



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: HB1889, HD1, RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS.

Purpose of Bill: Creates a School Psychologists Working Group within the Department of Education to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation for an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists that can be acted upon in 2027. Requires a report to the Legislature. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports HB1889, HD1, which establishes a School Psychologists Working Group within the Department to examine and recommend actionable steps toward an immediate pathway to licensure.

The Department recognizes the role school psychologists play in supporting students' academic success and social, emotional, and behavioral well-being. While the Department maintains employment standards to ensure qualified individuals serve in these roles, Hawai'i remains the only state without a formal licensure or certification framework specific to school psychologists.

This working group provides a thoughtful, collaborative, and time-limited forum to engage relevant state agencies and professional experts, review national models, and inform future policy decisions without presupposing a specific regulatory outcome. The Department is willing to participate in the working group process as outlined.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

Testimony of the Board of Psychology

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Thursday, February 26, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 1889, H.D. 1, RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY**

Chair Matayoshi and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christopher Fernandez, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Psychology (Board). The Board supports the intent of this bill and offers the following comments.

The purpose of this bill is to create a School Psychologists Working Group (Working Group) to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation for an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists that can be acted upon in 2027, and requires a report to the legislature.

The Board views the Working Group as necessary to:

1. Develop clear definitions for “School Psychologist,” and the “practice of school psychology” that do not conflict or encroach on the definitions of “Psychologist” and the “practice of psychology”.
2. Clarify the distinctions between master’s/specialist-level, and doctoral-level practitioners of school psychology.
3. Develop regulatory language for school psychology that does not conflict with HRS chapter 465 and its foundations in clinical and counseling psychology.

Furthermore, the Board notes that, in past legislative sessions, all bills addressing this issue have sought to place school psychology licensure within chapter 465, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Board believes the Working Group reflects this same design, as school psychology representation is maximized within the Working Group and the group’s purpose does not explicitly exclude chapter 465 as an option for placement.

Accordingly, the Board questions the inclusion of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) when psychologists- whose chapter has consistently

been discussed as the appropriate placement for this regulation-do not have any representation at all. Hawaii licensed psychologists have a vested interest in chapter 465, HRS and how it functions, and representation in this matter should be equitable.

If the intention for the Working Group is to place school psychology regulation within chapter 465, HRS, then the Board respectfully requests that the Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA) be included in the discussion and NASP be removed. The Board believes this change will enhance the quality of the discussion while having minimal effect on school psychologist representation, as the Hawaii Association of School Psychologists (HASP) can adequately represent NASP as its state chapter.

The Board also suggests other willing state-level stakeholders be identified as members. This could include parties who would benefit from school psychology regulation, such as local universities that may wish to create programs to train and prepare students for practice in the field here in Hawaii.

Ultimately, the Board hopes ongoing disagreements on these issues can finally be resolved in a Working Group that is both balanced and diverse, with interested parties present to support the development of school psychology regulation.

Finally, as it did last year, the Board continues to request that the Working Group remain exempt from chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

P.O. Box 833
Honolulu, HI 96808

www.hawaiipsychology.org

Phone: (808) 521-8995

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION
Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Representative Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 26, 2026, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

Comments and Proposed Amendment to HB1889, RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

HB1889 would create a working group within the Department of Education to recommend actionable steps towards legislation for the licensing of school psychologists. **The Hawai'i Psychological Association (HPA) supports the establishment of a school psychologists working group so long as psychologists are added to the proposed working group. We propose that the bill be amended to include HPA in the working group.** Previous bills for a school psychologists working group did include psychologists, who are now excluded. **Psychologists are key stakeholders given the position by the Hawaii Association of School Psychologists that licensure should be under the Board of Psychology.**

All states except Texas and Hawaii have their State Education Agencies (SEAs) overseeing the credentialing of school psychologists. Texas licenses school psychologists under their Board of Psychology. They are still the only state to do so. (<https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/school-psychology-credentialing-resources/state-credentialing-faqs>). In a move towards deregulation, Texas has multidisciplinary Boards.

HPA encourages the state of Hawaii to adopt legislation consistent with 48 other states regarding school psychologist licensure. We also encourage the Hawaii Association of School Psychologists to delineate their scope of practice for the working group as a necessary step towards licensure. As HPA shared in meetings with school psychologists and testified in proposed legislation in 2025, we continue to present to support licensing school psychologists under the Board of Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important bill.

Sincerely,



Alex Lichton, Ph.D.
Chair, HPA Legislative Action Committee

To: House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Re: **HB1889 HD1 – Relating to School Psychologists**
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 26, 2026; 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Grandinetti, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1889 HD1**, which creates a School Psychologists Working Group within the Department of Education to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation for an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists that can be acted upon in 2027.

More than one-third of our state's youth struggle with depression, and 1 in 4 young teens report having suicidal thoughts.¹ To reduce increased rates of anxiety, depression, and potential suicides that have occurred since the pandemic, the U.S. Surgeon General recommended ensuring all children have access to high-quality and culturally competent mental health care in schools and other community-based settings.²

Yet in recent years, Hawai'i has employed only one school psychologist for every 2,800 students, which is over five times more than National Association of School Psychologists' recommended ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 students.³ This shortage of accredited school psychologists has been an on-going issue for our state, and now is the time to address it.

Hawai'i is the only state that does not require certification or licensure for school psychologists,⁴ which creates a challenge for recruitment and retention. For example, professionals working as school psychologists in Hawaii cannot count their experience if they relocate to another state. Coupled with below-average salaries and heavy workloads, Hawai'i becomes a less appealing option.⁵

Creating a pathway to school psychologist licensure would help Hawai'i address our critical shortage of accredited school psychologists and support children and youth with high quality, evidence-based mental health practices.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ <https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/indicators/index/dashboard?alias=MentalHealth>

² <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>

³ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2022/09/hawaii-has-a-shortage-of-school-psychologists-national-research-says-thats-a-problem/>

⁴ <https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/local-news/2022-02-17/senate-moves-forward-bill-for-school-therapist-credential>

⁵ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2023/11/beth-fukumoto-hawaiis-youth-need-more-mental-health-support>



HB1889 Credentialing School Psychologists in Hawai'i

LATE

Aloha Chair Matayoshi and members of the committee:

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists believes that credentialing is important for all professionals that are entrusted to care for students, especially those with special needs. Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) 465 protects the professional integrity of the term "psychology" by ensuring that non-licensed individuals cannot practice psychology. This public protection ensures that specialized training and expertise is required to practice psychology. Currently, School Psychologists are 'exempt' from needing such a credential to practice in the educational setting (HRS 465) and have no credentialing in the State. Hawai'i is the **only** State in the nation that allows this. This exemption has allowed individuals who do not have graduate training in school psychology and who do not meet the nationally accepted certification standard to practice "school psychology" within the educational setting. We are asking for the legislature's support to establish credentialing requirements for School Psychologists in the State, thereby ensuring that students receive services from highly qualified and properly licensed professionals. Additionally, recent updates to CMS now explicitly name licensed School Psychological services as billable, and would enable the DOE to generate additional funds under Medicaid. Finally, the proposed legislation aligns with the nationally adopted language and structure for credentialing School Psychologists.

Graduate training in school psychology and a supervised internship aligns with the Practice Model set forth by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The Practice Model outlines the professional expectations of respecting the dignity and rights of all persons and maintaining professional competency and integrity in professional relationships to foster and maintain the public's trust. The NASP practice model outlines the training of school psychologists, which requires them to be forthright about their qualifications, competencies, and roles. We work in full cooperation with other professional disciplines to meet the needs of students and families and avoid multiple relationships that diminish their professional effectiveness. We maintain the public trust by respecting law and encouraging ethical conduct. When untrained and unqualified persons are employed as a school psychologist under this current exemption in HR 465, but do not meet the graduate level training requirements, the integrity of the profession is compromised and the public is not protected. The training of school psychologists is unique in that we have extensive training in cognitive, academic, social/emotional, behavioral, and adaptive assessment practices and training to ensure these measures are fair, reliable and valid. When these assessments are not utilized and administered as they were designed by properly trained professionals, the students are not being fairly assessed, which can result in inaccurate results. The research is clear that students who are identified with special learning needs are at a higher risk for a number of negative outcomes, such as dropping out of school, qualifying for lower-level jobs, or becoming involved in criminal activity. Raising the standards of practice for all school psychologists working in the state of Hawai'i will increase appropriate service delivery to those students most in need.

The Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists asks that you support the credentialing of school psychologists to ensure that all children in Hawai'i are afforded the same protection of a licensed and credentialed professional working within their scope of practice. This working group is the next step in this process.

Respectfully Submitted:

Leslie Baunach, NCSP
HASP Legislative Chair

Testimony Support for HB 1889
February 24, 2026

Aloha,

I'm writing to provide my support of HB 1889, to form a work group to focus on and create an actionable pathway for licensure for School Psychologists in the state of Hawaii. Hawaii continues to be the only state in the nation without a credential for school psychologists.

Two sunset evaluations were previously conducted on the profession of psychology with the recommendation that all psychologists be licensed (Report No. 81-6, 1981; Report No. 87-22, 1987); with the first conducted over 40 years ago. School psychologists *are* psychologists and should be credentialed as recommended by the sunset evaluations. As Hawaii does not have a pathway for licensure or credentialing of school psychologists through the Department of Education or through other bodies (such as the Department of Health, Board of Psychology, etc.), persons who do not hold proper education and training directly related to school psychology are able to be employed as school psychologists and deliver *psychological services* to our keiki in schools. This is extremely problematic given the sensitive nature of consultation with schools and families, evaluation procedures, and the high-stakes decision-making that comes with referrals for special education, related services, and school based mental health supports. Lack of credentialing of school psychologists has the potential to result in untrained persons misinterpreting and misusing assessment information, which can lead to great harm to our most vulnerable populations in schools. This can have long-lasting and detrimental impacts on students who may end up being misidentified, provided incorrect or inadequate services to meet needs, and impact the student meeting minimum qualifications for high school graduation with a standard diploma.

As a school psychologist in my 10th year of service, I received my training as an intern here in Hawaii, on the Leeward coast. I have also worked in the states of Tennessee and Virginia and have first-hand knowledge of the licensure requirements of both states. These states require credentialing through the state Department of Education in order to ensure proper training, skill, and ethical standards are obtained and met by the school psychologist. I currently maintain those state credentials as to show that I, as a school psychologist, meet standards of educational knowledge, training, skills, and ethical standards. The fact that Hawaii still does not have minimum standards for personnel in a role as significant as school psychologist is incredibly troubling and indicates to the rest of the country that our children and most vulnerable populations are not deserving of services from qualified personnel. While my experience relates to licensure through the Department of Education, many other states have alternative credentialing procedures, and, in some cases, credentialing through multiple governing bodies (i.e., DOE, Department of Health, Board of Psychology, etc.).

Furthermore, having been away from Hawaii for 8 years, I was surprised to see that this issue continues to be unresolved by the legislature to enact a credentialing of any kind, despite the introduction of similar bills to HB 1889 year after year. Meanwhile, other states across the

country are making great strides to ensure not only that their professionals serving their most vulnerable children are served by individuals who are trained in the profession but also that those individuals are highly qualified to meet the unique needs of students. Not only do all other states have a credential/licensure, many provide additional stipends for holding national certification to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel.

I urge the committee to ask why Hawaii has not addressed the credentialing of school psychologists when a recommendation was made over 40 years ago to take such action. I also ask the committee to consider all other professions, both within and outside of the HDOE, which do have a credential. Finally, I ask the committee to consider the immediate and long-term impacts unqualified personnel will have on our keiki and to take decisive action to make a pathway to licensure for school psychologists.

Mahalo for your consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Iris Mackey, M.S., CAGS
School Psychologist
President of the Hawaii Association of School Psychologists

HB-1889-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 5:27:59 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alec Marentic	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

My name is Alec Marentic, and I am a trained school psychologist living and working on Big Island. I am writing in strong support of HB1889 in its current amended version.

Previous testimony by the Hawai'i Psychological Association (HPA) has requested they be added to the working group to ensure psychologists are represented as a stakeholder group. I would like to respectfully point out that the Board of Psychology is made up of psychologists, and represent the governing agency responsible for regulating psychologists. Including the HPA, who represents clinical psychologists, I believe constitutes an overreach of the autonomy of the Board. Furthermore, I also believe there is a conflict of interest if an organization representing Clinical Psychologists were to influence the regulatory framework of School Psychologists.

Title protections for Schools Psychologists is critical to ensure that our keiki receive high quality services by appropriately trained Psychologists.

School Psychology was first recognized as an area of specialization by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998, the same year that Clinical Psychology was recognized as an area of specialization. The APA defines specialties as "a defined area of psychological practice that requires advanced knowledge and skills acquired through an organized sequence of education and training."

In all other states, verification of the advanced knowledge and skills necessary to practice as a School Psychologist is completed through credentialing, which often includes completing a School Psychology advanced degree program, and obtaining a passing score on the Praxis School Psychologist Test.

Currently, Hawai'i allows for individuals with advanced degrees in other specializations in Psychology to practice as School Psychologists. This mismatch of specialization leave our keiki and the department of education vulnerable in a number of ways:

Misidentification of Learning Disabilities: Clinical Psychologists (as an example) are trained to diagnose disorders like ADHD. School Psychologists are trained to identify educational disabilities. Someone without school psychological training may recommend the wrong

interventions for the school environment, and this could have deleterious impacts on the child's development.

Legal Vulnerability: School Psychology is governed by strict federal laws like IDEA, a law that School Psychologists receive extensive training on that other specializations do not. Someone who does not have that training might suggest an accommodation that is clinically sound, but legally unenforceable or disruptive to the school's Least Restrictive Environment mandate.

Systemic Mismatch: Most specializations of psychology are "person-centric" in the sense that they focus on the pathology of the person. School Psychology is "ecology-centric" in the sense that we are trained to examine the instruction, the curriculum, the classroom management, etc. A child may be inappropriately pathologized if the Psychologist does not know how to examine these areas in school contexts.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

Alec Marentic,
Nationally Certified School Psychologist

HB-1889-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 11:46:54 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keri Anacker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Keri and I'm a School Psychologist on O'ahu. I'm writing in favor of HB1889 that would establish a working group to establish licensure for School Psychologists. I have spoken to many prospective school psychologists from the mainland who have the desire to work for our state, but they are shocked to learn about the absence of credentialing, and disappointed with the subsequent lack of protection for our keiki, which ultimately turns them away from applying. Credentialing our School Psychologists would **help recruit**, retain, and give money back to the state as it would allow us to bill for Medicaid. A credential also gives more protection against malpractice. In my own district right now, we have "School Psychologists" who were hired into the role that do not have a degree in School Psychology. This leaves our students vulnerable to not receiving educational care from appropriately trained professionals.

Regarding the inclusion of HPA in the working group, while collaboration across related professions is important, the group is to develop a credentialing pathway specific to school psychology practice within **educational** systems. School psychs are trained through education-based programs and function under federal-specific Special Ed. law rather than healthcare licensure models. Including a group that only represents clinical psychologists could constitute overreach since they primarily focus on *clinical* psychology regulation and do not possess direct expertise in **school-based** credentialing structures. Including stakeholders whose regulatory interests differ from the educational framework may unintentionally complicate developing a credentialing system aligned with national school psychology standards and our state's needs. So, workgroup membership should prioritize stakeholders with direct experience in school psychology training, supervision, and service delivery within educational settings.

Thank you for your time.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1889

February 25, 2026

Dear House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce:

I support HB1889, a bill to create a School Psychologists Working Group to recommend actionable steps or propose legislation for an immediate pathway to licensure for school psychologists that can be acted upon in 2027.

Hawaii remains the only state in the nation without a credential for school psychologists, despite two sunset evaluations conducted on the profession which clarified that all psychologists should be licensed (Report No. 81-6, 1981; Report No. 87-22, 1987). Because Hawaii does not have a school psychology license, individuals who do not have graduate training in school psychology and who do not meet the nationally accepted certification standards can provide school psychological services within the educational setting. We are asking that legislators enact the present legislation and require that school psychologists in Hawaii have proper credentialing. This will ensure that students receive services from highly qualified and licensed professionals.

The training of school psychologists is unique in that we have extensive training in cognitive, academic, social/emotional, behavioral, and adaptive assessment practices, as well as the training to ensure that these measures are fair, reliable and valid. When these assessments are not utilized and administered as they were designed - by properly trained professionals - the students are not being fairly assessed, which can result in inaccurate results. The research is clear that students who are identified with special learning needs are at a higher risk for a number of negative outcomes, such as dropping out of school, qualifying for lower-level jobs, or becoming involved in criminal activity. Raising the standards of practice for all school psychologists working in the state of Hawaii will in turn increase appropriate service delivery to those students most in need.

I am currently licensed in the state of Kansas, where I completed my graduate degrees, but not my home state of Hawaii. I chose this profession because of my dedication to children and our public education system. Accordingly, this bill matters to me because I believe that our profession must be adequately recognized in the state of Hawaii. Without licensure, the state is effectively saying that they do not value or respect the profession, nor do they view our services as important enough to hold its practitioners to rigorous standards. It is embarrassing to be the only state in the country without licensure and it reflects negatively on all those who practice school psychology in Hawaii. By licensing school psychologists, the state of Hawaii will show their commitment to providing schools, students, and their families with high quality school psychological services, which will ultimately benefit the state and its communities as a whole.

It should also be noted that by licensing school psychologists, the Hawaii State Department of Education will be able to bill Medicaid for the services they provide within the schools. This will bring in additional funding which can be used to improve our state education system, which is undeniably important in the present climate where our public school system struggles to obtain adequate funds to address student and staff needs.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis E. Jamison, M.S., Ed.S.
School Psychologist
Hawaii State DOE – Leeward District
HASP President-Elect

HB-1889-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 12:30:57 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

STARTING WITH 96792 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1889 HB RELATING TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Testimony Support for HB1889
February 25, 2026

Aloha,

School Psychologists work to provide effective services to help children and youth succeed academically, social-emotionally, and behaviorally, by providing direct educational and mental health services for our keiki. Additionally, we work with parents, educators, and other professionals to create supportive learning and social environments for all children. As a practicing School Psychologist for the DOE and an executive board member of the Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists (HASP), I am writing in support of licensure of School Psychologists in Hawai'i. Currently, Hawai'i is the *only* state in the country that does not have a credentialing process in place for School Psychologists, despite two sunset evaluations conducted regarding Psychologists that clarified all Psychologists should be licensed (Report No. 81-6, 1981; Report No. 87-22, 1987). There are a couple of reasons this is extremely problematic. First and foremost, having no credentialing requirements may result in unqualified individuals working in School Psychologist positions, which could potentially cause harm to our keiki. Sometimes, individuals will be put into a School Psychologist position, even if they have not received adequate training to be working in these positions, due to the state not having credentialing requirements in place. It is clear that the state of Hawaii has a severe shortage of School Psychologists, and because of this, it is not surprising that unqualified individuals may be fulfilling School Psychologist roles; however, it is imperative to understand that this causes more harm than benefit to our keiki, as it places them at particular risk for malpractice.

The reason this is problematic is showcased in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which recognizes School Psychologists as “specialized instructional support personnel”. School Psychology programs are unique from other mental health programs in their focus on the interpretation of assessment results, formulating educational implications from the results, and then linking those results to effective, research-based interventions that can be implemented in the school setting. School Psychologists also receive specific training in special education law and are trained in the special education eligibility process. They are trained as Psychologists who are specifically trained to practice within the school, rather than a clinical setting. Although any mental health professional can be trained to administer assessments, the interpretation can be very problematic for anyone who is not trained, yet is placed into a School Psychologist position, and this can result in damaging consequences for students. For instance, I was made aware of a past case in our state where an unqualified individual working in the role of a School Psychologist had misinterpreted the cognitive (IQ) scores of a student who spoke English as a second language, when the cognitive test had been administered in English, a language in which this student was not fluent. The student scored within the extremely low range when tested in English, resulting in an educational classification of Mental Retardation at the time (now called Intellectual Disability), and the student consequently began to receive intensive special education services to meet what were determined to be his needs, based on the evaluation results. Unfortunately, this was very inaccurate, as the student apparently had average intellectual abilities when tested years later in his dominant language. Therefore, it appears this student received inaccurate programming for years until the error was realized, and by that time, he had missed years of receiving appropriate instruction/curriculum in school. This is just one example

to highlight how an individual unqualified to practice as a School Psychologist may not be able to make accurate decisions to assist our keiki, as this professional had not received the appropriate and specialized training necessary to do so. It is critical to have qualified professionals working in our field.

Second, the state's failure to require licensure of its School Psychologists means that, by law, the state is unable to seek warranted reimbursements from the federal Medicaid program for direct services provided by School Psychologists in an educational setting. If we had a licensing process in place, we would be able to bill for our services, other than just administrative work, and this money would be used to support the department's overall operating budget.

It would make the most sense for School Psychologists to be licensed and registered through the Board of Psychology to ensure the delivery of quality service to students and the community, as it is a consumer protection agency. It would be the most seamless transition because School Psychology has already become a part of the Board of Psychology. It is important to consider that all Psychologists are indeed Psychologists, regardless of the setting we work in (i.e., school, private practice, hospital). Why should School Psychologists be the only area of Psychology exempt from having to follow professional standards in our practice? Licensure is a requirement for all other Psychologists. As School Psychologists, we work with children with special needs, as we have specialized training to do this. We must have credentialing standards in place to be held to higher standards and to protect our children.

In summary, credentialing is important for all professionals, but it is critical for professionals who work with keiki with special needs. Our keiki need to be protected through the implementation of a credentialing process.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Garrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amanda Garrett, Psy.D., NCSP
Nationally Certified School Psychologist
HIDOE LMW Complex Area School Psychologist
Treasurer of the Hawaii Association of School Psychologists (HASP)

Testimony Support for HB1889
February 25, 2026

Aloha,

School Psychologists work to provide effective services to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally by providing direct educational and mental health services for children and youth. Additionally, School Psychologists work with parents, educators, teachers, and other professionals to create supportive learning and social environments for all children. As a practicing School Psychologist for the DOE and a member of the legislative committee for the Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists (HASP), I am writing in support of licensure of School Psychologists in Hawai'i. Currently, Hawai'i is the *only* state in the country that does not have a credentialing process in place for School Psychologists, despite two sunset evaluations conducted regarding Psychologists that clarified all Psychologists should be licensed (Report No. 81-6, 1981; Report No. 87-22, 1987).

First and foremost, having no credentialing requirements may potentially result in unqualified individuals working in School Psychologist positions, which could potentially cause harm to our keiki. This means that individuals within the state of Hawaii who have earned a degree in a similar field, such as Counseling, Industrial/Organizational, or Clinical Psychology, are hired into School Psychologist positions, even though they have not received adequate training to work in these positions. It is clear that the state of Hawaii has a severe shortage of School Psychologists, and because of this, it is not surprising that unqualified individuals may be fulfilling School Psychologist roles; however, it is imperative to understand that this causes more harm than benefit to our keiki, as it places our keiki at particular risk for malpractice.

The reason this is problematic is showcased in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which recognizes School Psychologists as “specialized instructional support personnel”. School Psychology programs are unique from other mental health programs in their focus on the interpretation of assessment results, formulating educational implications from the results, and then linking those results to effective, research-based interventions that can be implemented in the school setting.

School Psychologists also receive specific training in special education law and are trained in the special education eligibility process. They are trained as Psychologists, with the difference between their program and other Psychology programs being that they are specifically trained to practice within the school, rather than clinical setting. Although any mental health professional can be trained to administer assessments, the interpretation can be very problematic for those who are not trained, yet placed into a School Psychologist position, and this can produce damaging consequences for students.

For example, a student who has not had appropriate research-based interventions implemented prior to special education, might be made eligible by an unqualified clinician who has not had the university training in pre-referral interventions, such as School Psychologists receive in their graduate studies. This student might have been ablaze to succeed educationally without the need for special education services with the correct response to intervention efforts made by the team

and implemented by School Psychologists. This is just one example to highlight how an individual unqualified to practice as a School Psychologist may not be able to make accurate decisions to assist our keiki, as this professional had not received the appropriate and specialized training necessary to do so. It is critical to have qualified professionals working in our field.

Second, the state's failure to require licensure of its School Psychologists means that, by law, the state is unable to seek warranted reimbursements from the federal Medicaid program for most services provided by School Psychologists in an educational setting. If we had a licensing process in place, we would be able to bill for our services, and this money would be used to support the overall operating budget of the department.

It would make most sense for School Psychologists to be licensed and registered through the Board of Psychology to ensure delivery of quality service to students and the community, as it is a consumer protection agency. It would be the most seamless transition because School Psychology has already become a part of the Board of Psychology. It is important to consider that all Psychologists are indeed Psychologists, regardless of the setting we work in (i.e., school, private practice, hospital). Why should School Psychologists be the only area of Psychology exempt from having to follow professional standards in our practice? Licensure is a requirement for all other Psychologists. As School Psychologists, we work with children with special needs and we have received specialized training to do this. We must have credentialing standards in place to be held to higher standards and to protect our children.

In summary, credentialing is important for all professionals, but it is critical for professionals who work with keiki with special needs. Our keiki need to be protected through the implementation of a credentialing process.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Traci Effinger, M.S., NCSP
Nationally Certified School Psychologist