costs and Workforce Gaps

High turnover creates financial and operational strain on schools. By providing a structured Visiting International Educator Permit and clear guidelines through the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, this bill supports longer placements and better retention. Stability reduces repeated recruitment cycles and allows schools to focus on student learning instead of constant staffing transitions.

5. Community Integration

When visiting teachers remain in schools for consistent periods, they build relationships not only with students but also with families and the broader community. This continuity fosters trust and strengthens the school's role as a stable community anchor.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 6:56:21 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you -- I am a member of Indivisible Windward.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 6:58:10 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach in accredited schools in grades K - 12. The federal standards provide a three year term of the visa which can be extended if certain criteria are met to five years. HB1840 would require the Board to fully implement the federal program.

There are several hundred teachers in Hawaii under the J-1 program, dealing with our chronic, severe, teacher shortage. The rules of the program require the visa holders to make progress toward receiving a teaching certificate from the State. Since the benefits of the program to our K-12 educational system in Hawaii are significant, it makes sense to require the Board to maximize the availability of qualified candidates.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill

Jane Aquino

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 7:36:30 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MARK ANTHONY T. DOMINGO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is MARK DOMINGO and I write before you today not just as an educator, but as a dedicated member of the Hawaii teaching force serving under a J-1 visa. I am writing to urge your immediate and favorable consideration of **HB1840**. This bill is not just a policy change; for many of us, it is the lifeline that allows us to continue serving the students we have come to love.

There is a misconception that "Emergency Hires" are beginners or "untrained" individuals. I want to be very clear: **I am a fully licensed professional educator in the Philippines**. Like many of my J-1 colleagues, I arrived in Hawaii with more than **10 years of classroom experience**, a Master's degree, and a proven track record of pedagogical success. We are not new to the profession; we are seasoned experts who have chosen to bring our skills to Hawaii to help address the chronic teacher shortage and serve the keiki of this state.

When I first arrived in Hawaii, I did not come merely to "fill a vacancy." I came to give my absolute best shot to the students of this state. Every day, I walk into my classroom with a mission: to ensure that my students do not just pass, but excel. The results of this commitment are visible. In my classroom and those of my fellow J-1 colleagues, we are seeing the **tangible fruits of our labor in rising test scores, increased literacy, and a measurable closing of the achievement gap**. We are proving every day that we are high-performing professionals capable of delivering the excellence Hawaii's keiki deserve.

However, the current three-year limit on Emergency Hire Permits creates a "ticking clock" that undermines the very stability our schools crave. Three years is barely enough time to fully integrate into a school's culture and see a cohort of students through their developmental milestones. By extending this permit to **five years**, you are choosing to keep proven talent in the classroom. You are choosing to prioritize the **learners** who thrive on the continuity and the deep bonds they have built with us.

Beyond the gradebook, we J-1 teachers bring a unique set of skills to our schools. We are actively engaged in **social and speaking engagements**, bridging cultural divides and bringing a global perspective to our local communities. We don't just teach—we facilitate communication, lead extracurricular activities, and participate in the civic life of our schools. Our presence enriches the community's social fabric, preparing Hawaii's youth to be global citizens.

I urge the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to recognize our impact. We are here, we are working tirelessly, and we are delivering results. Please do not let a bureaucratic timeline cut short the progress we have made. If this extension is granted, it will ensure that the majority of dedicated emergency hires—those of us who have already proven our worth through hard work and student success—can secure the permits needed to stay in the fight for Hawaii's future.

In addition, forcing out a teacher with 15 years of experience and a Master's degree after only three years—simply because of a permit expiration—is a loss for the school and a tragedy for the students. Extending the permit to **five years** aligns with the federal J-1 visa duration and allows us the necessary time to navigate the expensive and time-consuming local licensure exams while remaining in the classroom.

I implore you to pass **HB1840**. Give us the time to finish what we started. Give our students the stability they earn. Give our schools the chance to keep the teachers who are already giving their all.

Respectfully,

MARK ANTHONY DOMINGO

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 8:03:10 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen Caringer, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Ellen R. Caringer Ph.D.

In SUPPORT of HB1840 HD1

Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 26, 2026

Dear Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi, Vice Chair Tina Nakada Grandinetti, and members of the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce,

My name is Ellen Caringer, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB1840 HD1**, which requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator’s J-1 visa program.

I am a clinical psychologist, and I am testifying as an individual. HB1840 HD1 is important because schools need stable, predictable staffing pathways—and permit timelines should align with the reality of educator exchange programs. When permitting and program duration are misaligned, it creates uncertainty for educators and administrators and can disrupt classroom continuity for students.

By directing the Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway aligned to the J-1 program duration, this bill helps schools plan more effectively and supports qualified visiting international educators who contribute valuable skills, cultural competency, and in many cases multilingual capacity to Hawai‘i’s classrooms. This is a practical, common-sense fix that improves consistency and reduces unnecessary administrative barriers while maintaining standards.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB1840 HD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Ellen R. Caringer, Ph.D.

drcaringer@gmail.com

(808) 281-7463

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 8:15:55 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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 HB 1840, which requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program. 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. 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 HB 1840, 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

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 8:38:14 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvette Kay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Yvette Kay and I am a resident of Kailua Kona, HI. I support HB1840 which Requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program. I do not support the Trump regime's racist and xenophobic agenda that prevents great teachers from other countries from legally teaching in the United States.

Staying in **Hawai'i** to teach is a meaningful opportunity for me because it is geographically closer to my home and culture in the Philippines, and many of my relatives live here. However, despite my strong passion for teaching, I find it very challenging to continue pursuing my teaching career in Hawai'i due to certification requirements and the high cost of living.

One major challenge is the requirement to pass multiple Praxis examinations in order to obtain even a temporary teaching license. Relocating from the Philippines to Florida and then to Hawai'i was a difficult adjustment for me and for my colleagues who came from the other side of the world. This transition involved more than simply adjusting to a new work environment; it affected my holistic well-being, including emotional health, financial stability, and cultural adaptation.

Because of **Hawai'i's geographic location**, living here is especially difficult for teachers coming from other countries. Housing costs in Hawai'i are extremely high, and J-1 teachers often pay between **\$1,800 and \$2,500 per month** for apartments, sometimes for shared or very limited housing. In addition, many landlords require large security deposits and advance payments, which can cost thousands of dollars before employment even begins.

Transportation is another major financial burden. Public transportation options are limited in many areas, and many J-1 teachers are required to purchase or lease a car to commute to work. Costs for transportation include car payments, insurance, fuel, registration, and maintenance, which can total **several hundred dollars per month**. These expenses significantly reduce teachers' take-home pay and increase financial stress, especially while working toward licensure requirements.

Previously, **when I worked as a public school teacher in Florida**, I was granted a **Temporary Teaching Certificate For Exchange Teachers** valid for three years, which is set to expire on June 30, 2026 and can be extended to five years by **FLDOE**. Florida provided more flexible pathways for temporary certification, and my colleagues who remain there are enrolled in short online ESOL courses that allow them to renew their temporary certificates up to five years. In addition, Florida does not have a state income tax, which helps teachers better manage living expenses while completing certification requirements without taking the Praxis Exams.

In Hawai'i, internationally trained teachers face more rigid certification requirements. **The Praxis examinations are costly, and repeated attempts place a heavy financial burden on educators.** I have taken the Praxis exams multiple times and given my best effort, yet I

have not passed all required tests. This experience has been emotionally discouraging and has lowered my self-esteem, even though I remain fully committed to teaching and supporting students.

If teachers like me were granted the opportunity to remain through a **five-year hire permit**, we would have the stability needed to adapt fully to Hawai'i's educational system, strengthen our teaching effectiveness, and meet licensure requirements without the constant pressure of time and financial insecurity. This extended period would allow us to better serve our students, contribute meaningfully to Hawai'i's schools, and share our skills, knowledge, and cultural experiences during our temporary stay in the United States.

Meriam Alvarez

ELA / SPED Inclusion Teacher

H.P. Baldwin High School

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:16:21 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB 1840

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 HB 1840, a bill that will significantly benefit Hawaii's keikis 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. HB 1840 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 HB 439 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 HB 1840 and give Hawaii's keiki's future top priority.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:28:44 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support HB1840.

A member of Indivisible Hawaii

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:38:03 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emelyn Barba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TO: House Committee on Education

FROM: EMELYN BARBA

POSITION: J-1 International Teacher, Lihikai Elementary School

DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 2026

RE: Support for HB1840 – Relating to International Teacher Employment

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

My name is [Emelyn Barba, and I am currently serving as a J-1 International Teacher at **Lihikai Elementary School** on Maui. I am writing to express my **strong support** for HB1840.

The Impact at Lihikai Elementary

As an educator at Lihikai, I have seen firsthand the challenges our schools face regarding teacher shortages. My presence here is not just about filling a vacancy; it is about providing stability for my students and bringing a global perspective to our "Surfers" community.

By supporting this bill, you are ensuring that:

- **Consistency for Students:** International teachers can focus on long-term student outcomes without the stress of bureaucratic hurdles regarding their credentials or status.
- **Cultural Exchange:** My students learn about the world through our daily interactions, fostering a more inclusive and globally-aware generation of Hawaii’s youth.
- **Professional Parity:** This bill recognizes the high level of expertise and dedication we bring from our home countries, treating us as the professionals we are.

Why This Bill Matters

Coming to Hawaii to teach is a significant sacrifice and a major professional commitment. HB1840 provides the necessary framework to ensure that the transition and retention of qualified

international teachers are handled fairly. It helps bridge the gap in our education system while maintaining the high standards that Hawaii's Department of Education requires.

Lihikai Elementary and schools across the islands rely on the diverse skill sets of international educators. We are committed to the success of our students, and we ask that the state shows that same commitment to us by passing this measure.

I strongly urge the committee to pass HB1840. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your dedication to Hawaii's public education system.

Sincerely,

EMELYN BARBA

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 10:20:12 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angela Young	CARES Community Advocacy Research Education Services	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support

**Testimony of Wendy Naomi Sodetani
In SUPPORT of HB1840 HD1**

Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 26, 2026

Dear Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi, Vice Chair Tina Nakada Grandinetti, and members of the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce,

My name is **Wendy Naomi Sodetani**, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB1840 HD1**, which requires the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

I am testifying as an individual born and raised in Hawai'i and an active member of the Indivisible Hawai'i Statewide Network (IHSN). I recently retired from a community health center in Kalihi caring for vulnerable underserved populations, primarily low-income, new immigrant and Pacific island migrant families. Our health center provided wraparound health education and social programs, working closely with administrators and educators at all Kalihi schools (K-12) to meet the health and educational needs of our diverse multilingual community.

HB1840 HD1 is important because schools need stable, predictable staffing pathways—and permit timelines should align with the reality of educator exchange programs. When permitting and program duration are misaligned, it creates uncertainty for educators and administrators and can disrupt classroom continuity for students.

By directing the Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway aligned to the J-1 program duration, this bill helps schools plan more effectively and supports qualified visiting international educators who contribute valuable skills, cultural competency, and in many cases multilingual capacity to Hawai'i's classrooms. This is a practical, common-sense fix that improves consistency and reduces unnecessary administrative barriers while maintaining standards.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB1840 HD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Wendy Naomi Sodetani
Member of Indivisible Hawai'i Statewide Network (IHSN)
naomisodetani@gmail.com
(808) 741-0555

February 25, 2026

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair
Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
House of Representatives
Hawaii State Legislature
Conference Room 329
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Grandinetti and Members

RE: HB1840 Relating to Education

Aloha. My name is Randall Francisco. I am writing in strong support of this legislation. I have had the opportunity and privilege to work closely with the J1 teachers (57 on Kauai) during the past three years as a volunteer since I first learned about the importance of this US State Department Program. Many of us are already aware of both the contributions and challenges the teachers experience. We understand that the true pathway to success is that the Department of Education cannot succeed alone on behalf of the teachers and ultimately, the students whom we all serve. We as a Kauai community continue to support and earnestly partner with the DOE and teachers for their primary success: teaching students in the island's public school system for their success and address some of the teacher shortage areas, especially, in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. The Filipino community especially as individuals, community organizations and, businesses understand that the pathway to success is our strengthened partnership, support and thoughtfulness with the department, teachers and administrators of each school.

I also especially, acknowledge the issues raised by the Hawaii Standards Teachers Board in their previous testimony to the House Education Committee regarding the private agencies involved that both DOE and J1 teachers are working with. I humbly ask for your approval and passage of this bill but, with amendments to seriously consider and address issues raised regarding the administration of this program with the private sector agencies and the D.O.E. I acknowledge the HTSB for bringing the issues raised in their testimony to our attention. They are doing what they must do for the benefit of all involved. Please consider amendments related to this issue to be incorporated into the bill.

Thank You for your time and consideration.

Selamat Po,



Randall Francisco
Hanapepe, Kauai, HI

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 11:50:28 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of HB1840 HD1 because I believe it will help with our state's qualified teacher shortage. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 12:34:41 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jayson Nucup	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jayson Nucup, and I strongly support this bill requiring the [Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board](#) to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned with the J-1 visa program.

As a J-1 teacher in Hawai'i, I have seen how international educators help address teacher shortages while enriching our schools with diverse perspectives. Aligning the permit with the J-1 visa duration will reduce administrative barriers, provide stability for schools, and allow educators to focus on student learning.

I respectfully urge you to pass this measure.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 12:38:00 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

TO INCLUDE FOLLOWING MODELS FROM "BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS"

1840 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE
Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 2:00 pm
Conference Room 329 and Via Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840, HD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Nakada Grandinetti, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I am also an attorney licensed in the state of Hawaii for over 25 years and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui — The People in Action Maui. I am writing today in **strong support of HB 1840, HD1**, Relating to Education, which requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program.

Early in my career I worked on gender equity in STEM as a workforce development issue for many years. I focused on issues in recruitment and retention and wrote over ten peer-reviewed papers on best practices in the field. One of the key workforce development areas I identified in my work with K-12 teachers and administrators in Hawaii was the gaps in the education-to-workforce pipeline. This is an issue that we continue to see today when it comes to the education, recruitment and retention of teachers.

In my work I identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers to recruiting and retaining teachers for our schools on Maui. One such barrier is lack of consistency between federal and state standards for visiting international educator permits for educators on the J-1 visa program. House Bill 1840, HD1 would help remedy this situation and improve the pathway for longer retention of teachers on the J-1 visa program by adding a new Section 302A-802 to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal J-1 program standards provide for a three year visa term that can be extended to five years if certain criteria are met. House Bill 1840, HD1 would require the Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

House Bill 1840, HD1 seeks to adopt and facilitate the federal standard that allows for J-1 visa extensions from three to five years, helping foreign teachers at our schools stay longer, reducing teacher turnover and building more integrated school communities with more experienced teachers. For this reason, I respectfully request that you vote **in support of HB 1840, HD1**.

Mahalo for supporting our schools and our valued J-1 visa teachers,

Christine Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 12:41:18 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840

Relating to the J-1 Visa Program and Visiting International Educator Permits

TO: The Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) and Members of the Legislative Committee

FROM: Raymart Jayson M. Fundal, PhD

POSITION: Special Education Teacher, Kainalu Elementary School

DATE: February 25, 2026

Personal Statement of Support

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Raymart Jayson M. Fundal**, and I am writing to you today with a heart full of gratitude for the opportunity to serve the children of Hawai‘i, balanced with a heavy concern for the future of international educators in our islands. I have been a dedicated Special Education teacher for nearly nine years, a licensed professional in the Philippines, and I am currently in my third year as a J-1 international exchange teacher.

I wish I could provide this testimony in person or online; however, my current priority must remain with my students. Between focusing on their needs, collaborating with my colleagues, and preparing for my upcoming **EES (Educator Effectiveness System) observation**, I have chosen to submit this detailed written testimony to ensure my voice is heard while I continue my duties in the classroom.

I am testifying in **strong support of HB 1840**, which seeks to align the visiting international educator permit with the actual five-year duration of our J-1 visas.

The Reality of a Special Education Teacher

For the past three years, I have poured my soul into my students. However, the path to remaining here has been a struggle of "time versus duty":

- **Year 1 (Transition):** My first year was spent navigating a new culture and a complex transportation situation, often walking 15–30 minutes to school. My energy was focused on learning the ECSSS system and ensuring my students with special needs had stability.
- **Year 2 (Dedication):** I fully adjusted to the "Hawai'i Way," but my days remained consumed by IEP meetings, EOEL training, and creating Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). While I was also pursuing my PhD in Special Education, the sheer volume of work left very little time for the rigorous review required for the Praxis.
- **Year 3 (The Current Crisis):** I am proud to share that I **graduated with my PhD in Special Education in November 2025**. Yet, despite this high level of academic achievement, I face the terrifying reality of being sent home. I have five Praxis tests to pass, and with only a few months left in the school year, the pressure is overwhelming.

The Significant Financial Burden

Beyond the emotional and academic stress, there is a substantial financial risk involved for international teachers. Every year, we must pay for visa renewals, which cost over **\$1,500**. In this third year, including extensions and renewals, the total reaches over **\$1,700**.

If I pay these non-refundable fees today but do not pass the Praxis requirements by the deadline, that hard-earned money—along with the fees for the tests themselves—is essentially lost. It is a heavy financial gamble for educators who are already working tirelessly to support our local schools.

An Appeal for Fairness and Reciprocity

It is difficult to see my colleagues in California, Texas, and Chicago—friends I started this journey with—continuing into their 4th and 5th years without these specific testing barriers. I humbly ask the HTSB to consider:

1. **Alignment with Other States:** Many states allow credential evaluation or license reciprocity for experienced international teachers.
2. **Equity in Testing:** The number of Praxis tests required is inconsistent; some must take eight, while others take five. This creates an uneven playing field.
3. **Valuing Experience:** I have a PhD and nearly a decade of classroom experience. My "High Quality" status is proven daily in my classroom, not in a testing center.

A Message of Gratitude

If this is to be my last year in the islands, I want to express my deepest Mahalo:

- **To my Students and Parents:** Thank you so much for believing in me. I treasure your kindness and your positive feedback. I view my role as more than just a teacher; I serve with my heart, gentle hands, and as a "second parent" to every child in my care.
- **To my Leadership:** To **Principal Kimberly Maeda**, who saw my potential and hired me, and to **Principal Resha Ramolete**, for her kindness and for helping me become the best version of myself.
- **To my Community:** To my landlord and mentor, **Principal Keoki Fraiser**, for being my 'ohana and making my transition seamless, and to the local and Filipino communities who sustained me.

I ask you to please "walk in our shoes." We are filling the gaps in Hawai'i's hardest-to-staff classrooms. Please pass HB 1840 to allow us the full five years to share our culture and expertise with the children of Hawai'i.

Mahalo Nui Loa for your time, your kindness, and your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymart Jayson M. Fundal, PhD

*Special Education Teacher
Kainalu Elementary School
3rd Year As JI Teacher
rjmunifundal060596@gmail.com*

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 1:18:07 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KAREN FAYE SOBERANO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a J-1 teacher from the Philippines, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to teach in the United States. This experience has helped me grow professionally and personally, and I am committed to fulfilling all the requirements expected of me, including passing the Praxis examination.

However, I humbly hope that we may be given more time to meet this requirement.

Many of us are adjusting not only to a new educational system, but also to a new culture, environment, and set of professional expectations. We balance full-time teaching responsibilities, lesson preparation, student needs, and personal obligations — both here and back home. Financially, the Praxis exam and review materials are also a significant expense.

We are not unwilling to take the exam. In fact, we are preparing and doing our best. But having additional time would ease the pressure and allow us to prepare more effectively, increasing our chances of passing rather than rushing and risking multiple costly attempts.

We are dedicated teachers who want to succeed. With a little more flexibility and understanding, we believe we can meet the standards required and continue contributing positively to our schools and students.

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 1:57:01 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lenie Horos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Proposed Testimony in Support of the Bill

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

I am Lenie Horos, and I am a J1 teacher currently serving under an emergency permit in the State of Hawaii and I stand in strong support of this bill with a proposed amendment. Specifically, I urge the committee to allow emergency hire permit renewals after three years, rather than enforcing a rigid five-year.

J1 educators were recruited to fill critical gaps in Hawaii schools. We carry the same workloads and responsibilities as our licensed peers. However, the transition to a new educational system while balancing full time teaching makes the current licensing timeline a significant hurdle.

I respectfully ask for your support in amending this bill to keep qualified teachers where they belong with their students.

Mahalo for your time.

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 2:10:58 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

I am currently a second-year J-1 teacher at Waimea High School, where I serve as a secondary science teacher. I teach full-time, work closely with diverse learners, and actively contribute to my school community. Like many J-1 teachers, I came to Hawai‘i with a strong commitment to teaching, professional growth, and long-term service to students and schools in the state.

I fully support the goal of ensuring that all teachers meet Hawai‘i’s licensure standards. I am actively working toward licensure and intend to complete all required exams. However, the current three-year limit imposed through the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) permit structure does not realistically reflect the time, preparation, and access challenges involved in completing the licensure process—particularly for J-1 teachers working full-time in high-need schools.

Licensure exams require extensive preparation, multiple test components, and significant financial investment. Between registration fees, study materials, and retake costs if needed, the total expense can easily reach or exceed \$1,000. As a J-1 teacher, I also balance living expenses, family obligations, and the high cost of living in Hawai‘i while working full-time in the classroom. These realities affect the pace at which exams can reasonably be completed.

Testing access further compounds the challenge. On neighbor islands, in-person testing centers are limited, and available dates may be months apart. Travel to another island for testing requires time off from school and additional expenses, while online testing options are often restricted by strict environmental requirements that are difficult to meet in shared or modest living spaces.

Despite these challenges, I—and many other J-1 teachers—remain fully committed to our schools and students. We are not asking to bypass licensure requirements, but rather for reasonable flexibility in timelines that acknowledge the real conditions under which we teach and prepare. When effective teachers are forced to leave after three years despite making documented progress, students lose trusted educators, schools lose continuity, and communities lose stability.

LATE

The J-1 program allows teachers to serve for up to five years, yet current permit limitations often reduce effective classroom service to only three. This shortened window makes it difficult for teachers to fully prepare for licensure exams while maintaining instructional quality and consistency for students. Extending or aligning permit timelines more realistically would allow teachers to complete licensure responsibly while continuing to serve Hawai'i's learners.

I want to continue teaching in Hawai'i, build long-term relationships with my students, and contribute meaningfully to my school community. Policies that allow flexibility while maintaining high standards will help retain dedicated educators and strengthen Hawai'i's public education system.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to Hawai'i's students and teachers.

Respectfully,
Arnie I. Calamaya
J1 Secondary Teacher
Waimea High School

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 3:03:29 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Isabella Bett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony Regarding HB1840

Relating to Education (Visiting International Educator Permit)

To: The Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board / House Committee on Education

From: Isabella Bett

Position: Special Education (SPED) Teacher, Kalaheo High School **Experience:** 10 Years of teaching

Origin: Kenya

Position: Support with Comments

I am writing to express my **strong support** for HB1840, which seeks to align the visiting international educator permit with the duration of the J-1 visa program.

As a SPED teacher currently serving the community at Kalaheo High School, I have seen firsthand how vital the J-1 program is for filling critical vacancies while enriching the local classroom environment. However, I would like to offer a specific recommendation regarding the duration of the permit extension.

Mahalo,

Isabella Bett

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 3:24:14 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maria Teresa Brioso	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TO: MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE

From: Maria Brioso

Date: February 25, 2026

Position: Biology Teacher (Secondary J1 Exchange Teacher)

Dear Chair and Members of Committee

I am a J1 Exchange teacher teaching Biology at Kaimuki High School, residing at Honolulu. I am writing a strong support of HB 1840, which relates to education in Hawai'i which align state teaching permit with federal J1 visa duration from 3 years to 5 years to provide stability for international educators and SPED students.

I support this measure because as a dedicated international teacher I face licensure hurdle that force me to leave the classroom after only 3 years, eventhough our federal visa allows us to 5 years. This creates unnecessary turnover that affect and hurt our students especially SPED learners who rely on consistent trust.

This legislation will have a positive impact on our community which provide stability, our school need by streamlining these permits. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

Sincerely,

LATE

Maria Brioso

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 3:45:30 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heriel Jhon Sarmiento Bravo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Chair and Members of the Committees on Education

From: Heriel Jhon Bravo

Date: February 25, 2026

Subject: **TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1825 / SB2616 ---**

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

My name is **Heriel Jhon Bravo**, and I am currently in my third year as an **Exchange Teacher from the Philippines**, serving the students and community here in Hawai‘i. I am writing to express my strong support for **HB1825 / SB2616**, which addresses critical issues surrounding teacher retention, permit duration, and licensure pathways.

In my time teaching here, I have seen firsthand how much our students thrive on consistency. When a teacher’s future is uncertain due to bureaucratic hurdles or short-term permit durations, it creates an underlying tension that affects the entire classroom. This bill is a vital step toward ensuring **instructional continuity**, allowing students to build long-term relationships with their educators without the fear of sudden transitions.

For myself and many of my colleagues from the Philippines and other nations, this bill is a significant relief. Navigating licensure and permit renewals can be an overwhelming process. By streamlining these pathways and extending permit durations:

- **Reduced Anxiety:** It will greatly lessen the worries of exchange teachers regarding our legal and professional standing.
- **Focus on Pedagogy:** When we aren't preoccupied with the complexities of permit expiration, we can pour 100% of our energy and creativity into **teaching and supporting our students**.
- **Professional Growth:** It recognizes the value we bring to the Department of Education and provides a clearer path for us to contribute to Hawai‘i’s educational landscape.

Conclusion

LATE

Teacher retention is not just an administrative goal; it is the backbone of a successful school system. HB1825 / SB2616 acknowledges the hard work of all teachers—including those of us who have traveled from abroad to serve Hawai‘i’s keiki—and provides the stability we need to do our jobs effectively.

I urge the committee to pass this measure to support a more stable, focused, and empowered teaching force.

Mahalo for your time and for your dedication to Hawai‘i’s education.

Sincerely,

Heriel Jhon Bravo Exchange Teacher

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 4:00:58 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan De Guia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is Ryan G. De Guia. I am currently hired as a J-1 educator serving under the Exchange Visitor Program. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1840. This bill is a vital step in addressing Hawai'i's teacher shortage and ensuring our keiki receive the stable, high-quality instruction they deserve. While federal BridgeUSA rules authorize us for five years, current state "emergency hire" policies often force us out after only three. This creates an unnecessary hurdle for dedicated teachers like myself. Extending the limit from 3 to 5 years allows us to fulfill our full exchange potential. It ensures we don't have to leave our students just as we have "hit our stride" and fully integrated into our school communities. In addition, the current requirement to pass multiple Praxis exams in a short window is a significant financial burden. Maybe by extending the timeline, you give us the necessary breathing room to prepare for licensure without the constant anxiety of displacement hanging over our heads. I urge you to pass HB1840. Mahalo for your time and for supporting educators like me.

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 4:05:17 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

To the Committee:

My name is Ma. Disalyn Gale, and I am a J-1 visiting international teacher currently serving in a Hawaii public school. I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of HB1840 HD1.

As a participant in the BridgeUSA J-1 Teacher Program, I came to Hawaii to help address the teacher shortage while contributing to cultural exchange in our classrooms. I am proud to serve students from diverse backgrounds, including many Filipino students who benefit from seeing educators who reflect their culture and experiences.

To participate in this program, I went through a recruitment and sponsorship process under Foreign Cultural Exchange, now operating as Teacher Lounge. This process required multiple program-related fees. While we willingly invested in this opportunity, the financial obligations were significant and, at times, lacked sufficient transparency. For many international educators, these upfront and ongoing costs already represent a considerable burden before even arriving in Hawaii.

Under the current licensing system, visiting international teachers must also complete multiple additional examinations that can cost over one thousand dollars and require extensive preparation time. These additional requirements further increase financial strain while we are simultaneously adjusting to a new educational system and cultural environment.

Because the J-1 visa program has a limited duration, many of us are unable to complete full Hawaii licensure within the three-year period. As a result, we are prevented from remaining for the optional two-year extension permitted under federal guidelines. This affects instructional continuity for students and reduces the State’s ability to benefit from qualified educators who are already successfully teaching in Hawaii classrooms.

HB1840 HD1 would create a more equitable and practical pathway by aligning a visiting international educator permit with the duration of the J-1 visa program. This measure supports teacher retention, reduces unnecessary barriers, and strengthens cultural exchange while maintaining professional standards.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1840 HD1.

LATE

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,
Ma. Disalyn Gale
J-1 Visiting International Educator
Hawaii Public School System

Testimony in Support of 1840 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION
Hearing Date: Feb 26, 2026, at 2:00 PM

Aloha!

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

LATE

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.

LATE

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 the whole 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. My father passed away last July 6, 2025.

Through prayer, enthusiasm, and hard work, I am given the opportunity to teach at Maui High School as an Integrated science 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. I am also a Grade 9 level adviser of Ahinahina Academy. 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 an Integrated Science 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 1840. 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 Texas, Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico.

LATE

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.

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.

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 sincerely pray and hope that you will support the passage of 1840 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION, which encourages and motivates our

LATE

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 9 Integrated Science teacher

Grade 9 Level Adviser

Maui High School

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

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 4:51:14 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JESSA VERGARA MONGE	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members, my name is Jessa and I am a first-year J-1 teacher in the HIDOE writing in strong support of **HB1840**. Aligning our state permit with the federal five-year visa duration is essential for teacher retention and student stability. Currently, as a new educator in Hawaii, I face the immense emotional burden of a three-year "countdown" to pass the Praxis while simultaneously adapting to a new culture, a new educational system, and a completely new environment. This intense pressure creates unnecessary stress that detracts from our primary focus: our students. By passing HB1840, you allow experienced, fully licensed international professionals the time and fair pathways necessary to serve Hawaii's keiki without the immediate threat of a short-term deadline. Mahalo for your support in providing a more sustainable and compassionate path for visiting educators.

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 5:17:54 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Marie Monares	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

I am in my second year of teaching at Wailuku Elementary School. I am writing in strong support of this bill.

Teaching in Hawai‘i has been a meaningful experience for me. I work hard every day to support my students and create a safe and welcoming classroom. Like many international teachers, I am adjusting to a new country, a new school system, and new licensing requirements, all while teaching full time.

The current licensing process is difficult to complete within three years. It costs a lot of money and requires long hours of study outside the classroom. Even though we are qualified and committed teachers, many of us may be forced to leave before we can finish all requirements.

This bill would allow international teachers to stay for the full length of our J-1 visa through a visiting international educator permit. This helps students by giving them stable teachers, helps schools save money on training new staff, and allows teachers like me to continue serving our school communities.

I want to continue teaching at Wailuku Elementary School and stay in Hawai‘i. Please support this bill and help us keep dedicated teachers in the classroom.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Anna Marie Monares

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 6:01:56 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse Hutchison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you!

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 6:27:55 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rodulfo Singcol Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a first-year J-1 teacher in Hawai‘i, I feel grateful for the chance to teach and learn in a new culture while supporting my students every day. At the same time, I used to worry about how quickly my time might end before I could truly grow in my role. Because of HB1840 and the work of the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board, I now feel more secure knowing there is a pathway that extends the permit from three years to five. Having this extra time means I can build stronger relationships with students, families, and colleagues. It also gives me space to improve my teaching skills and contribute more to my school community. I feel appreciated and supported as an international educator who wants to make a positive difference. This change gives me hope and confidence to continue serving Hawai‘i’s students with dedication and care.

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 7:03:45 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

My name is Princes Joy Calingangan, and I am a J-1 Exchange Teacher currently teaching the students of August Ahrens Elementary/ Leeward District. I am writing to testify in **strong support** of measures that extend permit durations, streamline licensure pathways, and prioritize teacher retention.

The transition period for international teachers is tight. I firmly believe that J-1 teachers in Hawai'i should be granted the full five-year stay allowed under federal exchange guidelines, paired with clear pathways to local licensure.

The Impact on Hawai'i's Haumāna

Keeping J-1 teachers for a full five years is about one thing: student success. When teachers are forced to leave after only three years because of permit rules, students lose the mentors they trust and classrooms lose stability. High teacher turnover hurts how much students learn. A five-year window gives us the time we need to finish all the requirements for a Hawaii teaching license while staying in the classroom. By our third year, we aren't just visitors—we are part of the school 'ohana. We understand the local culture and our students' specific needs. Letting us stay longer protects the state's investment in us and gives our students the consistent, qualified teachers they deserve.

A Commitment to Long-Term Success

Hawai'i's teacher shortage is no secret. We J-1 teachers are not just a "quick fix" or a temporary patch. We are dedicated professionals who want to help the islands' students succeed for years to come. However, our current state rules don't match our federal visa timelines. This creates a "revolving door" where experienced teachers are forced to leave just as they are making a real impact. Without a permit that lasts the full five years, the "revolving door" continues, and it is our students who lose out the most.

LATE

I respectfully ask the committee to support HB1840 / SB2875. By aligning state teaching permits with the 5-year J-1 visa, you are choosing classroom stability and high-quality education for every child in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and for your commitment to Hawai'i's public education system.

Sincerely,

Princes Joy Calingangan

J1 Teacher

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 7:19:32 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lily Troy MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1840 HD1

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 8:39:25 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Justice, M.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi, Vice Chair Tina Nakada Grandinetti, and members of the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce,

My name is Robert Justice, M.D., and I offer my sincere apologies for missing the deadline for submitting testimony on this bill. However, I hope that you will still consider my testimony. I am testifying personally and as a member of Indivisible Hawaii. I strongly support of HB1840 HD1, which

requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit that is aligned with the duration of the educator’s J-1 visa program.

HB1840 HD1 is important because schools need stable, predictable staffing pathways, and permit timelines should align with the reality of educator exchange programs. When permitting and program duration are misaligned, it creates uncertainty for educators and administrators and can disrupt classroom continuity for students. By directing the Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway aligned to the J-1 program duration, this bill helps schools plan more effectively and supports qualified visiting international educators who contribute valuable skills, cultural competency, and in many cases multilingual capacity to Hawai‘i’s classrooms.

This is a practical, common-sense fix that improves consistency and reduces unnecessary administrative barriers while maintaining standards. For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee pass HB1840 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Robert Justice, M.D.

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:16:52 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Joy Fernandez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Elizabeth Joy M. Fernandez, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of extending the J-1 visa program for teachers from three (3) years to five (5) years without requiring the Praxis examination.

Teachers recruited from the Philippines under the J-1 visa program are already fully qualified professional educators before arriving in Hawai‘i. They have successfully passed the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT) in the Philippines and have completed a minimum of two years of teaching experience in their home country. These educators come to Hawai‘i not as novice teachers, but as licensed and experienced professionals who are prepared to contribute immediately to the classroom.

The extension of the J-1 visa from three years to five years would provide significant benefits to both the State of Hawai‘i and the teachers themselves.

First, it would promote stability and continuity in our schools. By their third year, J-1 teachers have already adapted to the culture, expectations, and diverse learning needs of students in Hawai‘i. They have built meaningful relationships with students, families, and colleagues. Requiring them to leave after only three years disrupts student learning and forces schools to restart the costly and time-intensive process of recruiting and training new teachers.

Second, extending the visa would help address the ongoing teacher shortage in Hawai‘i. The Hawaii Department of Education continues to rely on international educators to fill critical vacancies, particularly in hard-to-staff schools and subject areas. Allowing qualified J-1 teachers to remain for up to five years maximizes the investment already made in their recruitment, onboarding, and professional development.

Third, requiring the Praxis test for extension may create unnecessary barriers for experienced and already licensed professionals. These teachers have demonstrated their competence through years of teaching experience and successful performance evaluations in Hawai‘i classrooms. Their effectiveness should be measured by their classroom impact and professional contributions, not solely by an additional standardized test.

LATE

Extending the J-1 visa to five years without requiring the Praxis examination is a practical, equitable, and mutually beneficial solution. It strengthens workforce stability, supports student achievement, reduces recruitment costs, and honors the professional qualifications these educators already possess.

This proposal represents a win-win situation for both the State of Hawai'i and our dedicated J-1 teachers who have committed themselves to serving our students and communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to supporting Hawai'i's educators and students.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Joy M. Fernandez

TESTIMONY ON *HB1840*- RELATING TO THE HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

TO: The House Committee on Education

FROM: Janica Mary Pogoy

POSITION: Second-Year J-1 Teacher, Lehua Elementary School

LATE

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

I am writing to express my **strong support for HB1840** which proposes extending the emergency hire permit for teachers from three years to five years. I am a dedicated educator currently in my second year as a J-1 exchange teacher, and I am sharing my perspective to highlight the unintended obstacles the current three-year limit places on qualified professionals.

Professional Value and Preparation

I am a "**full-pledged**" **Master's degree holder** from the Philippines. I intentionally earned my advanced degree to prepare myself for the rigor of the American classroom and to share my culture with the community here in Hawaii. **My transcripts were evaluated by nationally recognized agencies (such as SPANTRAN/CARREE) and deemed equivalent to U.S. standards (as we were told prior to coming here).** To be honest, it is frustrating that my Master's degree and evaluated transcripts don't seem to count for much when compared to the PRAXIS. I am a capable teacher, but this exam is a huge struggle for me. The current 3-year limit doesn't give us enough time to overcome this hurdle while also dealing with the high cost of living and the demands of our first years in a new country.

The Challenges of the 3-Year Timeline

The current three-year window creates an environment of high-pressure "survival" rather than professional growth:

- **Financial Burden:** Between the high cost of living in Hawaii and the expensive fees for the PRAXIS exams, the financial strain is immense.
- **Mental Health:** The pressure to pass multiple exams within a short window—knowing that our ability to stay and teach depends on it—is a significant burden on our mental well-being.
- **National Inconsistency:** Many of our colleagues teaching in the mainland U.S. are granted 5-year permits based on their evaluated credentials. We are simply asking for parity with our peers in other states.

LATE

The Goal: A Fair Path to Success

I'm not looking for a way around the standards—I truly value them. I'm just looking for a timeline that makes meeting them possible without burning out. We love these schools and these kids; they are the reason we're here. Many of us have big dreams to keep learning and growing professionally, but the 'three years or you're out' rule makes it feel like we're constantly racing against a clock. **It's hard to give my students 100% when I'm worried that my time here has an expiration date.**

By extending the permit to **five years**, you provide us with the necessary time to navigate the licensing process without the constant fear of displacement. It allows us to be the stable, high-quality educators Hawaii's students deserve.

I respectfully urge the committee to **pass HB1840** and support the teachers who have traveled across the world to serve the children of Hawaii and not just to us J1 but to all emergency hired teachers. WE ALSO MATTER.

Mahalo for your time and for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Janica Mary Pogoy

808-927-6685 | janicamarycartalla@gmail.com

Testimony in Support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125

Submitted by: Mark Vincent Espiritu

Position: Support

LATE

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

My name is Mark Vincent Espiritu, and I respectfully submit this testimony as a J-1 teacher currently serving in Hawai'i's public schools. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

J-1 teachers like myself play a vital role in maintaining instructional continuity, particularly in rural, neighbor island, and high-need schools where staffing shortages are ongoing. We are fully committed to our students and school communities, and we actively work toward meeting Hawai'i's licensure requirements while fulfilling our classroom responsibilities.

However, the pathway to full licensure presents significant practical barriers. The cumulative cost of required licensure examinations and preparation materials can exceed \$1,000, creating a substantial financial burden. In addition, limited in-person testing availability on neighbor islands often leads to long scheduling delays. Virtual testing options are frequently restricted due to strict proctoring policies, internet connectivity limitations, or testing environment requirements that are beyond our control. These barriers delay progress despite our good-faith efforts and documented advancement toward licensure.

When emergency permit limits are applied rigidly without consideration of these realities, effective teachers who are actively making progress may be required to leave their classrooms prematurely. This disrupts student learning, affects school stability, and places additional strain on administrators and fellow educators. The impact is felt not only by teachers, but most importantly by the students who rely on consistent instruction and trusted relationships.

Although the J-1 program allows educators to serve for up to five years, the combined effects of licensure timelines and permit limitations often reduce our effective classroom service to approximately three years. This shortened period undermines the stability that students need to build meaningful relationships and limits the long-term

LATE

instructional growth that teachers can provide. It also diminishes the cultural exchange and global perspective that the J-1 program brings to Hawai'i's schools.

Looking toward the future of education in Hawai'i, these barriers threaten the long-term stability of our school system. Without reasonable flexibility, schools may continue to experience frequent turnover, making it difficult to sustain strong school culture, mentorship systems, and consistent academic progress. Retaining experienced, qualified, and dedicated educators is essential to building resilient and high-performing schools for the next generation.

These bills offer a balanced solution—maintaining professional standards while recognizing real-world challenges. Extending emergency permit flexibility for J-1 teachers who demonstrate measurable progress toward licensure ensures stability for students while preserving accountability.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your favorable consideration and strong support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125. Supporting these measures is an investment in stability, continuity, and the long-term success of Hawai'i's students.

Mahalo for your time and commitment to Hawai'i's public education system.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Vincent Espiritu

LATE

Good day,

I am Eva P. Dapin a kindergarten teacher in Naalehu Elementary School. As a J1 teacher originally from the Philippines. I fully support the proposal to extend the emergency hire period in Hawaii from three to five years for the following reasons.

First -As a J-1 international teacher, my first year in Hawaii was a profound period of transition. It was a phase dedicated entirely to navigating a new culture and learning. Adapting to a new curriculum while ensuring my students felt support required my undivided attention and energy.

During my second year, I made the significant decision to have my family join me here. This period required my full heart as I helped them adjust to a new life and find their place in the Hawaii community. These first few years were a whirlwind of adaptation; while I have worked tirelessly to prepare for the Praxis exams, the weight of these major life transitions made it incredibly difficult to give my studies the singular focus they require. As I would reach the three-year mark, the pressure of the current permit deadline is creating an overwhelming sense of anxiety. This stress, rather than being a motivator, has become a significant barrier, making it increasingly difficult to perform my best on the exams despite my deep commitment to my profession.

Despite these challenges I am proud to say that now in the middle of the school year the Annual Typical Growth of my students in Reading is 61% and 56% in Math in I-ready.

So, an extension to five years would provide the necessary breathing room to overcome these hurdles. It would ensure that I can continue to serve my students with the focus and excellence they deserve, while also maintaining the stability of my family.

Second- Beyond the logistical challenges, the most compelling reason for this extension is the deep bond I have formed with my students. I have stood by them through their challenges and triumphs and seeing them grow to the point where they are ready to take the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) would mean the world to both them and me.

This extension is about more than just filling a vacancy in the Hawaii Department of Education; it is about honoring the genuine human connections we have built. We have helped one another grow as individuals, and I want to see that journey through. To leave now would not just be a loss of a teacher, but the breaking of a vital support system for my students.

Ultimately, I am not asking for a shortcut, but for the fair opportunity to finish the journey I started for the sake of my students and my family. The current three-year limit creates an unnecessary 'revolving door' that disrupts the learning environment and penalizes teachers who have already proven their dedication. By aligning our state permits with the five-year duration of the J-1 visa, you are choosing to prioritize student achievement and classroom continuity over administrative barriers. I am committed to finishing my licensure and continuing my service to the keiki of Hawaii; I simply ask for the time and the fair opportunity to do so

Mahalo for your time, your compassion, and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Eva P. Dapin

LATE

LATE Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

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

My name is Dean Patrick R. Espiritu, and I am currently serving as a J-1 Visa teacher at Samuel E. Kalama Intermediate School in the State of Hawaii. I am writing to you today to urge your strong support for HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

I came to Hawai'i to share my expertise, support our students, and engage in a meaningful cultural exchange. I love my students, and I am fully committed to their success. However, under the current permit restrictions, my ability to remain in my classroom for the full duration of my five-year J-1 program is being cut short by bureaucratic timelines.

To transition from a permit to full licensure, I am required to take multiple exams. Between study materials and registration fees, the cost often exceeds \$1,000. On a teacher's salary, while adjusting to the high cost of living in Hawai'i, this is a significant financial burden that takes time to save for.

For those of us on neighbor islands, testing centers are limited. Scheduling an exam often requires significant travel or navigating complex virtual testing requirements that are not always accessible.

While federal law allows J-1 teachers to serve for five years, Hawai'i's current permit laws often effectively limit us to three. This means just as I have built deep relationships with my students, mastered the curriculum, and integrated into my school community, I am forced to leave.

My students deserve stability. Every time a qualified teacher is forced to leave due to a permit expiration, it creates a vacancy that is often filled by a rotating door of substitutes. This disrupts student learning and places an extra burden on my fellow teachers and administrators.

Passing these bills would allow me and many other dedicated J-1 educators the necessary time to complete licensure requirements without being forced out of the classroom prematurely. It aligns Hawai'i's state policy with federal J-1 guidelines and ensures that the investment our schools make in us can benefit our students for the full five years.

I am here because I want to serve Hawai'i's keiki. I respectfully ask for your support of these measures so that I can continue to do the work I love in the community that has welcomed me.

Mahalo for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to our schools.

Sincerely,

Respectfully,
Dean Patrick R. Espiritu
Special Education Teacher
Samuel E. Kalama Intermediate School

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 11:00:17 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charmaine Love Diyaya	J1 Teacher	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:



Dear Honorable Members of the Committee,

Aloha!

My name is Charmaine Love Diyaya and I am currently serving as a J-1 teacher in Hawai‘i. I am writing to respectfully express my strong support for the proposed bill to extend the allowable participation of J-1 teachers from three (3) years to five (5) years.

Teaching in Hawai‘i has been both a privilege and a responsibility. Over the past years, I have built meaningful relationships with my students, colleagues, and the community. As educators, we do more than deliver lessons—we provide stability, mentorship, and cultural connection. Just as we begin to see the full impact of our work, the current three-year limit requires us to leave, disrupting continuity for students and schools alike.

An extension to five years would:

- Allow students to benefit from sustained instructional support and stronger teacher-student relationships.
- Provide schools with greater stability, reducing the need for frequent recruitment and retraining.
- Enable J-1 teachers to fully implement long-term academic interventions and enrichment programs.
- Strengthen cultural exchange, which is a core purpose of the J-1 program, by allowing deeper engagement with local communities.
- Maximize the investment already made in training, onboarding, and professional development.

Many of us come to Hawai‘i to serve in hard-to-fill positions, and we are committed to contributing positively to student achievement and the broader educational environment. A five-year duration would allow us to complete the educational journey we begin with our students and leave a more lasting legacy of learning and collaboration.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to teach in Hawai‘i and humbly ask for your support in approving this measure to extend the J-1 teaching program to five years.

LATE

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and continued dedication to the students and educators of Hawai'i.

Respectfully,

Charmaine Love Diyaya
J-1 Teacher
Lokelani Intermediate School
Kīhei, Hawai'i

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 4:10:21 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyce Dodge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Scot Z. Matayoshi, Vice Chair Tina Nakada Grandinetti, and members of the Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce,

My name is Alyce Dodge, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB1840 HD1**, which requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator’s J-1 visa program.

I am an educator in Honolulu, and besides supporting visiting international educators I also support strengthening pathways for local teachers, school staff, and college students to become licensed teachers in Hawaii.

HB1840 HD1 is important because schools need stable, predictable staffing pathways—and permit timelines should align with the reality of educator exchange programs. When permitting and program duration are misaligned, it creates uncertainty for educators and administrators and can disrupt classroom continuity for students.

By directing the Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway aligned to the J-1 program duration, this bill helps schools plan more effectively and supports qualified visiting international educators who contribute valuable skills, cultural competency, and in many cases multilingual capacity to Hawai‘i’s classrooms. This is a practical, common-sense fix that improves consistency and reduces unnecessary administrative barriers while maintaining standards.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB1840 HD1**.

Mahalo,

Alyce Dodge

Testimony in Support of HB1840

MAYLEN M. PATANAO

J1 Special Education Teacher, Lokelani Intermediate School

February 2, 2026

Subject: SUPPORT for HB1840

To Honorable Chair and members of the Committee:

My name is MAYLEN M. PATANAO, and I am a J1 Special Education Teacher at Lokelani Intermediate School. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1840. This change is vital for maintaining the stability of our classrooms and the success of our most vulnerable students.

As a Special Education teacher, my mission is to be the bridge between a student's current challenges and their untapped potential. I don't just teach a curriculum; I build an ecosystem of dignity, inclusion, and agency. By "entering their world," I transform classrooms into safe harbors where a child's silence is met with assistive technology like AAC tools, their frustration is met with "calm-down" grace, and their academic barriers are dismantled through multimodal strategies. My work is rooted in the belief that every small-win—a spoken word, a completed task, or a successful peer interaction, and a week of zero behaviors—is a victory for the entire community. I am here to ensure that my students, regardless of their physical or cognitive starting point, is seen not for their disability, but for their unique contribution to our shared wraparound services.

However, while I am fully committed to my students, J1 teachers like me face significant hurdles in meeting Hawaii's licensing requirements within the current three-year window: The cost of Praxis exams is a heavy burden. For many of us, fees for the multiple required core and subject-area tests can exceed \$1,000 because we need to retake the exam until we pass it. On a teacher's salary, especially as an international guest, this is a significant financial barrier. Moreover, preparing for these exams requires hours of study. Balancing

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this with a full-time special education caseload—preparing students’ IEPs and progress reports, careful lesson planning, communicating with parents, and collaborating with service providers and admin—is nearly impossible to do in just three years without risking burnout.

The current three-year timeline often forces us J1 educators to leave just as we are making the most impact. Extending this period to five years under HB1825 would:

Reduce Teacher Turnover; thus, allowing us the necessary time to save for exam fees and study effectively without compromising our classroom performance.

Ensure Continuity of Care; thus, preventing the trauma students experience when their trusted support system is suddenly removed due to a licensing deadline.

Strengthen Our School; thus, allowing us to continue our collaboration with lead teachers and parents to ensure every child is valued, supported, and led toward success.

To conclude, as a J1 teacher, I am not just teaching academics; I am helping my students prepare for the real world. I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB1825 to give educators the time we need to become fully licensed while continuing to serve the community we have grown to love.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Hawaii’s students.

Sincerely,

MS. MAYLEN M. PATANAO

20394154@k12.hi.us

LATE

HB-1840-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 12:48:16 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/26/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Palestine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is **Palestine Alinabon**, and I am a J-1 teacher here in Hawaii. I am humbly asking for your support of HB1840, which would extend J-1 teacher permits from 3 to 5 years.

I truly love teaching and love my students. Every day, I do my best to help them learn, grow, and feel supported. But as a J-1 teacher, I face many challenges in completing the licensing process within just three years. Exams are expensive, testing locations are limited, and many of us don't have the private space or technology at home needed to take these tests. These barriers make it very difficult to become fully licensed on time.

Extending J-1 permits to five years would give teachers the **time and space we need to meet licensing requirements** without sacrificing the support our students rely on. At the same time, it would provide **stability for students and schools**, allowing teachers to stay longer, build strong relationships, and create a consistent, caring learning environment.

Please support this bill. It is not just about permits—it is about giving dedicated teachers the chance to continue making a positive difference in the lives of our students. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,
Palestine Alinabon