



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
H.B. NO. 1890, RELATING TO EDUCATION.**

**BEFORE THE:
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

DATE: Tuesday, February 3, 2026 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Amanda L. Donlin, Deputy Attorney General, or
Jeffrey T. Kent, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

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

This bill seeks to provide automatic step increases in teacher salaries for each year of satisfactory service completed, subject to the availability of funds. However, the bill conflicts with section 89-9(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), which makes "wages" a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

Pursuant to section 89-2, HRS, the term "wages" includes the number of incremental and longevity steps. As written, the bill would therefore conflict with chapter 89, HRS, because wages, including incremental and longevity steps, are subject to negotiation through collective bargaining. Further, where there is contrary legislation, section 89-19, HRS, provides that adjustments made in accordance with chapter 89 shall take precedence over all contrary legislation.

The bill's current wording is similar to section 302A-626, HRS, formerly section 297-34, HRS, which was enacted prior to Hawaii's collective bargaining laws for public employment. Section 302A-626, HRS, was repealed by Act 87, Session Laws of Hawaii 2016. That repeal provided consistency within the law because section 302A-626, HRS, had been rendered obsolete by the collective bargaining law, which requires longevity steps and movement between steps in the salary range to be negotiated

through collective bargaining. Reinserting similar wording in chapter 302A through this bill could again create a conflict with chapter 89.

To promote consistency with chapter 89, HRS, the Department recommends that, in subsection (a) of the new section proposed to be added to chapter 302A by section 2 of this bill (page 2, lines 12-13), the phrase, "Pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for bargaining unit (5)," be replaced with, "Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement pursuant to section 89-9,"

The Department also recommends the following amendments for consistency with the HRS. On page 2, lines 15-16, and in subsection (b) beginning on page 2, line 18, the bill refers to a range of HRS sections (i.e., sections 302A-602 to 302A-639, and section 302A-701) that address requirements applicable to teachers. As drafted, this range does not include the full set of relevant sections, as it omits section 302A-601.5, HRS, at the front end and sections 302A-641 and 302A-642, HRS, at the back end. On page 2, lines 15-17, the amendment to include the full statutory range would read as follows:

... who have complied with the other requirements of sections 302A-601.5 to 302A-642, and 302A-701, as applicable, shall be entitled to an annual increment. (Emphasis added.)

Regarding the proposed new subsection (b) beginning on page 2, line 18, the statutory wording would be more consistent with the HRS if it refers to the full range of 302A provisions described above; and includes a specific reference to section 302A-624, HRS, which applies to the three-year "maximum increment step or in any longevity step" term. The proposed amendment would read as follows:

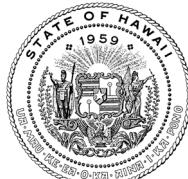
(b) Teachers who have served satisfactorily for three years in their maximum increment step or in any longevity step pursuant to section 302A-624 and who have complied with the other requirements of sections 302A-601.5 to 302A-642, and 302A-701, as applicable, shall receive longevity step increases, subject to the availability of funds. (Emphasis added.)

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER



SETH S. COLBY, Ph.D.
ACTING DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**
Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

**TESTIMONY BY SETH S. COLBY, Ph.D.
ACTING DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1890**

**February 3, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Room 309 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO EDUCATION

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) opposes this bill.

House Bill No. 1890 provides bargaining unit (BU) (5) teachers who have completed a year's satisfactory service and who have complied with the other requirements of Sections 302A-602 to 302A-639 and 302A-701, as applicable, an annual increment negotiated pursuant to a collective bargaining (CB) agreement. In addition, the bill provides longevity step increases for teachers who have served satisfactorily for three years in their maximum increment step or in any longevity step and who have complied with the other requirements of Sections 302A-602 to 302A-639 and 302A-701.

B&F opposes this measure because it is contrary to the CB process. This measure preferentially directs the outcome of CB negotiations for a select BU.

While the Legislature has the authority to set the scope of CB, the Legislature did this in setting up a process in Chapter 89, HRS. This bill disrupts that process due to its partial return to directly legislated wages and working conditions for public employees.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



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

Date: 02/03/2026
Time: 02:00 PM
Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1890, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for Bargaining Unit (5) and subject to the availability of funds, provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on HB 1890.

The Department appreciates the Legislature's continued efforts to improve the Department's ability to attract and retain quality employees to support Hawaii's K-12 public schools. Providing automatic step increases in teacher salaries for each year of satisfactory service completed has the potential to be a powerful tool to achieve that goal. The measure explicitly provides automatic step increases for teachers for each year of satisfactory service. Bargaining Unit 5 (BU5) covers more than just teachers; it also includes librarians, counselors, and resource teachers.

If the Legislature proceeds with authorizing this measure, the Department recommends an adjustment to the language to include all members of BU5.

The Department believes that all of its employees serve diverse yet equally important roles to help ensure student achievement. In light of this, the Department encourages the Legislature to consider including all other Bargaining Units in acknowledgment of the tremendous team effort it takes to ensure a successful Department. Therefore, the Department urges the Legislature to consider including step movements for the following Bargaining Units to this measure:

Bargaining Unit 1 - Blue-Collar Non-Supervisory Employees
Bargaining Unit 2 - Blue-Collar Supervisory Employees
Bargaining Unit 3 - White-Collar Non-Supervisory Employees
Bargaining Unit 4 - White-Collar Supervisory Employees
Bargaining Unit 6 - Educational Officers
Bargaining Unit 9 - Registered Professional Nurses
Bargaining Unit 10 - Institutional, Health, and Correction Officers
Bargaining Unit 13 - Professional and Scientific Employees

The Department notes that Section 89-9 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires negotiations between the employer and the exclusive representative with respect to wages.

Finally, should the Legislature proceed with authorizing this measure, the Department respectfully requests that the Legislature simultaneously include the funds necessary to implement these step movements into the Department's base budget going forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1890.



**HAWA'I STATE
TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION**

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Andrea Eshelman
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWA'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: HB 1890 – Relating to Education

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, February 3, 2025, 2:00 pm, Room 309

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

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **strongly supports** H.B. 1890, which establishes a statutory framework for annual salary step increases for public school teachers. This measure is essential to addressing the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention.

Teachers in Hawai'i are financially struggling under the weight of the state's high cost of living. Once adjusted for these expenses, our educators are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes directly to a staggering turnover rate. Nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state altogether within five years of starting. This high attrition poses a significant problem for our students and the stability of our schools.

Establishing automatic step increases is a priority for our educators and aligns with our current Unit 5 collective bargaining agreement. The collective bargaining agreement explicitly states that "the parties recognize that annual incremental step movements are a viable recruiting and retention tool."

The negotiated language further specifies: "Teachers who are not at the top of the salary schedule and who have effective evaluations shall move to the next highest step of the corresponding class at the beginning of each school year. Annual incremental step movements are subject to funding."

H.B. 1890 aligns statutory language with this negotiated agreement. It provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom by ensuring salary progression is a consistent part of their professional career.

The importance of this stability is also echoed in the *2025 HIDOE Teacher Compensation Report*. This study states: "Automatic annual step progression is the norm across most states and is strongly linked to teacher expectations of fairness...A shift to automatic steps would reinforce trust and potentially improve attrition."

By codifying these increases, the State is sending a clear message that it values the experience of its educators. We respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo.

JOSH GREEN, M. D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



J.N. MUSTO, PhD
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR
KE PO'O KŪKĀKŪKĀ

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
KE KE'ENA MĀLAMA LIMAHANA AUPUNI
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235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96813-2437

Statement of
J.N. Musto, PhD
Chief Negotiator, Office of Collective Bargaining

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Tuesday, February 3, 2026
2:00PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of
HB1890, RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and the members of the committee:

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) appreciates the intent of HB1890 which provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed a year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements; however we must respectfully oppose this measure.

Wage, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment are subject to negotiations as provided in Hawaii Revised Statutes, §89-9. We note that the 2016 legislature agreed when nearly identical provisions proposed in this measure were repealed.

We are available to answer any questions or provide further information as needed.

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

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 2:00:22 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie Reyes Oda	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 9:59:50 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Fitzpatrick	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is John Fitzpatrick and I am a teacher at Kūlanihāko‘i High School. I stand in **strong support of HB 1890**, which would finally provide automatic annual step increases to our educators.

The Financial Reality vs. The Rainy Day Fund We often hear that there is "no money" for teachers, yet the fiscal landscape suggests otherwise. In 2024, the legislature passed historic income tax cuts. While tax relief for working families is important, we cannot prioritize tax cuts while leaving our classrooms underfunded. Furthermore, the state currently has over **\$1.6 billion** in the Emergency Budget Reserve Fund ("Rainy Day Fund").

How can we justify hoarding nearly \$2 billion in reserves or passing massive tax cuts, while telling the teachers who educate our future workforce that we cannot afford the estimated \$25 million needed for annual step increases? We are not asking for a handout; we are asking for the state to prioritize the retention of the professionals who show up for our keiki every day.

The "Every Other Year" Myth & The 24-Year Climb Our current contract (2023–2027) and the salary schedule (Exhibit B) are designed with 12 steps to reach the top of the pay scale. In a logical system, a career teacher would reach the top in 12 years. However, because we only receive step increases every *other* year—if we are lucky enough to negotiate them—it actually takes a teacher **24 years** to reach the top, and nearly 30 years to maximize their retirement.

By the end of this current contract, many teachers will have faced three years without step movement (no step in 2024–2025, and likely no step in 2026–2027). This wage compression demoralizes experienced teachers and makes teaching in Hawaii financially unsustainable. HB 1890 would fix this by ensuring movement happens annually, allowing a teacher to reach the top of the scale in a reasonable 12 years—a powerful recruiting tool.

Recruitment and Retention: A Broken Pipeline I previously served as a head faculty representative at Maui Waena and frequently mentored new hires. I vividly remember two teachers recruited from Chicago who were shocked to learn we do not have annual step increases. In Chicago, annual movement is the standard. Those teachers have since moved back to the mainland.

We are competing in a national market. When we cannot promise consistent salary growth, we lose talent. This turnover has devastating effects on our schools. Vacancies mean students are often taught by long-term substitutes who may lack subject-specific certification.

Real Impact on Haumāna The lack of retention hits our students the hardest. I currently teach science to 9th graders. Recently, during a lab that required calculating averages, I realized many students didn't know how to do the math—a skill usually mastered in elementary school. This gap exists because they have lacked consistent, qualified teachers in their earlier years.

Last year, a student told me, *"Mister, you are the best science teacher I have ever had. All my science teachers in middle school dipped out on us."*

That statement broke my heart, and sadly, the cycle continues. Just this year, my fellow science teacher left two weeks into the school year to teach at Kamehameha Schools, where he could get better pay and smaller class sizes. I had to scramble to cover his AP Biology classes so those students wouldn't be left with a substitute for the entire year. The despair on my 9th graders' faces when I had to switch classes was real—they thought they were being abandoned again.

Solidarity with Our Schools I also want to voice my support for our principals, vice principals, custodians, office staff, and cafeteria staff. They, too, deserve annual step increases. Our principals are managing "impossible puzzles"—trying to run schools with 20 classroom positions but only 15 teachers, and constantly losing staff to the hospitality industry where they can make more money with less stress. They deserve a raise for managing these crises daily.

A Legislative Solution is Necessary I often hear that step increases should be handled in collective bargaining. However, we are stuck in a cycle where the employer claims "no funding" during negotiations. **We need the Legislature to break this cycle.** By passing HB 1890 and earmarking the funds specifically for annual steps, you ensure that our pay is predictable, competitive, and sufficient to keep local teachers in local classrooms.

Please pass HB 1890. Help us stop the exodus of talent, solve the "impossible puzzle" for our principals, and give our haumāna the qualified, consistent teachers they deserve.

Mahalo for your time and support,

John Fitzpatrick

Science Educator, Kūlanihāko‘i High School

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 11:52:42 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christopher castillo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Chris, and I have been a teacher in our public schools for about ten years. Over the last decade, I've been active with our union and have met with educators from across the country. Those conversations have taught me that while teacher retention is a national struggle, Hawai'i is in a category of its own because of the sheer cost of just existing here.

When we talk about teacher pay, we often look at the numbers on a contract, but we don't talk about what it takes to survive on them. To make ends meet, many of my colleagues and I are forced to work second or even third jobs. It is common to see teachers tutoring late into the evening, working retail on the weekends, or driving for ride-share apps during school breaks.

This isn't just about "extra spending money"—it's about sustainability. When a teacher spends their "off-hours" working another job just to cover a mortgage or rising grocery costs, they aren't resting. They aren't grading, they aren't lesson planning, and they aren't showing up to the classroom the next morning with the energy our **keiki** deserve. We are essentially asking our educators to burn the candle at both ends just to keep a roof over their heads on the islands they call home.

Even with affordable housing initiatives, the math often doesn't work for us. Between high utility bills, the cost of food, and the hundreds of dollars we personally spend on classroom supplies every year, the current pay structure is unsustainable. We are seeing wonderful, seasoned teachers—the heart of our schools—leave for the continent not because they want to, but because they *have* to. They are looking for a life where they can be "just a teacher" and still afford to live.

By passing HB1890, you are providing a path toward professional dignity. Making annual step increases a matter of law, rather than a recurring point of contention in negotiations, gives us predictability. It tells us that our experience and our time in the classroom actually have a set, guaranteed value.

More importantly, it allows our conversations with the union and the legislature to shift toward the things that matter most: classroom conditions, job duties, and how we can better serve our students. It takes the "begging" out of the equation and replaces it with a stable system that recognizes teaching as a sustainable, lifelong career in Hawai'i.

I support this bill 100%. We need to make sure our teachers are seen as a vital part of our community's future, not just as a workforce that is expected to sacrifice their well-being to stay here.

Mahalo for your time and for listening to the voices of those of us in the classroom.

Sincerely,
Chris Castillo

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:51:22 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jaune Alfed Jose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a teacher for four years in Hawaii, one of the most expensive states to live in, I support this testimony wholeheartedly. I am working over 40 hours and still needing not just one but two extra part times to barely get by. Teachers all over the Hawaii state can agree how difficult it is to be expected to pull miracles in and out the classroom but not get properly compensated. I have to question myself regularly if this is a career I want to continue in because of how difficult it is to financialy support myself.

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

I, Chad Lawson, a resident of the state and a teacher in the Department of Education, am relaying this personal testimony with regards to HB 1890.

I am in full support of a codified plan for regular and appropriate salary increases for teachers in the state of Hawaii. Consider the incredible workload, long hours which place stress on teachers and their families both in and out of contractual work time, and factor in the cost of living in the state. Teachers are at a tremendous financial disadvantage as compared to other states in the nation. As a result, many teachers are leaving for greener pastures. It would be in the best interests of the state –and the teachers it employs– to secure regular salary increases to improve quality of life and retain more teachers.

One final thought: At this moment, considering rising costs and the accrual of student loans for college, teachers cannot honestly say to their students that aspiring to be a teacher here in the state is a financially sound (or even reasonable) decision. Let's do better by the future teachers that we need here in Hawai'i.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chad Lawson



HOUSE BILL 1890, RELATING TO EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 3, 2026 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 1890, relating to education, which, pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for Bargaining Unit (5) and subject to funding, provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements.

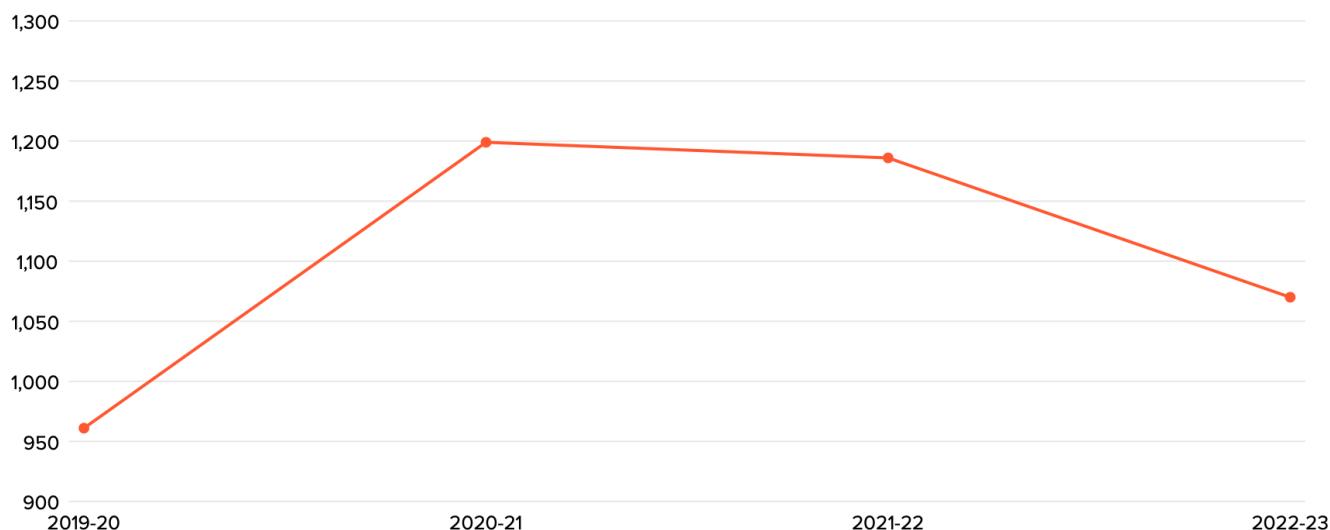
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education found that when compared with other high-cost geographic locations, Hawai'i teachers are paid \$7,700 to \$26,000 less than their peers in school districts with similar costs of living, depending on length of service.

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. Restoring guaranteed annual increments, more commonly known as “step increases,” would significantly help to alleviate that gap.

A 2022 survey by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University placed Hawai'i among the 10 states with the lowest teacher-to-population ratio. Moreover, as *Honolulu Civil Beat* reported in August of 2024, voluntary teacher separations remain high, at over 1,000 per year (see chart below).

Voluntary teacher separations, 2019 to 2023

The number of teachers annually leaving the DOE remains high but has started to decline following the pandemic.



DOE has not released data for the 2023-24 school year.

Chart: Megan Tagami/Civil Beat • Source: [Hawaii DOE](#)

These trends are further exacerbated by the aging teacher workforce. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association has repeatedly cautioned against being overly optimistic about positive teacher retention data, with a wave of experienced educators expected to retire in the next few years.

Moreover, the state is over reliant on unlicensed teachers to fill vacant positions. A December report found that 48 percent of new teachers in classrooms statewide are not fully licensed. As the Honolulu Star-Advertiser's editorial board recently wrote, “That is completely unacceptable. Strengthening teacher pay improves workforce retention. A Stanford University analysis found that raising wages by 10 percent reduces high school dropout rates by 3 to 4 percent. Similarly, a Florida study showed that pay raises reduced teacher attrition by up to 25 percent for hard-to-fill subject areas.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com • 808-679-7454



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Rep. Justin Woodson, Chair

Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB1890 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

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

UPW provides comments on HB1890, which, pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for Bargaining Unit 5 and subject to the availability of funds, provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements.

UPW recognizes the issues that this bill is trying to address and strongly supports better compensation for members of Bargaining Unit 5. However, we are gravely concerned by any legislation that could potentially circumvent, or even undermine, the collective bargaining provisions in Chapter 89, Hawaii Revised Statutes. We believe that the Legislature is not the appropriate authority to approve such salary increases prior to being collectively bargained between the employer and exclusive representative.

Statutorily codifying annual wage increases could create a precedent where exclusive representatives feel compelled to seek better contract provisions through legislation rather than negotiating with employers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:10:13 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support HB 1890. Automatic annual step increases are essential for teacher retention and for the future of our keiki.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:49:26 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Payton Jade O'Neill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand with Hawaii's teachers. Also, as a resident of Hawai'i, born and raised on the island of 'Oahu, I want to continue living and working here without worrying about making ends meet.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 9:38:39 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maya Alayne Coloma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand in support of Hawaii's teachers.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:09:19 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shayla Oyama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand in support of Hawaii's teachers.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:47:15 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand in support of Hawaii's teachers. Many teachers often have to live paycheck to paycheck and even work a seconf job to maintain a sense of living here in Hawaii. Even as college students who enter their full time role as a student teacher, stuggle to make time for a job as they are doing the work as a teacher without the pay.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 6:48:45 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffrey Murakami	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand in support of Hawaii's teachers.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 6:33:37 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Akiko Miyata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 1890 and stand in support of Hawaii's teachers.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 9:45:31 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Press	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Education Committee,

Speaking as an individual, I strongly support HB 1890, which would provide automatic annual step increases for teachers who complete a year of satisfactory service. This bill directly responds to findings from the [2025 Teacher Compensation Study](#), which identified inconsistent and unpredictable step movement as a major source of teacher dissatisfaction, reduced morale, and ongoing retention challenges.

Importantly, the study aligns with Senate Concurrent Resolution 142 and Priority II of the HIDOE Strategic and Implementation Plan (2023–2029), which calls for improving the teacher pipeline and enhancing conditions for educator success. By creating a predictable, annual step, HB 1890 strengthens the existing salary structure, reinforces trust in the compensation system, and supports teacher retention, an urgent need given that nearly 40% of teachers surveyed expect to leave the classroom within three years.

The UHERO report [Beyond the Price of Paradise](#), from January 2026, further underscores Hawai‘i's outmigration reality. It finds that Hawai‘i combines high living costs with below-average incomes and experiences outmigration patterns similar to economically distressed regions. These conditions make predictable, stable compensation essential for retaining educators and sustaining school communities.

I respectfully urge your support of HB 1890. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Michael Press

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:32:06 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Sanchez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

For too long, teachers have had to struggle to survive. For too long, teachers have had to deal with ridiculously low salaries. Teachers have to jump through unnecessary hoops to earn a living wage and earn pay increases. Why do teachers need to do more than teach to make more money? Passing HB1890 will help teachers tremendously. Please do what is right for our kumu and our keiki, and pass HB1890.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:03:16 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MALIA HANAKAHI	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Teachers deserve a livable wage and I strongly support HB1890 and stand with Hawaii's teachers.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:10:28 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rafael Habon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand in support of Hawai‘i's teachers.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:20:19 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melanie Pokakaa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 1890. Automatic annual step increases are essential for teacher retention and for the future of our keiki.

To: Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Brent Macabio

Date: February 1, 2026

Location: State Capitol

Position: **STRONG SUPPORT**

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my full support for HB1890, which establishes automatic yearly step pay increases for Hawai'i's public school teachers. This measure is not just a matter of fairness; it is a necessary intervention to stabilize a workforce in crisis.

The Reality of the "Teacher Leak" As noted in the bill's introduction, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation when adjusted for our high cost of living. This financial strain is directly linked to our staggering turnover rates: nearly 50% of our teachers leave the profession or the islands within five years. This revolving door in our classrooms creates an environment of instability for students, particularly in our most vulnerable communities.

Aligning with National Norms Automatic step increases are the standard in the overwhelming majority of school districts across the continental United States. Currently, Hawai'i's teachers must wait for the "negotiating table" to see any movement, leading to a system that feels unpredictable and, frankly, discouraging. By making these increases automatic based on satisfactory service, we:

- **Restore Trust:** Teachers can plan their lives and careers in Hawai'i with financial predictability.
- **Increase Retention:** We provide a clear, guaranteed pathway for professional and financial growth.
- **Follow Expert Advice:** An independent compensation study recently confirmed that shifting to automatic steps is a "viable recruiting and retention tool" that aligns with teacher expectations of fairness.

Investing in Students When we fail to retain teachers, our students lose out on experienced mentors and stable learning environments. HB1890 recognizes that keeping a qualified teacher in the classroom is more cost effective than the constant cycle of recruiting and training new ones.

Conclusion

It is time to treat our educators like the professionals they are by providing the same structural stability found in almost every other state. I urge you to pass HB1890 to ensure our teachers can afford to stay in the state they serve and the profession they love.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Brent Macabio

Hilo District, Kaumana

brent.macabio@gmail.com

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

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 2:14:55 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Genelyn Gabriel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand in support of Hawaii's teachers.

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:01:32 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christina Puakea Busby	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, My name is Christina Busby. I am a resident of Honolulu and a former public school teacher with over 15 years of teaching experience. I am also a PhD Candidate at UH Manoa in the Educational Foundations department. I am writing to encourage you to pass HB1890. It is absolutely vital that we codify into law -- and make the necessary financial allotments -- to ensure that public school teachers receive a step pay increase each year. Hawaii has been suffering from a severe teacher shortage. As an educational researcher, my doctoral dissertation has focused on the teacher shortage issue, specifically understanding how we can recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. All the research is clear -- teacher compensation is one of the most key factors impacting teachers' decisions to stay or leave the profession. Further, teacher pay is tied directly to student learning outcomes. Having been born and raised in Hawaii and attended public school, I dreamed of becoming a teacher. After graduating with a Master's degree in Teaching in Oregon, I moved to Washington and taught for 8 years in public schools where I was paid generously. When I moved back home to Hawaii in 2019, I was apalled to discover that as a teacher in Hawaii, I would be taking a nearly \$30,000/year paycut, and that was despite my having obtained a National Board Teaching Certification. Ultimately, this led me to leave the teaching profession and to pursue educational advancement. Hawaii ranks one of the lowest states for teacher pay in the nation (after considering cost of living). If we want to attract and retain teachers--if we want to improve student learning outcomes--we must support legislation that aims to increase teacher salaries. Young people in Hawaii today don't want to become teachers. They see their teachers struggling to survive financially and instead, they choose better paying careers. Many of our public school students--especially those residing in lower income and hard-to-staff geographic locations--are being taught by emergency hire and uncertificated teachers, which significantly impacts the quality of education students in lower income areas receive. This is unequal and highly unethical. We must do everything in our power to improve the conditions for our teachers, who are one of our most precious, and vital resources. HB1890 is one step we can take to do this, Please pass this bill. Mahalo

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 4:50:27 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tennelle Clark	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

"I strongly support HB 1890, as implementing automatic annual step increases is a vital investment in the stability of our education system and the future of our keiki. By ensuring that teachers are fairly compensated for their growing experience, we can effectively combat the chronic turnover and salary compression that drive talented educators out of the profession or away from the islands. This bill provides the financial predictability necessary to retain our most seasoned teachers, creating a more consistent and high-quality learning environment for students. Ultimately, valuing our educators through a structured, reliable pay scale is an essential step toward ensuring every child in Hawaii receives the education they deserve."

Thank you,

Tennelle Clark

Nanakuli-Waianae Complex area Teacher of the year 2025

HB-1890

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:46:52 PM
Testimony for EDN on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mishka Sulva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support annual step increases for our public school teachers. It is a hard job that requires creativity, consideration for the learner, and the ability to apply educational theories and a variety of strategies to provide a fruitful education to our keiki. Despite this, many teachers in Hawaii struggle to make ends meet and as many as half leave after 5-6 years. We pay doctors, lawyers, and legislators a salary that matches the level of respect, effort, and professionalism we all expect. Let us begin to do the same for teachers.