

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



SIERRA WHITESIDE
CHAIRPERSON

DAINTRY BARTOLDUS
EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

April 6, 2026

The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Dela Cruz and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1891 HD1 SD1 Relating to Education

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **SUPPORT of HB1891 HD1 SD1**, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction. Appropriate funds.

Early identification and intervention are critical to improving reading outcomes. Research consistently shows that students who are not reading proficiently by third grade face long-term academic challenges. Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening, paired with structured literacy instruction and evidence-based interventions, creates a proactive system that identifies students at risk before they fall significantly behind.

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities often experience co-occurring language, processing, or literacy challenges. When reading difficulties are not identified early, these students may struggle unnecessarily or be misidentified, delaying appropriate supports. Implementing consistent, linguistically appropriate screening tools and structured literacy instruction strengthens the multi-tiered system of supports and promotes equitable access to reading proficiency for all learners.

Professional development and pre-service training are also essential. Ensuring that both current and future educators are trained in structured literacy approaches improves instructional quality systemwide and supports inclusive classrooms where students with diverse learning needs can succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB1891 HD1 SD1**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

Ka 'Oihana Ho'oka'a'ike no ka Po'e Kīnānā

1010 Richards Street, Rm. 118 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • (808) 204-2466 (VP)

April 6, 2026

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill 1891 House Draft 1 Senate Draft 1 – Relating to Education

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 1891 House Draft 1 Senate Draft 1 – Relating to Education. This bill requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction. It appropriates funds and is effective 7/31/2055.

Proper identification of dyslexia along with appropriate educational training helps to mitigate its impact and will improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

KRISTINE PAGANO
Acting Executive Director



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 586-8126 Fax: (808) 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov

April 6, 2026

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

Ms. Martha Guinan, *Chair*
Ms. Susan Wood, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Dominique Anders
Ms. Kathie Awaya
Ms. Virginia Beringer
Mr. Will Carlson
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Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Jasmine Williams

Ms. Helen Kaniho, *liaison to
the Superintendent*
Ms. Wendy Nakasone-Kalani,
*liaison to the military
community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 1891, HD1, SD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Dear Senator Dela Cruz and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Council under the Individual's with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is in **strong support** of HB 1891, HD1, SD1 that requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction.

This legislation is critical in addressing the significant literacy achievement gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers. SEAC advises the Department of Education on the needs of roughly 20,000 students who have been found eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The largest subgroup of special education students is identified as having a specific learning disability, and according to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, 80-90 percent of these students likely have dyslexia. In SY 2024-25, only about one in ten 3rd and 4th grade students with learning disabilities were proficient in reading on the Smarter Balance Assessment. Many students identified in other IDEA eligibility categories also have significant difficulties with literacy resulting in the largest achievement gaps in reading on the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the National Assessment of Educational Progress of any other student subgroup.

Universal & Dyslexia Screening. Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening for grades kindergarten through 3rd grade could help to identify the estimated 15-20% of the school population who have dyslexia and related reading difficulties before they begin to fall behind and provide them with targeted interventions that could mitigate the need for specially designed instruction in the future. Without



identification and individualized support, these students will fail to develop a strong foundation in literacy and become at risk of academic failure, higher rates of dropping out and incarceration, and lower future earnings.

Structured Literacy Training. Non-proficient readers who are currently in grades 4 and above will also benefit from this measure which mandates professional development statewide for all teachers to better recognize dyslexia and deliver structured literacy instruction and evidence-based interventions to address self-regulation, executive functioning, reading, writing and comprehension. While structured literacy is essential for students with dyslexia, research has shown that it is effective for all students and fits well within a multi-tiered system of supports where interventions are individualized for students who are not successful with Tier 1 instruction. Training will also include preservice in state approved teacher education programs, ensuring that future teachers will have the skills to identify students with dyslexia and address their unique learning needs.

Written parent notification. While not explicitly mentioned in HB 1891, HD1, SD1 SEAC holds strongly that parents must be notified early when their child is at risk of reading delays and given the tools to support their child's literacy at home. We are therefore in support of the amendment offered by HawaiiKidsCAN stating that "a family must receive written notification within 30 school days if a student is determined to be at risk of language or literacy challenges. Notifications should also include the basis for the "at-risk" determination."

Dyslexia and other reading challenges when identified early and addressed with structured literacy instruction can set students on the path to a successful academic career. We urge your Committee to support this legislation that is targeting ALL struggling readers to ensure a system that is fair and consistent across the state. This investment will pay huge dividends in improving the academic success and future contributions of Hawaii's public school students.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
Chair



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

Date: 04/06/2026

Time: 10:32 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: WAM

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1891, SD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/31/2055. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding HB1891, SD1. The Department is already actively designing an implementation plan for all English-medium K-3 schools to administer dyslexia-sensitive, developmentally appropriate universal screeners from an approved list by School Year (SY) 2027-2028. The Department is conducting a pilot in SY 2026-2027 in specific volunteer complex areas with approved K-3 screeners to evaluate teachers' and principals' perceptions of their effectiveness, quality, and ease of administration. The Department is focused on ensuring that K-3 students are adequately screened for reading risk, while also ensuring that principals' and teachers' voice are honored in the process. The pilot screeners fully address all areas of reading that are specified in the language of HB1891, SD1.

Importantly, the Department clarifies that dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners do not formally identify students as having dyslexia and do not serve diagnostic purposes for specific learning disabilities. The current language in the bill of, "Implementing evidence-based interventions for students who are identified as having dyslexia..." may present a conflict with this, as students flagged for reading risk on a dyslexia-sensitive universal screener are not automatically identified as having dyslexia or a specific learning disability. The Department respectfully suggests language that any students with reading risk be provided appropriate interventions, as is already required by the Department's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

The Department also notes that all schools were already administering universal screeners as of SY 2019-2020, and that the pilot of specific K-3 dyslexia-sensitive screeners in volunteer complex areas and schools is taking place with existing Department funds. The Department is conscious of maintaining a fiscally responsible assessment infrastructure, and will be exploring internal materials development during SY 2026-2027, which could reduce or eliminate reliance on external assessment providers in future years.

The Department has launched statewide, free, and open source professional development in structured literacy for preschool, kindergarten-5th grade, and 6th-12th grade teachers. This free professional development will be continuously available to all Department teachers. Similarly, the Department is hosting ongoing free training in MTSS, which is already a required structure in all schools for providing core instruction and evidence-based interventions to all students based on their academic needs. The Department is also hosting ongoing Literacy Coaching training, grounded in principles of structured literacy and MTSS.

The Department has also convened a workgroup partnering with Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) regarding preservice teacher preparation and structured literacy instruction. The workgroup includes multiple IHE representatives and their work is ongoing.

Finally, the Department notes that the bill does not specify reading research and practices for the Hawaiian-medium Kaiapuni context, but rather reflects research that has been traditionally based in western, English-centered contexts. As a dual-language system, the Department respectfully notes that English-centered research and evidence cannot be assumed to automatically transfer to the Kaiapuni context. Should this bill continue forward, the Department respectfully suggests language that specifically exempts initial Kaiapuni participation, and allows the Kaiapuni context time and space to research whether and how reading risk is different in Hawaiian literacy development, and whether and how screening processes should take place in Kaiapuni K-3 classrooms.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding HB 1891, SD1.

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:23:09 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meilan Akaka Manfre	Testifying for Teach For America Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Meilan Akaka Manfre, and I serve as the executive director of Teach for America Hawai'i. I'm a former public school teacher and public school parent.

I am writing in strong support of HB1891, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive, linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions for our students.

Currently, Hawai'i is one of the only states without specific legislation addressing the needs of students with dyslexia. While our educators work tirelessly, many students who struggle with word recognition and phonological awareness are not identified until they have already fallen significantly behind their peers. Data show that students who are not reading proficiently by the third grade face long-term academic and social challenges.

HB1891 HD1 is a critical step forward for the following reasons:

- Early Identification: By mandating universal screenings from Kindergarten through Grade 3, we can identify "at-risk" markers early, allowing for proactive support rather than reactive remediation.**
- Structured Literacy: The bill's focus on professional development in structured literacy ensures that teachers are equipped with explicit, systematic instructional methods that benefit not only students with dyslexia but all developing readers.**
- Equity and Access: Linguistically appropriate screenings ensure that Hawaii's diverse student population, including those from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, receive fair and accurate assessments.**
- Teacher Support: Partnering with teacher preparation programs to include structured literacy in their curriculum ensures the next generation of Hawaii's educators enters the workforce ready to support every child's right to read.**

There is a lot of great literacy work already happening in HIDOE. That work gets even better when we can expand it through strategic partnerships and strategic spending, just as this bill outlines. For example, the HIDOE CLSD grant team - Dr. Petra Schatz, Leslie Stiller-West, and Dr. Lauren Padesky - is always willing to work with other local

organizations in the Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition to make sure our work aligns. Because of this, we at TFA Hawai'i have been able to implement evidence-based literacy programming into our educator prep program, directly supporting the HIDOE Literacy Levers.

Because we knew what HIDOE's goals for teachers and literacy are, we were able to work with Chaminade University and Dr. Chris Padesky, who created a course on the Science of Reading meant to help our first-year TFA teachers - at any grade level, any content area, any school - incorporate the evidence-based literacy practices into their classrooms.

From the first months that they are in their classrooms, our TFA teacher candidates are thinking about how to best close literacy gaps for their students, and that is extremely powerful. This bill would help to expand that opportunity for all educator prep programs to similarly align with HIDOE and other partners to further this work.

Passing HB1891 HD1 will align Hawai'i with national best practices and fulfill our commitment to ensuring every student has the foundational skills necessary for success. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

We appreciate your continued support of public education in Hawai'i and look forward to seeing the progress made at the legislature this year.

Mahalo,

Meilan Akaka Manfre

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:23:43 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Piikea Kalakau-Baarde	Testifying for Teach for America Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, and I work at Teach for America Hawai'i. I'm a former public school teacher and now support TFA Hawai'i's local initiatives, including our corps member programming, early literacy, alumni leadership development, external affairs, and more.

I'm reaching out in support of HB1891, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive, linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction

A significant portion of my current role involves advancing a 10-year goal around early literacy that we established through research and over 400 local interviews and survey responses from educational leaders, community organizations, students, and families. Specifically, our goal is that by 2030, twice as many children in Nānākuli and Wai'anae will reach proficiency in 3rd-grade reading, indicating that they are on a path to economic mobility and co-creating a future filled with possibilities. We believe that this bill will contribute to our goal.

HB1891 represents a critical step toward ensuring that every child in Hawai'i has the foundational skills necessary for lifelong success. By mandating dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, this bill addresses a significant gap in our current educational system. Early identification is the most effective way to prevent reading failure, and codifying these practices ensures that students with dyslexia and other literacy challenges receive the targeted, linguistically appropriate support they deserve from the very beginning of their academic journey.

Furthermore, the bill's focus on professional development in structured literacy empowers our educators with the tools needed to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Investing in teacher training and aligning instruction with proven, research-based practices is not just an educational improvement; it is a matter of equity for our students. TFA Hawai'i already partners with

Chaminade University to provide training in evidence-based literacy practices to all of our corps members. We know the value of this literacy-based professional development for new teachers across content areas and grade levels. HB1891 provides the necessary framework and resources to move Hawai'i toward a more consistent and effective literacy model, ultimately strengthening our entire community through higher academic achievement and improved student outcomes.

Mahalo,

Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, EdD

TFA Hawai'i

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB1891 HD1

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

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1891 HD1.

As a person with dyscalculia, I have firsthand experienced the effects of this undiagnosed learning disability. Had I been diagnosed as a child, I might have been able to learn how to keep the effects to a minimum.

This measure represents an important step toward addressing key challenges facing our community. By advancing this legislation, the committee is helping to promote more effective, equitable, and forward-thinking policy that will benefit residents both now and in the long term.

HB1891 HD1 is particularly significant because it:

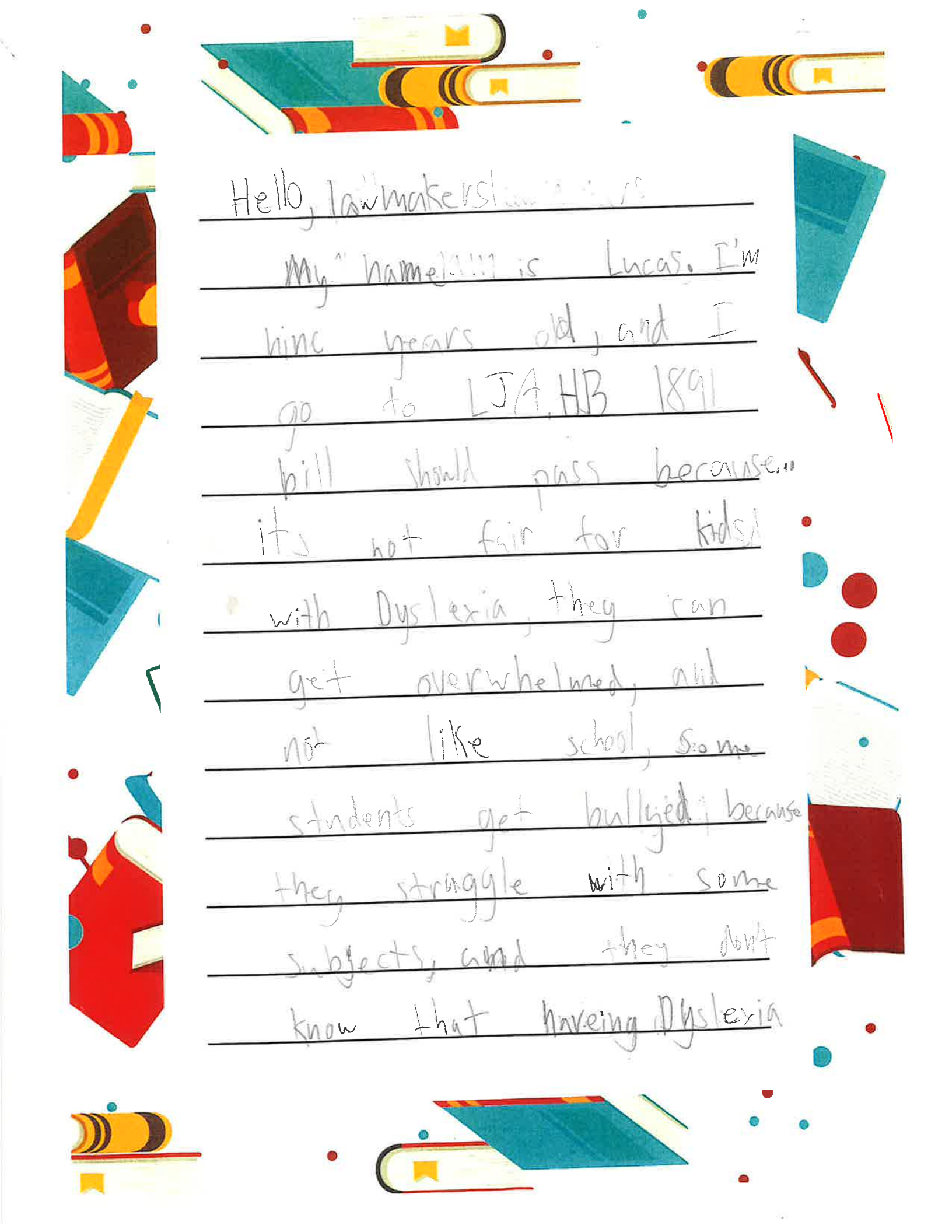
- Improves accountability and transparency in how decisions are made
- Strengthens outcomes for affected individuals and communities
- Provides a thoughtful and balanced approach to a complex issue

From my perspective, policies like this are essential to ensuring that our systems evolve to meet current needs. The changes proposed in this bill demonstrate a commitment to practical solutions while also considering fairness and sustainability.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB1891 HD1 and move it forward in the legislative process.

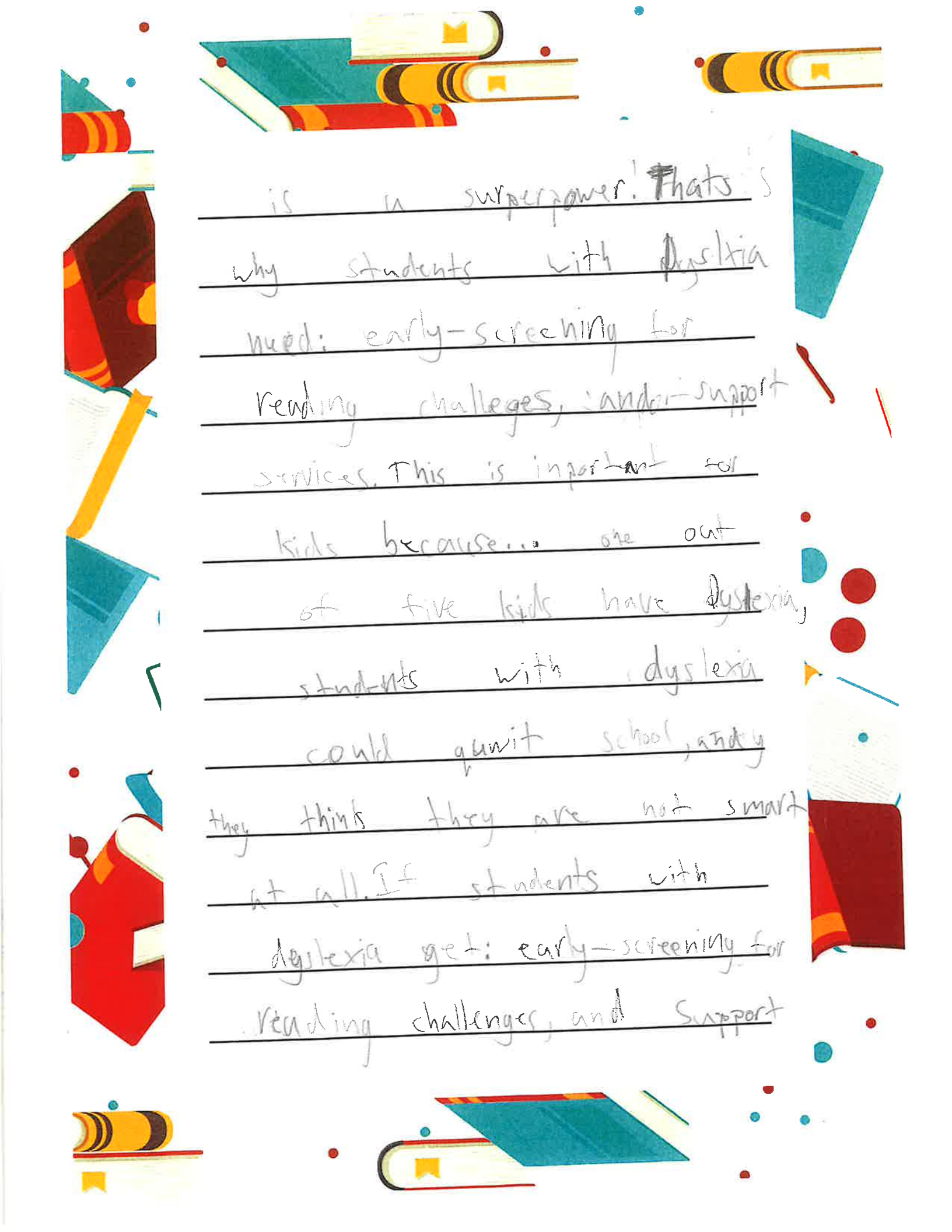
Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Sabine Nagasawa
Aloha Independent Living Hawaii
Hilo, HI 96720

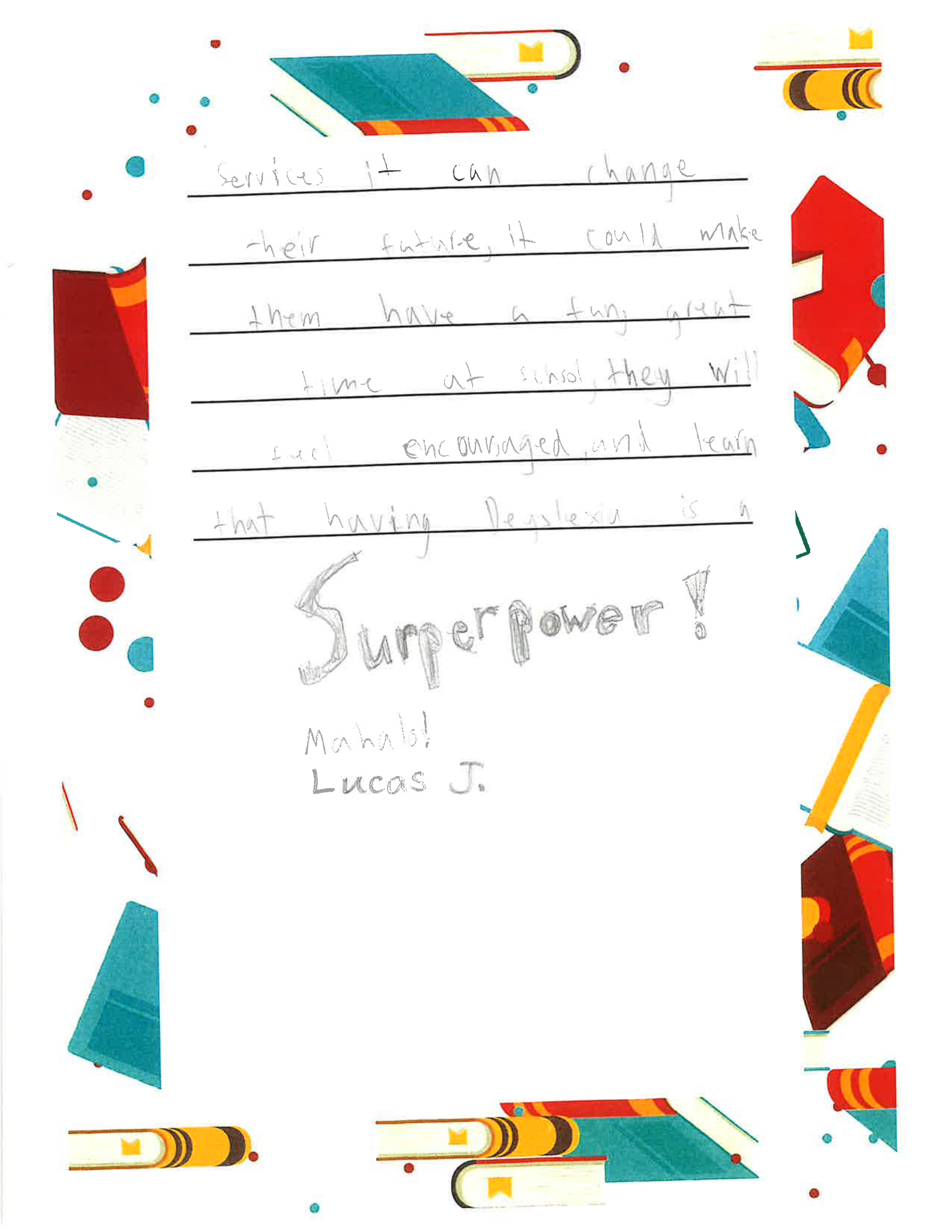


Hello, lawmakers!

My name is Lucas. I'm
nine years old, and I
go to LJA HB 1891
bill should pass because
it's not fair for kids
with Dyslexia, they can
get overwhelmed, and
not like school, some
students get bullied because
they struggle with some
subjects, and they don't
know that having Dyslexia

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring various books in different colors (red, blue, yellow, green) and orientations. There are also scattered geometric shapes like circles and triangles in blue, red, and yellow. A red pen is visible on the right side.

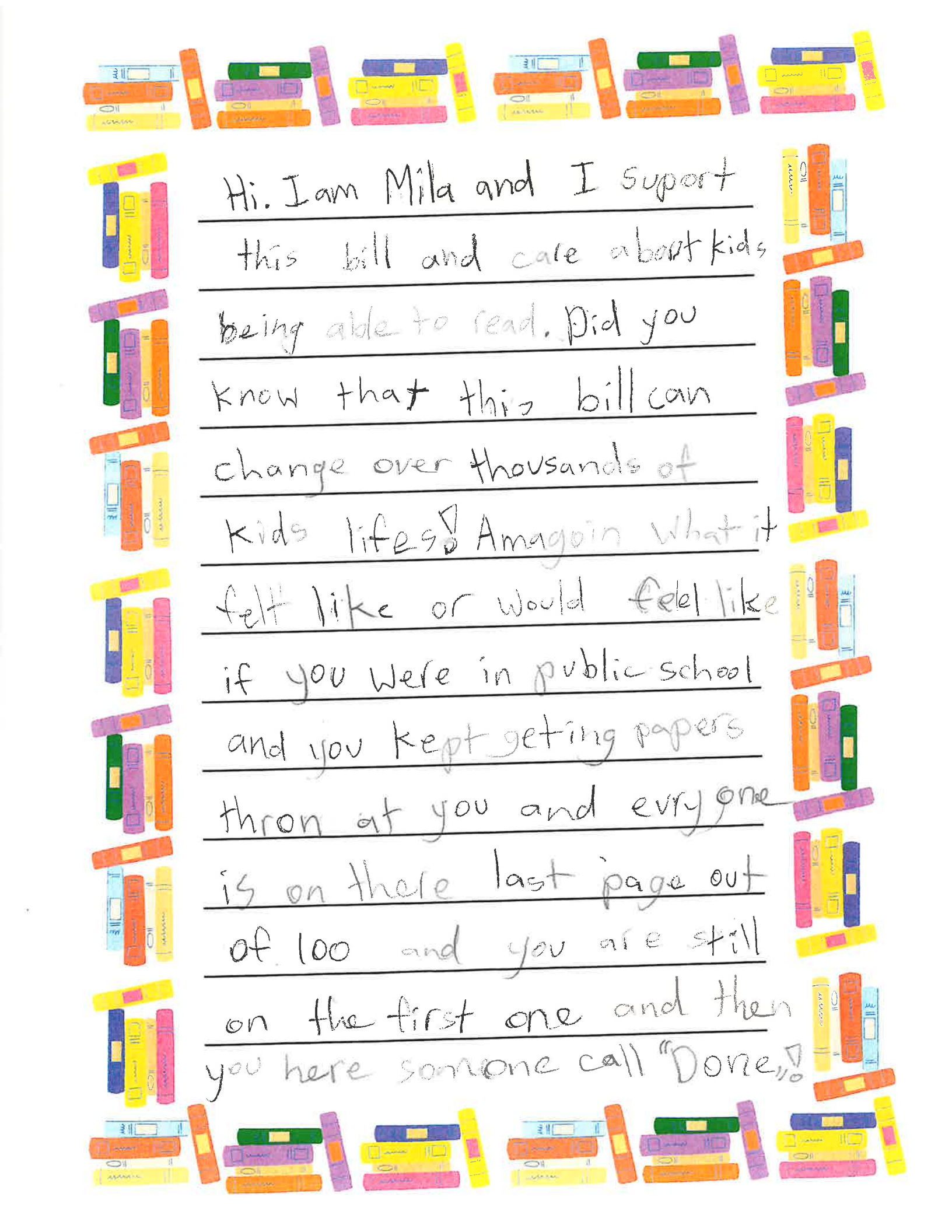
is a superpower! That's why students with dyslexia need: early-screening for reading challenges, and support services. This is important for kids because... one out of five kids have dyslexia, students with dyslexia could quit school, and they think they are not smart at all. If students with dyslexia get: early-screening for reading challenges, and support



Services it can change
their future, it could make
them have a fun great
time at school, they will
feel encouraged, and learn
that having Dyslexia is a

Superpower!

Maha!
Lucas J.



Hi. I am Mila and I support
this bill and care about kids
being able to read. Did you
know that this bill can
change over thousands of
kids' lives? Amagine what it
felt like or would feel like
if you were in public school
and you kept getting papers
thron at you and evry one
is on there last page out
of 100 and you are still
on the first one and then
you here someone call "Done!"

And now you are the only one left
with the same 100 papers then you
here the bell ring. Bring! Now you come
back the next day and now you have
200 papers and you only finished one from
yesterday. You are only on your 2nd
paper. Well hearing everyone say Done!

All your days would be so exhausting
but with this bill none would be

falling like this. With this bill
everyone will have enough to

courage to do things so please

Support HB 1891.

Mahalo,
Mila R.



Dear law makers,
~~I~~ I'm Whit and I just
turned 9 I'm from
Le Jardin Academy and
I support the
Hb 1891 bill.

Mahalo,
Whit



Dear sir or madam I am writing

a letter to you because I feel

bad for the people who have

dyslexia and because

I think they have a

hard time reading.

I think that people who have

dyslexia worry that

they are going to

spell something wrong

or pronounce something

wrong.



Dear law makers,

Hi law makers, my

name is Jaden i'm 9

year old and i'm trying

to get the bill to pas

because what if you have

dyslexia that would not

be fun with no help. I hope

you pass. Bye

Mahalo,

Jaden





My name is Jude

Elizabeth Atkins and

I am a student
at Le Jardin academy

and I support bill

HB 1891 and I think

it is important that

every kid gets the

education they need.

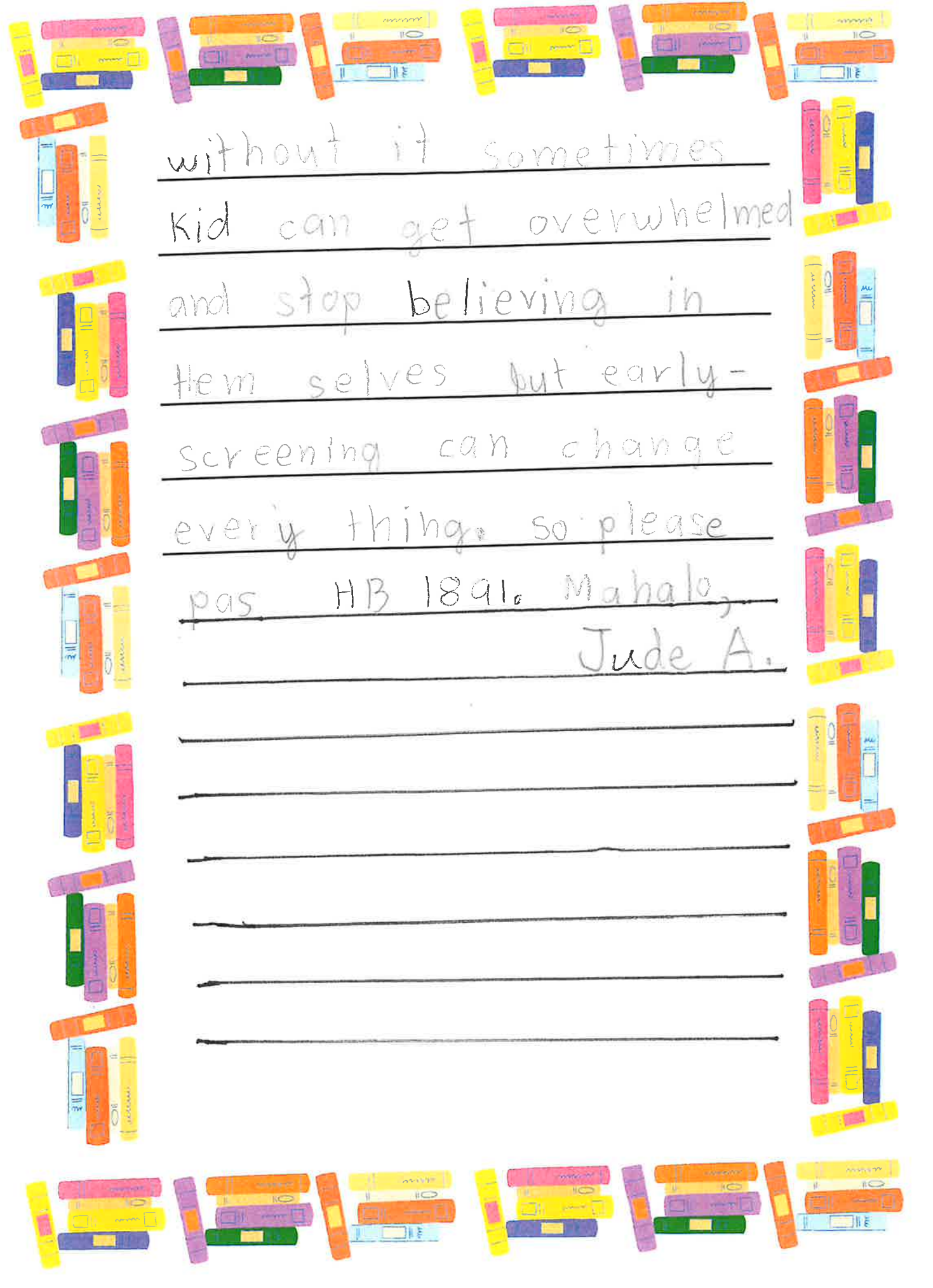
Did you know Hawaii is

the only state without

early-screening and since

we are the only state





without it sometimes
kid can get overwhelmed
and stop believing in
them selves but early-
screening can change
every thing. so please

pas HB 1891. Mahalo,
Jude A.

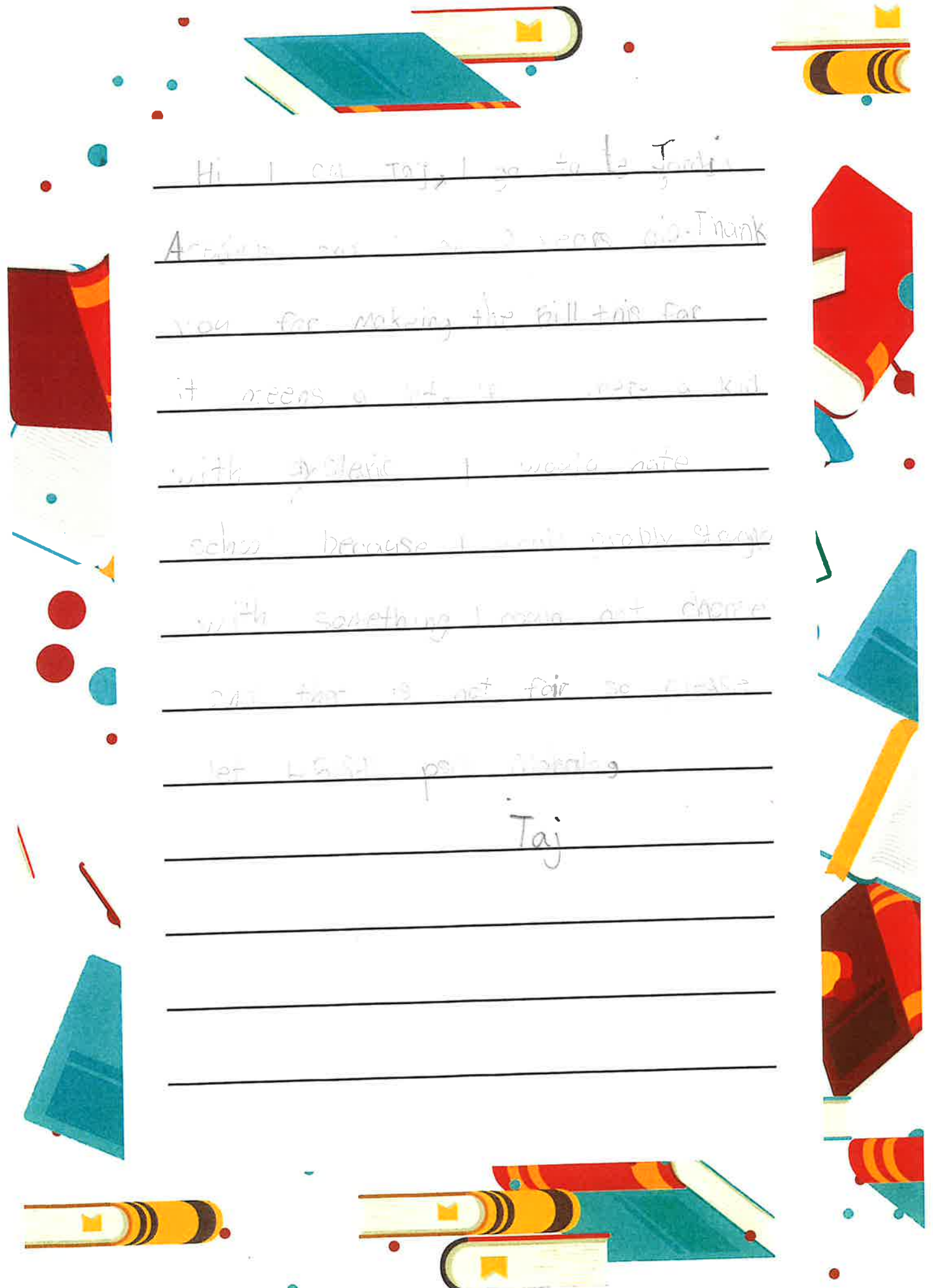
Aloha, my name is Luna I'm 9 years
old and I am student at LJA. If I
was a dyslexic student I would
have lots of help but some kids
in public school don't have help
so if you want to make kids
future better say yes to bill
HB 1981,

mahalo,

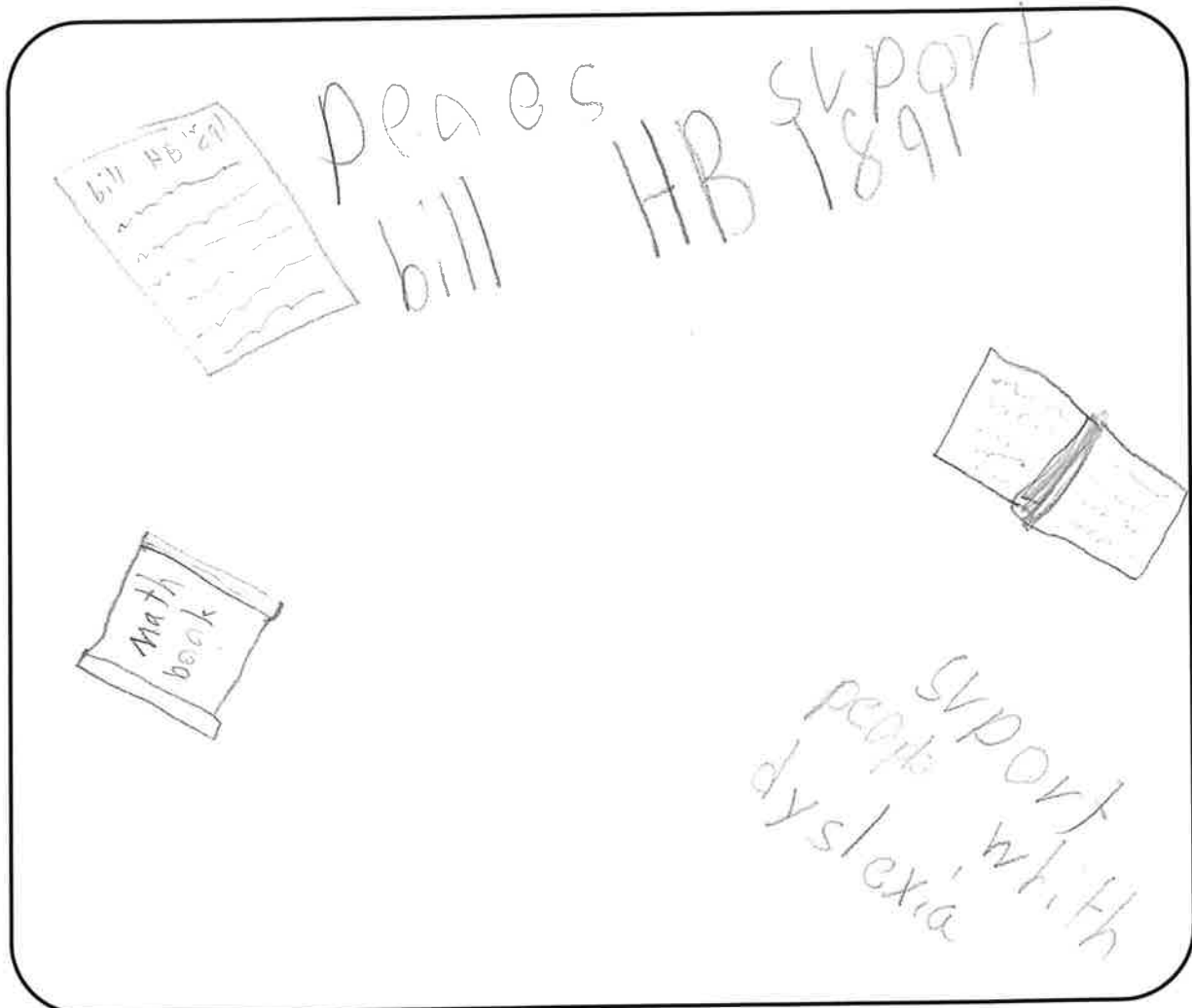
Luna

Hi I am Taj, I go to the Yogi
Ardra school in a 2 years old. Thank
you for making the bill this far
it means a lot to me as a kid
with dyslexia I would not
school because I would probably struggle
with something I could not choose
24/7 that is not fair so please
let L&S do ps. Working

Taj



Nathan



Aloha my name is
Nathan. From my
experience dyslexia is hard.

Pl ease support bill HB 1891

Thank you,
Nathan

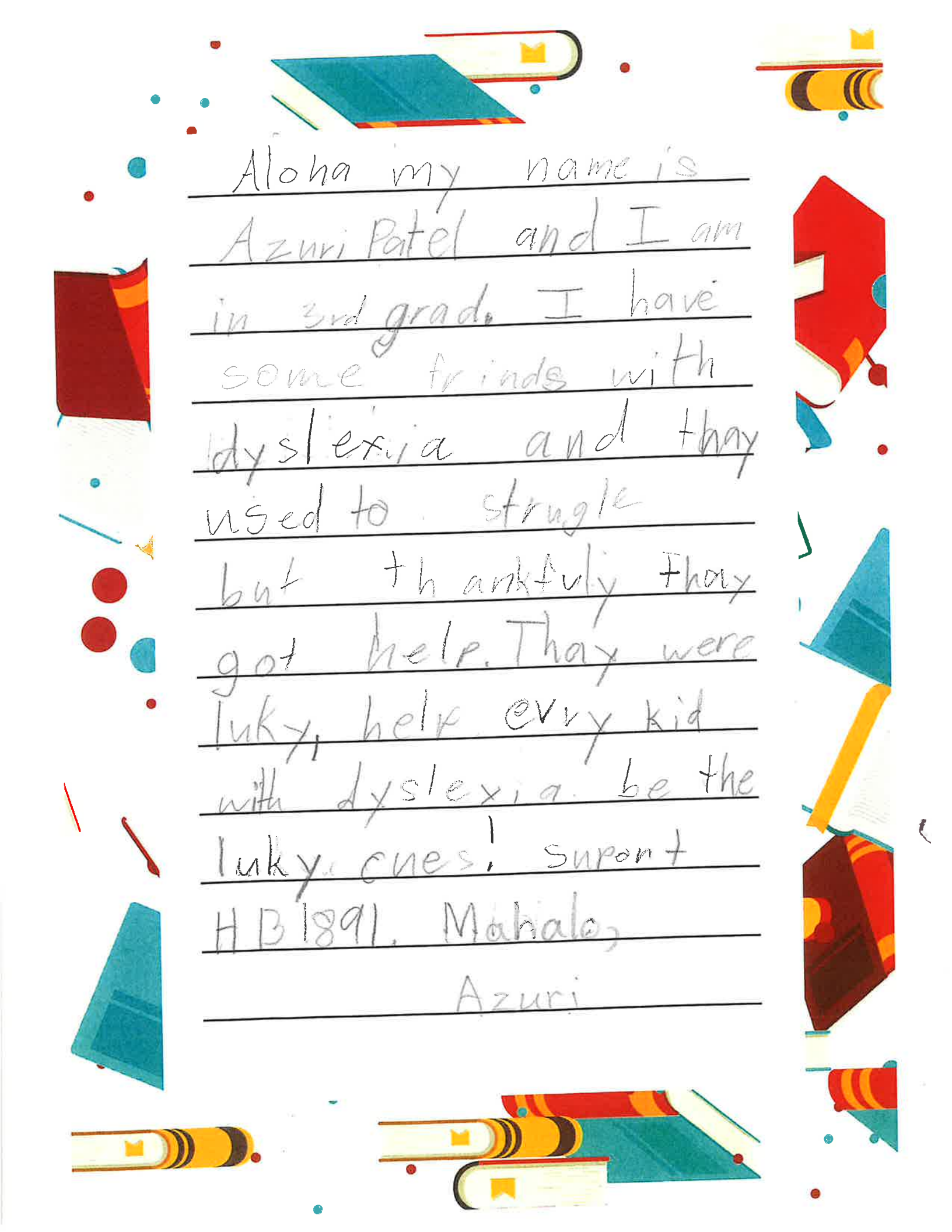


your great

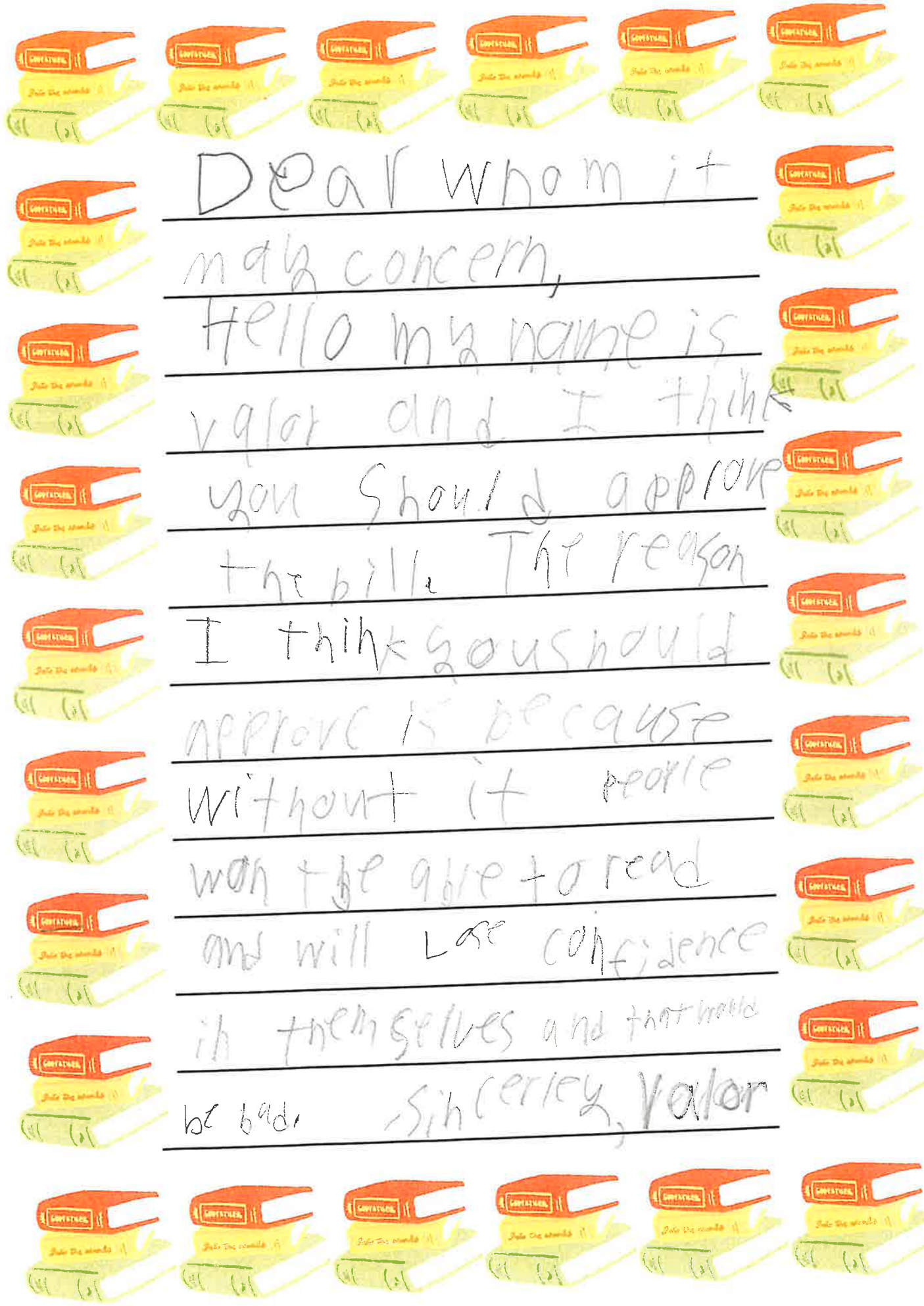
Hello my name is Kyson!
Please Support HB1891!
HB1891 lets kids get the
Support they need.

Mahalo,

Kyson



Aloha my name is
Azuri Patel and I am
in 3rd grade. I have
some friends with
dyslexia and they
used to struggle
but thankfully they
got help. They were
lucky, help evry kid
with dyslexia. be the
lucky ones! Support
HB 1891. Mahalo,
Azuri



Dear whom it
may concern,

Hello my name is
Vijay and I think
you should approve

the bill. The reason
I think you should

approve is because
without it people

won't be able to read
and will lose confidence

in themselves and that would
be bad. Sincerely, Vijay

Aloha Comito. My name
is Cooso Ben. I am a child
I want to help form
school and family. I'm lucky
but I wonder if I was
lucky and every day at
school. It had to
hand. I think I would like
so, as soon as I could and
my problems would become his. Please
make me a kid. The way!

Mahalo,

Coco

Aloha Committee,

My name is Coco Beh. I am dyslexic

I get lots of help from school and family.

I am lucky, but, I wonder, if I

wasn't lucky and every day at school

felt too hard to handle. I think

I would leave school as soon as I

could and my problems would become

Hawai's problems. Please make every

kid the lucky one!

Mahalo,

Coco

my name is Julie

riding on DKS

can make work done

become possible but work

welding is had son child

not understand. H107891

mak unkid understand

Dyslexia can be

hard. But it can

change everything.

Mahalo,

Julie

My name is Jolie. Reading opens doors and can make dreams come true and be possible. But when reading is hard, some children do not understand. HB/891 makes kids understand. Dyslexia can be hard, but help can change everything.

Mahalo,

Jolie

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Emilie, and I am a third-grade student.

When students struggle to read, the effects can go far beyond academics.

Students may feel embarrassed, anxious, or discouraged.

The true cost of illiteracy is not just difficulty with reading—it can also affect a child's confidence, mental health, and sense of belonging at school.

The good news is that we know how to help struggling readers.

Please support HB 1891 so students receive the support they need to succeed.

Mahalo, Emilie
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Jude 3rd grade, and I am a third-grade student in Hawai'i.

Every child in our state deserves the opportunity to learn to read. Research shows that about 1 in 5 students may have Dyslexia, and we know how to help them succeed.

HB 1891 ensures early screening and evidence-based instruction that supports all learners.

Please choose literacy. Please choose Hawai'i's keiki.

Mahalo,

Jude

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

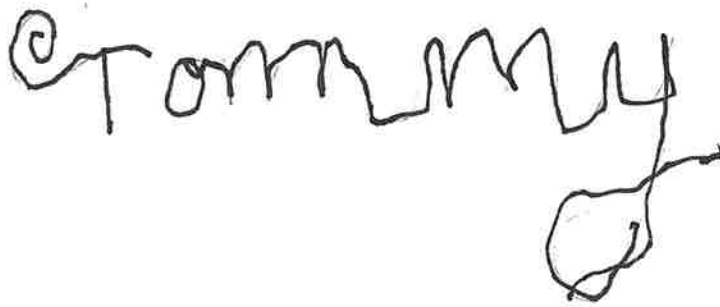
When assessments show that a student may need extra reading support, families should be informed as soon as possible. Early communication allows families and teachers to work together to help students succeed.

Families and schools are partners in supporting children.

HB 1891 ensures that families are notified when data shows a student may need additional help, so support can begin early.

Please support HB 1891 to strengthen collaboration between schools and families.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tommy". The signature is stylized with a large, circular initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline that loops back under the "y".

Bunroghs
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Reading opens doors. It helps students learn, explore their interests, and pursue their dreams.

But when reading is difficult, and students do not understand why, they may begin to feel discouraged or alone.

HB 1891 will ensure that students are screened early and provided with effective instruction and support.

Please support this bill so every child in Hawai'i has the opportunity to succeed as a reader.

Mahalo, Aubrey
3rd grade

Aloha, Committee -

My name is Coco Beh. I am dyslexic. Because we found out two years ago, I'm getting lots of help at school and from my family.

I am lucky.

But I wonder what would happen to me if I wasn't lucky. If we didn't know I had dyslexia and every day at school felt too hard to handle.

I think I would leave school as soon as I could. And my problem would probably become Hawaii's problem.

Please help every dyslexic kid be the lucky one.

Vote yes on HB 1891

Coco Beh
3rd Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Taegan, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Early help can change everything for a struggling reader. When students receive support early, they gain skills, confidence, and a love of learning.

But when reading problems go unnoticed, students can fall further behind each year.

HB 1891 ensures that students are screened early so teachers and families can work together to support them.

Please support HB 1891 so all students in Hawai'i have the chance to succeed.

Mahalo,

Taegan Murray, 3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

When students struggle to read and do not receive support, some eventually lose motivation or disengage from school.

Reading is foundational to future success. It opens doors to learning and opportunity.

HB 1891 will help prevent students from falling behind for years by ensuring early identification and support.

Please protect Hawai'i's keiki and their futures by passing HB 1891.

Mahalo,

AZURI patel
3rd Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,
School should be a place where students feel safe, supported, and confident.

But when reading is difficult every day, and students do not understand why,
school can become stressful and discouraging.

HB 1891 will help teachers better understand why students struggle and provide
evidence-based strategies to support them.

Please help make school a place where every child can succeed. Please pass HB
1891.

Mahalo,

Kirra M.


3rd. Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Henry, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Learning to read is one of the most important skills a child can gain in school.
Reading helps us learn new ideas, understand the world, and imagine our futures.

But for some students, reading is very difficult, especially when they have dyslexia
and do not receive help early.

HB 1891 will help schools identify students sooner and provide teachers with the
training and tools they need to support struggling readers.

Every child in Hawai'i deserves the chance to become a confident reader.

Please support HB 1891.

Mahalo,

Henry Crawford 3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Chloe, and I am a third-grade student in Hawai'i.

Reading difficulties are not a mystery. Research shows that with the right instruction, about 95% of students can learn to read successfully.

This instruction is often called structured literacy, which teaches reading step by step in ways that align with how the brain learns.

HB 1891 brings universal Dyslexia screening, evidence-aligned instruction, and stronger teacher preparation to Hawai'i.

We already know the solution. Please help bring literacy and opportunity to every child in our state.

Mahalo, Chloe Lau
3rd Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Whit, and I am a student in Hawai'i. Hawai'i is currently the only state in the country without laws specifically supporting students with Dyslexia. This is concerning, especially when research shows that about 1 in 5 students may have Dyslexia.

That means in nearly every classroom there are students—our friends and classmates—who need different kinds of support to learn to read successfully.

Now is the time for Hawai'i to act. Even if the financial investment feels big, the cost of failing to teach children to read is much greater. It affects confidence, opportunity, and future success.

Please support Hawai'i's students by passing HB 1891.

Mahalo, Whit Corrado
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Joliz, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Students today are the future of our state. When students learn to read well, they can become scientists, teachers, doctors, and leaders in our communities.

But when students struggle to read and do not receive support, it can affect their future opportunities.

HB 1891 helps make sure all students in Hawai'i receive the support they need to become strong readers and successful adults.

Please support HB 1891 for the future of Hawai'i's keiki.

Mahalo,

Joliz Ingram
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Lucas and I am a student in Hawai'i.

When students struggle to read every day without understanding why, it can make school feel frustrating and even scary. Some students feel embarrassed or anxious, or begin to believe they do not belong in school.

But it does not have to be that way.

HB 1891 will help schools identify reading challenges earlier and provide the right support before students lose confidence.

Please support HB 1891 to protect the mental health and success of Hawai'i's students.

Mahalo,

Lucas
Jaeger

3rd Grade



Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Easton, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Reading is the key that opens the door to learning. When students can read well, they can learn about science, history, and the world around them.

But when students struggle to read and do not get help early, those doors can begin to close.

HB 1891 helps make sure those doors stay open by identifying reading challenges early and supporting students right away.

Please support HB 1891 so every child in Hawai'i has the opportunity to succeed.

Mahalo,

3rd Easton Culver



Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Vivienne, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

When students learn to read well, they feel confident and excited to learn. But when reading is hard, and students do not get the help they need, they may start to believe they are not smart.

That is not true. Many students simply need to be taught differently.

HB 1891 will help schools identify students early and provide teachers with the tools to support them.

Please support HB 1891 so all students in Hawai'i can grow into confident and successful learners.

Mahalo,

Vivienne Blanchard
3rd grade

Hello Lawmakers,

My name is Samantha French, and I am a third-grade teacher at Le Jardin Academy. I am writing in strong support of HB1891 and its focus on early screening, dedicated dyslexia services, and comprehensive teacher training.

In my general education classroom, I have the privilege of teaching several students with dyslexia. I also come from a background working closely with children who have dyslexia and other learning differences, which has deepened my understanding of the supports they need to thrive. Because of this, I feel incredibly grateful that these students were placed in an environment where their needs are recognized and addressed.

The students I am thinking of are bright, creative, empathetic, and deeply intuitive. They bring unique perspectives and strengths to our classroom community every single day. They are the kind of learners who will go on to make meaningful contributions to the world. What has made the difference for them is not chance but access. They benefited from early screening, timely diagnosis, skilled teachers, targeted interventions, and additional support both in and out of the classroom.

Even with this strong network of support, these students still face daily challenges with reading and writing. Their progress requires persistence, patience, and continued specialized instruction. Without these services, I worry that their experience would look very different. Struggles that are now supported could instead lead to frustration, diminished confidence, and a loss of the joy and curiosity that make them who they are. Over time, this can result in disengagement from school altogether—something we know happens to far too many students whose needs go unmet.

HB1891 has the potential to change that trajectory for countless children across Hawaii. By ensuring early identification, equipping teachers with the knowledge and tools they need, and providing appropriate support services, we can create learning environments where all students—not just the fortunate few—have the opportunity to succeed.

Every child deserves the chance to feel capable, valued, and successful in school. This bill helps make that possible. I urge you to support HB1891 so that all students in Hawaii have the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Samantha French

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samantha French". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.



Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Serena Marsden. I am a 2nd-grade teacher, Vice President of The Reading League Hawai'i, and the mother of two dyslexic children. I am writing in strong support of HB 1891.

HB 1891 is a smart and necessary investment in Hawai'i's future. Early screening and intervention are not only educationally effective but also fiscally responsible. Many evidence-aligned screening tools are free or low-cost, and when paired with effective instruction, they can significantly improve student outcomes. The cost of early intervention is minimal compared to the long-term social and economic costs of reading failure. Simply put, intervention is far more affordable than remediation.

When students are not identified early, the consequences compound. Struggling readers are more likely to fall behind academically, experience anxiety and disengagement, and require far more intensive and costly support later. Early literacy is not just an education issue; it is directly tied to workforce readiness, economic stability, and the long-term well-being of our communities.

I also strongly support the proposed reporting amendment to ensure accountability and transparency in the bill's implementation. This amendment would require the Department of Education to collect and share critical data, including:

- How many schools are implementing a dyslexia-sensitive screener
- How many students in each complex area are being screened
- How many teachers are completing structured literacy training
- A clear plan and timeline for reviewing and approving screening tools

Without this level of accountability, we risk passing a bill without ensuring meaningful outcomes for students. With it, we can ensure that this investment leads to real, measurable change.

We know how to teach children to read. With early identification and evidence-aligned instruction, the vast majority of students can become successful readers. HB 1891 ensures we act early, when it matters most.

In my 24 years of teaching in Hawai'i, I have witnessed the heartbreak of students who leave our classrooms without learning to read. That is a weight educators carry, but it does not have to continue. We have the knowledge and the tools. What we need now is the commitment to act.

We are so close. This bill represents an opportunity to change life trajectories, for our keiki, for our communities, and for Hawai'i's future.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1891 and adopt the reporting amendment to ensure it delivers on its promise.

Mahalo for your leadership and your commitment to Hawai'i's keiki.

Serena Marsden

Serena Marsden

2nd Grade Teacher

Vice President, The Reading League Hawai'i

Mother of two dyslexic children



info@hawaiikidscan.org
hawaiikidscan.org

April 03, 2026

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

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

HawaiiKidsCAN strongly supports HB1891 HD1 SD1, which requires all public schools to administer dyslexia-sensitive universal screening to students in kindergarten through grade three, implement evidence-based interventions for struggling students, and make professional learning opportunities in structured literacy instruction available.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all students in Hawaii have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels or circumstances. As a member of the Hawaii State Literacy Coalition, strengthening foundational literacy is one of HawaiiKidsCAN's priority policy areas.

In October 2024, the Department of Education received a five-year \$60 million federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant to support schools in adopting best practices in structured literacy instruction, provide teacher training, and more. In the same month, the department identified its top literacy priorities and created a goals framework called the Literacy Levers. We celebrate the department's intent in laying out a clear path for every school in the state.

While these goals are laudable, because only 60 of 258 schools are participating in the CLSD grant, we are concerned that the benefits of the teacher training and support for improved screening will not reach the other 198 schools, raising equity concerns.

Students and families should reasonably be able to expect that no matter which public school a child attends, they will successfully be taught to read and write. **But if we do not mandate the use of effective literacy screeners and teachers are not trained in evidence-based literacy instruction in two thirds of our schools, we risk leaving the bulk of students behind.** When 69% of our fourth graders are



not reading proficiently, we cannot afford to take this risk.¹ HB1891 HD1 SD1 would ensure that all schools across the state shared long-term goals clearly aligned with critical elements of the Literacy Levers. It would also, for the first time in Hawai‘i’s statutory history, define dyslexia and mandate that struggling readers have the right to evidence-based interventions.

Implementation Costs

While HB1891 HD1 SD1 currently has a blank appropriation, we believe this bill does not require any funding to be implemented. Last year, the DOE testified that they would convene a review committee to assess and streamline approved screeners for schools.

On January 28, a draft of the screener review committee’s findings were shared with the Hawai‘i State Literacy Coalition, though a final report has yet to be released. In it, the DOE’s workgroup’s criteria noted that being dyslexia-sensitive and teacher-facing were mandatory components for a screener to be approved. Three screeners met those standards on the draft approved list: CUBED-3 Insight, DIBELS 8th Edition, and Amplify mCLASS.

Currently more than 70% of schools use i-Ready as an early literacy screener, but it was determined that it did not meet the review committee’s standards. If i-Ready, which costs approximately \$20/child, is no longer approved for use and schools are instead required to use DIBELS 8th Edition (\$2), mCLASS (\$8), or CUBED Insight (\$6) - this would represent a substantial savings from current expenditures, as shown below.

Assessment	Per Pupil Cost	Statewide Cost (n = 46,000)
DIBELS 8th Edition	\$2	\$92,600
mCLASS	\$7	\$324,100
CUBED Insight	\$6	\$414,020
i-Ready *not approved, for reference only	\$20+	\$926,000+

Regarding teacher training, the DOE has testified that they have "launched statewide, free, and open source professional development in structured literacy for preschool,

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2024 Reading Assessments. [State Snapshot Report. Hawaii Grade 4 Public Schools](#)



kindergarten-5th grade, and 6th-12th grade teachers. This free professional development will be continuously available to all Department teachers." Given that the bill only requires that training be made available but does not mandate participation, training costs should not account for any appropriation consideration for the bill.

While HB1891 HD1 SD1 makes important progress in setting new parameters for assessment and intervention, there are still some gaps. Currently, there is no aggregated, publicly available statewide data on which schools use effective screeners, how many teachers are trained, or how interventions are implemented. The CLSD grant data will undoubtedly yield crucial data through 2029 for the 60 schools that opted in, but we must also be able to measure progress in all public schools - not just a third of them.

We therefore echo the note in the Senate Education committee report that “reports on...school-level implementation of dyslexia-sensitive screeners and related outcomes would increase accountability.” If the legislature were to support this measure, we expect that the department would ensure the availability of transparent, statewide data on implementation and outcomes to ensure fidelity to this measure’s goals.

Finally, we note that HB1891 HD1 SD1 does not conflict with Hawaii’s unique status as a dual-language system that includes Hawaiian-medium Kaiapuni school models. The International Dyslexia Association notes that with dyslexia, “there appears to be a core dysfunction present across writing systems that reflects the phonological deficit hypothesis (Goswami, 2015)... This would also make sense given the high heritability estimates of the disorder (Grigorenko, 2004).”² Dyslexia screening takes place around the world, including in languages such as Te Reo Māori, French, Hindi. Students in Hawaiian-medium Kaiapuni schools should have equal access to screening and support around dyslexia as any other student in our public school system. HB1891 HD1 SD1 is aligned with the proud history of high literacy rates achieved by the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Erica Nakanishi-Stanis
Advocacy Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

² [The Myths and Truths of Dyslexia in Different Writing Systems](#). International Dyslexia Association, retrieved April 2026.



Addenda

The Hawai'i DOE Literacy Levers (below) propose a goals framework for strengthening literacy in the state. HB1891 HD1 would strengthen Hawai'i's policy commitment to three principles: Evidence-Based Interventions, Universal & Dyslexia Screening, and Science of Reading Training.

Hawai'i State Department of Education's Literacy Levers



Science of Reading Training

Hawai'i teachers will be trained in the science of reading in order to successfully implement structured literacy instruction for all students.



Family Notification

Hawai'i families will receive written notification of students' literacy screening results; families of students at risk will be given further information on interventions provided.



Evidence-Based Interventions

Hawai'i students at risk will receive evidence-based, Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 interventions aligned to their individual literacy skill needs within the HMTSS-R system.



Literacy Coaching

Hawai'i schools will have access to highly trained literacy coaches to support teachers in the implementation of structured literacy and data-based instruction.



Universal & Dyslexia Screening

Hawai'i K-3 students will be screened for literacy difficulties with a state office approved dyslexia-sensitive screener; all 4-9 students at risk will also be screened.



High Quality Instructional Materials

Hawai'i students will have full access to engaging Tier 1 literacy instruction with evidence-informed, high quality instructional materials within the Hawai'i Multi-Tier System of Supports (HMTSS-R) system.



Monitoring Student Progress

Hawai'i students will be progress monitored for growth within the HMTSS-R system; students at risk will be closely progress monitored for reasonable Rate of Improvement (ROI).



Adequate Funding

Hawai'i schools will be adequately funded to support their students' literacy needs, with priority given to increasing access to quality instruction through literacy coaching, literacy interventionists, and universal staff development.



Forty two community members have also co-signed our testimony in support of HB 1891 HD1 SD1.



Name of Individual or Organization	Affiliation	Zip Code
Alexander Callenback		96778
Anne Weber-Yarbrough		96819
Brigitte Schell		96816
Chris Padesky		96815
Courtney Caranguian		96789
Doug Imig, PhD		96822
Dr. Jennifer Dempsey		96768
Dylan Fujitani		96822
Elijah Kochenbach		96720
Emily SL Silver		96822
Felecia Shin		96763
Germaine Kaleilehua Tauati, MA.ED.		96720
Jacqueline Lamontagne		96744
Jason Breslin		12110
Jessica Barbera		96816
Jill Takasaki Canfield	Hawaii Literacy	96817
Jillian Levy		96792
Kaela Teho		96813
Kara Kusunoki		96816
Kashmira Reid		96822
Kate Sowards		96826
Keoni Uehara		96792
Kim Guieb		96818
Leilani Burchette		96786
Leilani Kailiawa		96720



Lynn Finnegan		96744
Mariah Ramo		96797
Marissa Brooks	FIT4MOM Honolulu	96825
Mary Shook-Starsinic		96826
Michelle Lam		96744
Mindy Yang		98613
Misty Cruden		96760
Momi Mae Ham		96816
Nick G.		96826
Paloma Almanza		96744
Phaedra Robinson, Ph.D.	RAI Hawai'i LLC	96734
Sachie Yorck		96816
Sarah DeLuca	Bess Press	96816
Serena Marsden		96744
Silvia Tedeschi		96814
Tiffany Wilson		96792



The following letter was voluntarily submitted by a community member who signed onto this testimony and gave permission for it to be included in full below. We are grateful for her voice and perspective.

**Testimony in Support of HB 1891
Relating to Dyslexia-Sensitive Screening and Educator Training**

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

My name is Jessica Barbera, and I am writing in strong support of HB 1891 as both a parent and a literacy teacher working closely with young children in our public schools.

As a literacy educator, I see firsthand how early reading struggles can quietly compound over time when students are not identified early or accurately. Many of the students who work the hardest are often the ones who feel the most frustrated, not because they lack motivation or intelligence, but because their brains process language differently. Dyslexia does not reflect a lack of effort or ability, yet without dyslexia-sensitive screeners and proper training, these students are often misunderstood, overlooked, or identified far too late.

As a parent, this issue is deeply personal. Every child deserves to feel confident, capable, and supported in their learning. When a child struggles to read and no one can explain why, it impacts not just academics but their self-esteem, behavior, and long-term relationship with school. Early identification changes that story. It replaces confusion with clarity and frustration with targeted support.

HB 1891 is critical because it focuses on early, dyslexia-sensitive screening paired with professional learning for educators. Screening alone is not enough. Teachers must be trained to understand what the data means and how to respond instructionally. This bill recognizes that reality. When educators are equipped with the right tools and knowledge, we can intervene earlier, provide structured literacy instruction, and prevent years of academic struggle.

I have seen how effective training transforms classrooms. Teachers become more confident, students receive instruction aligned to how they learn, and families finally feel seen and heard. This bill is not about labeling children. It is about understanding them.

Supporting HB 1891 is an investment in our students, our teachers, and our families. It promotes equity, early intervention, and evidence-based literacy practices that will benefit Hawai'i's keiki for years to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your commitment to improving literacy outcomes for all students. I respectfully urge you to support HB 1891.

Thank you,
Jessica Barbera

Parent and Literacy Teacher

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 11:53:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deloris Guttman	Testifying for African American Diversity Cultural Center Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Ways and Means Committee

The African American Diversity Cultural Center Hawaii supports this Literacy Bill HB1891 HD1 SD1.

Deloris Guttman

Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition
2444 Dole Street, Bachman Annex 6
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

April 5, 2026

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition strongly supports [HB 1891 HD1 SD1](#). This bill represents a positive step forward in ensuring educational equity and a smart financial investment for Hawai'i. Reading is not just a school issue; it is a foundation of a strong economy.

As this Committee evaluates the fiscal impact of this legislation, we emphasize that early literacy is a strategic economic move. Currently, sixty-nine percent of Hawai'i's fourth graders are not reading at a proficient level. This is more than an educational challenge - it is a long-term economic risk. Research shows that students who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are significantly more likely to require expensive remedial services, face higher rates of grade retention, or drop out of school entirely. By investing in early screening and intervention now, the State can avoid millions of dollars in future costs related to special education, social services, and lost tax revenue.

Fortunately, strengthening our literacy system does not require a massive financial burden. Many evidence-based, dyslexia-sensitive screening tools are available to schools at a minimal cost. These tools are efficient and accurate in identifying reading challenges. This bill ensures that all students across the state have access to a high standard of support regardless of where they live. It moves our system from an optional model to a universal standard of excellence, maximizing the impact of every dollar spent on public education.

We also recommend specific amendments to ensure these resources are used as effectively as possible. We support requiring schools to provide written notice to parents within thirty days if a child is identified as at-risk. This encourages a partnership between families and schools that costs the state nothing while providing essential support for the student. Additionally, making structured literacy training mandatory for teachers is the best way to protect the State's fiscal investment. When educators are equipped with research-based teaching methods, classroom time is used more effectively and student outcomes improve without requiring additional instructional hours. We urge the Committee to pass HB 1891, SD1, to build a more literate and economically stable future for Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition *E Holomua Kākou – Let Us Move Forward Together*

Members of the Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition

- Kim Guieb
- Dr. Jennifer Dempsey
- Meilan Akaka Manfre, TFA Hawai'i
- Jillian Levy, TFA Hawai'i
- Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, EdD, TFA Hawai'i
- Kara Kusunoki
- Bill Spradlin
- Petra Schatz, Ph.D.
- Tiffany Yango-Au
- Leslie Stiller-West
- Germaine K. Tauati
- Christopher Padesky
- Sarah DeLuca
- Jill Takasaki Canfield

Data Reference:

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2024 Reading Assessment. The State Snapshot Report for Hawai'i Grade 4 Public Schools indicates that approximately 69% of students performed below the "Proficient" level.

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

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1891 HD1 SD1, which addresses literacy development and dyslexia awareness in Hawai'i's schools.

I understand firsthand the importance of early literacy detection in schools. My grandson, at the time in first grade, was already falling behind in reading. By the time I realized how far behind he was, it was halfway through the school year. I spoke with his teacher, and together we created a plan to help him improve. Although he made some progress, he remained too far behind to truly catch up.

Concerned about his long-term success, I asked if he could be held back a year so he could build a stronger foundation. I was told that children at that age are not held back. This left me confused and worried, knowing he would be promoted to the next grade even though the material would only become more difficult.

This experience showed me how critical early screening, intervention, and structured literacy support are. Without timely identification and the right tools, students can fall through the cracks and continue to struggle year after year.

Low literacy not only affects academic success, but is also closely linked to higher dropout rates and increased risk of delinquency. When students fall behind early and remain unsupported, they can become discouraged, disengaged, and more likely to leave school altogether. Strengthening literacy at an early age helps keep students on track, in school, and on a positive path.

Literacy is the foundation of all learning. HB 1891 HD1 SD1 takes important steps to ensure students are identified early and supported with evidence-based instruction. It will help educators better meet the needs of students, including those with dyslexia, and prevent situations like my grandson's from happening to other families.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1891 HD1 SD1 so that all children in Hawai'i have the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Joanne Pagan
Independent Living Specialist
1055 Kino'ole St. # 202
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 756-2995 (Cell)
808 - 339-7297 (Office)
joannep@alohailhawaii.org

April 2, 2026

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lauren Farasati. I am the grandmother of a dyslexic learner and I strongly support HB1891. Chairman, Dela Cruz, I was with the student advocacy group from Le Jardin Academy you met with on Tuesday. I want to personally thank you for meeting with our keiki advocates and for prioritizing this bill with a hearing. They were thrilled to be able to speak with you about universal dyslexia screening in Kindergarten and the need for trained teachers in every school.



We know the buck stops at this committee. And we know that every session you juggle hundreds of competing legislative needs with a very finite budget. So I'm not going to focus on the emotional toll that dyslexia causes. Every empathetic human can imagine the shame keiki feel not being able to do what others can. Instead, I want to focus on measurable facts.

- Dyslexia is inherited. It has to do with how the brain processes language. Every dyslexic will struggle, not necessarily in the same way learning to read, write and spell. But they will typically be exceptional in other ways having to do with creative thinking, spatial intelligence, patterns, and designing outside the box solutions.
- This is not a small issue. One in every five people is dyslexic.
- Dyslexia cannot disappear with societal change. It can only be improved if is identified and remediated by specifically trained teachers.
- For every year remediation is delayed, the struggle gap widens. If we begin remediation in kindergarten or first grade, most children will be reading at grade level in a couple of years. If remediation is delayed to third or fourth grade or later, it will be years of remediation and many children will never catch up.
- Kindergarten screening - which does not actually identify dyslexia but raises an "at risk" flag - takes little time and little money. But what an impact it has if parents are immediately informed and can partner with their schools to help their keiki!
- Teacher training is huge. These kids aren't going to "get it" just by being taught. I can show my granddaughter a sight word flash card 100 times and she isn't going to remember it. These kids learn differently. And teachers must be trained to teach these keiki the way *they* learn.

- If we don't identify dyslexia early and do something about it, the costs are staggering. Dyslexia will significantly increase the dropout rate, under-employment, reliance on public assistance, the health system and incarceration rates...all huge costs! And worst of all...because dyslexia is inherited, this becomes a perpetual cycle of despair...unless we do something about it.

On behalf of the 20% of Hawaii's dyslexic keiki, I am asking, from the bottom of my heart for your support of HB1891. And, as a retired business person I'd love to see this bill strengthened by accountability. After making the investment in the initiatives of kindergarten screening and teacher training, we should be able to measure implementation and results across every school in the state. What gets measured gets done!

Mahalo

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Farasati". The ink is a dark grey or black color.

Lauren Farasati

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:44:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeremiah Brown	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a high school teacher for almost 20 years, I have seen students who struggle with dyslexia and I've been frustrated by the lack of effective interventions for these students. We are not effectively serving these students, who are at risk of dropping out and facing a lifetime of diminished earnings and outcomes.

I would also like to see dyslexia screeners made available at the high school level.

I urge the committee to pass this bill.

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 10:28:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah DeLuca	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 2, 2026

Aloha e Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Bill HB 1891 HD1. I serve as the Director of Literacy and Curriculum Design at Bess Press Publishing, an independent publishing house in Kaimukī, where I focus on place-based literacy. I also bring 19 years of experience as a classroom teacher, including work in DOE SPED settings and 16 years teaching Kindergarten–Grade 1.

One of the greatest joys of my teaching career has been guiding young learners as they learn to read. This process is complex and requires thoughtful structure, scaffolding, and consistent support. I found deep fulfillment in helping students build letter–sound relationships, develop decoding strategies, and experience the repetition necessary for mastery, leading to those unforgettable, raise-the-roof, scream out loud, breakthrough moments when a child reads independently for the first time! There is truly nothing like it, for both the child and the community of adults supporting them.

For students with dyslexia and other reading disabilities, this journey often takes longer and requires more targeted, structured intervention. I was fortunate to be trained in structured literacy approaches such as IMSE and Slingerland, and even with this training, I saw how critical early screening and assessment were in identifying student needs. In my school setting, we were able to refer students for additional evaluation and support, and I witnessed many of them thrive with the right interventions in place. Their growth (in reading ability, confidence, and self-esteem), was profound.

I strongly support this bill because every child, in every school, deserves access to early screening and the structured support they need to become successful readers. When we identify and address challenges early, we not only improve literacy outcomes, but we also change the trajectory of a child’s educational experience, and future success.

**Mahalo for your consideration,
Sarah DeLuca**

Director of Literacy and Curriculum Design, Author and Educator

Bess Press, Inc.

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 3:10:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Marsden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Rob Marsden, and I serve as an educational leader working with students, teachers, and families across Hawai‘i. I write in strong support of HB1891 HD1 SD1.

This bill represents a critical opportunity to strengthen early literacy across our state through universal screening, structured literacy, and aligned teacher preparation. The research is clear that early identification and evidence-based instruction significantly improve long-term outcomes for students, particularly those with dyslexia and other reading challenges.

I also offer my support from a personal place. I am dyslexic. As a student, I experienced firsthand how difficult learning to read can be when instruction does not align with how the brain learns. What made the difference for me was explicit, structured instruction. This bill helps ensure that access to that kind of teaching is not left to chance.

As this bill reaches the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I appreciate the focus on fiscal responsibility. Early screening and intervention are not only educationally sound, they are economically responsible. When students are identified early and supported effectively, we reduce the need for more intensive and costly interventions later. Many screening tools and instructional approaches are already available at low or no cost, making this a high-impact investment for Hawai‘i.

I also want to recognize the broader community effort that has brought this bill forward. The collective voices of educators, families, and students across multiple hearings reflect a deep commitment to improving literacy outcomes for our keiki. In particular, I want to acknowledge the students who have advocated for this bill with courage and clarity. Their actions are a powerful reminder of why this work matters.

To strengthen implementation and ensure long-term impact, I respectfully recommend the inclusion of clear reporting and accountability measures:

- A reporting requirement to the Legislature and Board of Education
- The percentage of students screened, identified as at risk, and receiving intervention, disaggregated by school and complex area
- Identification of schools meeting screening requirements and monitoring for redundant

screening practices

- Data on the number of teachers trained in the science of reading, including those beyond current grant requirements
- A clear plan, with timeline and goals, for collaboration with Hawai'i's Institutions of Higher Education to ensure teacher candidates are prepared in the science of reading

These additions would support transparency, coherence, and sustainability as this important work moves forward.

We are at a meaningful moment for literacy in Hawai'i. HB1891 represents a thoughtful and impactful step toward ensuring that all students, including those with dyslexia, receive the instruction they need to thrive.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your commitment to Hawai'i's keiki.

Mahalo nui loa,
Rob Marsden

I stand before you not just as an educator, but as someone who has watched children quietly fall through the cracks—children who are bright, curious, and capable, yet who begin to believe they are none of those things.

In my classroom, I have seen the same story unfold too many times. A student struggles to recognize letters, to connect sounds, to read even the simplest sentences. At first, it looked like hesitation. Then it becomes avoidance. Soon, it turns into frustration, tears, and silence. These are not children who don't want to learn. These are children who are trying—often harder than anyone else in the room—without the tools they need to succeed.

What we often fail to recognize in time is that many of these students are living with undiagnosed dyslexia.

Without early identification, these children internalize their struggles. They begin to believe they are “slow,” or “not smart.” By the time they are finally identified—if they ever are—the gap has widened, not only academically but emotionally. Confidence erodes. Engagement disappears. And a love of learning is replaced with anxiety and shame.

I remember one student in particular. He was imaginative, full of questions, and eager to participate—until reading was involved. Over time, he withdrew. He stopped raising his hand. He stopped trying. When he finally whispered to me, “I think I'm just dumb,” it was a moment that has stayed with me ever since. He wasn't dumb. He had dyslexia. But we were too late in recognizing it.

This is not an isolated story. It is happening across classrooms throughout our state.

We have the knowledge. We have the research. Early screening and intervention for dyslexia can change the entire trajectory of a child's life. When identified early, students can receive targeted instruction that allows them to read, to learn, and to thrive alongside their peers. The difference is not small—it is life-changing.

And yet, too many children are left waiting.

That is why I am asking—on behalf of my students, past and present—for you to take action.

I respectfully urge the House and Senate to pass legislation that mandates early literacy screenings for dyslexia and related reading difficulties in all public and private schools across the state of Hawaii. This must include not only screening, but also guaranteed access to evidence-based interventions for students who need support.

This is not just an education issue. It is an equity issue. It is about ensuring that every child, regardless of background or school setting, has the opportunity to learn to read with confidence and dignity.

We cannot continue to rely on chance—on whether a teacher happens to notice, or whether a family can afford private testing. Every child deserves to be seen early, supported early, and given the chance to succeed.

I ask you to think of the children sitting in classrooms right now, quietly struggling, wondering why something that seems so easy for others feels impossible to them. They are waiting for us to act.

Please, pass this bill. Give our teachers the tools, give our schools the structure, and most importantly, give our children the future they deserve.

Mahalo,

Mrs. Brianne Humara

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 8:36:30 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Shikuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Lori Shikuma. I am a Fellow with the Orton Gillingham Academy and the mother of two dyslexic children. I am writing in strong support of HB 1891.

HB 1891 represents a thoughtful and forward-looking investment in Hawai‘i’s future. Implementing early screening alongside effective, evidence-based instruction is both educationally sound and financially prudent. Many screening tools are readily accessible at little to no cost, and when used appropriately, they can dramatically improve literacy outcomes. The reality is clear: addressing reading challenges early is far less costly than attempting to remediate them later.

When students are not identified in the early years, the impact deepens over time. These students are more likely to struggle academically, lose confidence, and disengage from learning. As their needs intensify, so do the resources required to support them. Early literacy is foundational—not only for academic success, but also for future employment opportunities, economic security, and overall community well-being.

I also support the inclusion of the reporting amendment, which is essential for ensuring accountability and transparency as this bill is implemented. This amendment would require the Department of Education to gather and report key data, including:

- The number of schools utilizing a dyslexia-sensitive screener
- The number of students screened within each complex area
- The number of educators completing structured literacy training
- A defined plan and timeline for reviewing and approving screening tools

Without clear accountability measures, there is a risk that the bill’s intentions may not translate into meaningful outcomes. With them, we can monitor progress and ensure this initiative leads to measurable improvements for students.

We already know what works. With early identification and evidence-based instruction, most children can become proficient readers. HB 1891 gives us the opportunity to act at the point when intervention is most effective.

Over my 15 years of working exclusively with dyslexic students, I have seen far too many students leave elementary school without the ability to read. That experience is deeply difficult for both students and educators—but it is not inevitable. We have the knowledge and the tools needed to change this trajectory. What is required now is decisive action.

We are on the brink of meaningful change. This bill offers a chance to positively impact the lives of our keiki and strengthen the future of our communities.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1891 and include the reporting amendment to ensure its successful implementation.

Mahalo for your dedication and service to Hawai'i's keiki.

Sincerely,

Lori Shikuma

M.S.Ed, Fellow/OGA, Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist/CERI
Mother of two dyslexic children

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 10:11:22 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joy M. Koerte	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Joy Koerte, and I am a lifelong resident of Kauai, Hawaii and mother of a 12-year-old with dyslexia. I am writing in support of HB1891.

My daughter began showing signs of struggling with reading, writing, and processing in the first grade at her DOE school. Over the next few grade levels, her challenges continued, and my husband and I felt that we were constantly reaching out to her teachers, her school, and private tutors for help with no clear answers or significant progress. After a few years of in-school assessments, inconclusive findings, and several private referrals, she was finally able to be properly assessed and evaluated by a private specialist. This resulted in a dyslexia diagnosis in the months before she entered the 5th grade. This was a relief, yet it took four long years, and at that point, we had paid over \$2000 out of pocket because our health insurance denied coverage. This diagnosis was just the beginning. Today, my daughter is in the 7th grade. We continue to pay for her ongoing therapy, also out of pocket, because the DOE is not able to provide these services. While dyslexia is a common term, I realized that our family and most in the school system did not fully understand what it is, how it impacts an individual, and how to address it. We've been lucky that my daughter's educational therapist is willing to speak with her teachers to guide them on dyslexia and interventions, yet there needs to be more awareness of and training on this diagnosis for all educators.

To that end, I believe that HB1891 will greatly benefit students and families in Hawaii. The bill clearly defines dyslexia as a neurobiological learning disability and requires the DOE to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction. **It is my understanding that many of these tools and resources are available for free or low cost and will not create a great burden on the State.**

I am self-employed, and my husband works for our family's business. We are fortunate to have the flexible schedules, disposable income, and other resources to help our daughter get a diagnosis and continue with educational therapy. Even with these advantages, it's been a struggle to help her do well in school and extra-curricular activities, as well as maintain a healthy self-esteem. It has been an exhausting, frustrating, worrisome, and at times, heart-wrenching journey for our family. Please help alleviate some of these challenges for Hawaii families. We

need these dyslexia assessments and services to be competently and comprehensively provided by the DOE. The Child Mind Institute states that 1 in 5 children has dyslexia, and **Hawaii families need these services for our keiki to thrive and become productive, contributing adult citizens.**

I strongly urge you to pass HB1891. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Joy M. Koerte

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 3:15:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katharine Conway	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an educator for 30 years, and a current middle school teacher in a Hawaii DOE charter school, I am in strong support of this bill. Having training, assessment, and access to support for students who may have or have dyslexia is essential and supports both students and teachers.

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 3:29:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Christina Uemura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a Clinical Psychologist on Kauai, I am in support of this legislation! Thank you

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 4:22:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am writing in support of HB1891 HD1 SD1. As a licensed psychologist with over 30 years of extensive experience evaluating and working with students who have learning disabilities in both Hawaii schools and private practice settings, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that early intervention, tailored accommodations, and evidence-based instructional practices can have on dyslexic students.

Research has consistently shown that with the right support and interventions, students with dyslexia can succeed academically, build self-esteem, and thrive in their educational environments. However, without adequate resources, including early identification and intervention, dyslexic students are at risk of falling behind, which can have long-term negative effects on their academic and personal development and mental health.

The provisions outlined in HB1891 HD1 SD1, such as early screening, teacher training on dyslexia, and evidence-aligned literacy instruction, are exactly what research shows are critical for supporting students with dyslexia. By equipping schools with the necessary resources to offer targeted instruction and dyslexia-sensitive practices, this bill aims to proactively support students, rather than waiting for them to fail. This approach will level the playing field for dyslexic students, enabling them to reach their full potential.

I strongly support the passage of this legislation and encourage you to consider the long-term benefits it will have for students with dyslexia across our state. I also support HawaiiKidsCAN's suggested amendment.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 6:53:59 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Worley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of this bill.

Thank hui,

Robbin Worley, Ed.D

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 9:51:10 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anriada Nassif	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a pediatrician, I am writing in strong support of HB1891. Pediatric care is grounded in early identification and prevention. Across the lifespan of a child, pediatricians routinely screen for conditions such as metabolic disorders in the newborn period, hearing loss in infancy, autism in early childhood, and vision and developmental delays throughout childhood. These practices are rooted in strong evidence demonstrating that early detection, followed by timely intervention, leads to improved long-term outcomes.

Reading is a fundamental developmental milestone, and literacy is a critical determinant of lifelong health and well-being. Dyslexia is common, affecting an estimated 1 in 5 individuals. When reading difficulties are not identified early, children are at increased risk for persistent academic challenges, decreased self-confidence, behavioral concerns, and secondary mental health conditions, including anxiety and depression.

Extensive research demonstrates that evidence-based reading interventions are most effective when implemented during the early elementary years, particularly from kindergarten through second grade. By third grade, children transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Without early identification, this transition can exacerbate existing gaps and make remediation significantly more difficult.

Pediatricians across Hawai‘i regularly encounter children whose reading challenges were not recognized early, resulting in avoidable academic and emotional consequences. Families often face substantial barriers in navigating evaluation and intervention systems, particularly when access depends on resources, advocacy, or awareness. A universal, structured screening approach would promote greater equity by ensuring all children have the opportunity for early identification and support.

HB1891 represents a proactive, evidence-based approach that aligns with pediatric best practices and developmental science. It supports early literacy as a core component of child health and helps ensure that all keiki in Hawai‘i have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Thank you for your commitment to the health and well-being of Hawai‘i’s children.

Sincerely,

Anriada Nassif MD, Pediatrician

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 3:05:37 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a kindergarten teacher for 35 years in Hawai'i , I know the critical importance of teaching reading at this age, and the impact early screening will have to support all students achieve skills to read.

April 3, 2026

Dear Senate Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to offer my strong support for the passage of this bill advocating for students with dyslexia.

For over 20 years, I had the privilege of teaching kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. I am now a primary school librarian, where I continue to work closely with young learners and their families. Across both roles, I have seen firsthand how critical early identification and support are for students with dyslexia.

In the primary grades, children are building the very foundation of their education...learning to read. When a student struggles with dyslexia and does not receive timely, evidence-based support, that struggle often compounds quickly. What begins as difficulty recognizing letters and sounds can grow into frustration, loss of confidence, and a widening academic gap. On the other hand, when students are identified early and given structured, appropriate instruction, they can thrive. I have seen students transform from discouraged learners into confident readers when given the right tools.

Support cannot stop in the early grades. Students with dyslexia need consistent, sustained support throughout their educational journey. As academic demands increase, so do the challenges for students who have not been adequately supported. Ensuring continuity of services across all grade levels is essential for long-term success, not just academically, but emotionally as well. Most teachers will agree that students need to “learn to read” in order to “read to learn.”

In my current role as a school librarian, I work with families who are often searching for answers and resources, sometimes after years of struggle. A more comprehensive, system-wide approach is needed. It should be one that ensures all students are screened early, supported effectively, and given equitable access to learning throughout their schooling.

This bill represents an important step toward that goal. By prioritizing early identification, providing educators with the training they need, and ensuring ongoing support for students, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless children.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to supporting all learners.

With aloha,

Melissa Everest

Le Jardin Academy

Teacher, librarian, parent

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 9:37:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alecia Burroughs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Alecia Burroughs and I am a mother of 2 children with dyslexia. My children have asked me if they are dumb, why is reading so hard and makes them so confused, why does my brain work different than other kids when they can do things so fast and questions I did not know how to answer. All I knew was the questions broke my heart and I needed to find answers for them. After advocating for years in the DOE since they were 3 years old (knowing speech and something else was different), tutoring, and pouring my heart into their self esteem buckets, it was finally learned that my kids have dyslexia-just like their dad. Their dad who struggled his whole school life in Hawaii and never knew why. He was bullied and never felt smart or good enough growing up. My husband thankfully had a family who did not give up on him so he is now a successful police officer with the biggest heart ready to help anyone. My kids are also lucky ones who have a family who advocates and jumps through hoops for them every day. I finally got the answer of why, knew exactly how to help our kids and do what was needed to support the way their brains needed to be taught to learn how to read. No child in Hawaii should feel the way my children have felt for these recent years and my husband felt his entire childhood. We can do better. Early screeners get kids the early interventions they need to be successful and skip the step of wondering why they cannot learn the same and keep up in class. That wondering destroys kids' self esteem and it is not fair to our Keiki to neglect them from the help they deserve. Giving our children the name and reason something feels hard unlocks the key for them to advocate and feel empowered to step up and keep putting their all into learning every day. Please, please pass this bill for all the kids who need your help to have the education they deserve-because every child deserves to learn how to read and feel good about themselves.

Aloha Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 1891. I also strongly support the proposed amendment from HawaiiKidsCAN. As an educator (in regular education, special education, and private practice) for over 30 years, I have unfortunately seen struggling readers as young as 6 already feel defeated, and see themselves as “stupid” and unable to learn. They give up—at six years old. There is research to support that, without early identification and intervention, the risk of failure increases as these children get older. Reading failure not only impacts the individual, but it has long-term social and economic consequences for our communities and our state as well.

You may already be aware of these statistics; they are extremely sobering—

Children with dyslexia are 2-3 times more likely to be **bullied**.

They are 3 times more likely to **drop out** of high school.

Almost 50% of working-age adults with learning disabilities are **unemployed**.

Up to 60% of individuals in residential **substance abuse** treatment programs have been found to have a learning disability.

Students with dyslexia have a 3X higher risk of attempting **suicide**. 89% of suicide notes have dyslexic-type spellings in them.

85% of **incarcerated** youth have learning and/or emotional disabilities.

Dyslexia affects at least 1 out of 5 children, yet some estimates state that more than 80% of dyslexic children leave school **unidentified**.

(Source: [Educational Pathways Academy](#))

A National Institutes of Health study found that dyslexia is identifiable, with 92% accuracy, at ages 5 ½ to 6 ½. The astounding fact is not that dyslexia is identifiable with 92% accuracy but that this information is from a 1994 study. We have known this for almost 30 years, yet here in Hawai'i, we still have no legislation related to dyslexia to protect our at-risk children.

Other statistics -

-90-95% of children with reading difficulties will achieve grade level in reading if they receive appropriate interventions by 1st grade.

-When help is delayed until 3rd grade or later, 75% of children will continue to struggle throughout their school careers.

-If interventions are delayed until 4th grade, it takes 4 times as long to improve the same skills by the same amount.

(Source: [Reading Rockets](#))

I strongly urge you to consider that the statistics above are not just numbers—they represent real children here in Hawai'i. Let us not have 80% of students leave our schools unidentified and move into futures marked by unemployment, incarceration, drug use, and/or suicide. As research has shown, it is possible to identify potential reading problems in young children even *before* problems turn into reading failure. There is evidence early interventions take *less time*, *less cost*, can be *less intensive*, and can *prevent the harmful impacts* that reading difficulties can have on our children's self-esteem, mental health, and academic success. The social and

economic consequences related to reading failure *can be decreased*. Therefore, please do not wait any longer and pass HB 1891 now. Hawai'i's children, their future, and ours are on the line.

Thank you so much for your consideration, leadership, and commitment to both fiscal responsibility and to what is best for the future of our children and our communities.

Respectfully,

Anna Parreno, M.Ed., C-SLDS

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 6:22:44 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Kathleen Kiss Damon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in support of HB 1891 to the Senate Ways and Means (WAM) Committee Hearing HB 1891 HD1 SD1

I am writing that Hawaii as a state recognize dyslexia as a service need for her students. **At this time, Hawaii is the ONLY state that does not officially recognize dyslexia. It is time that this action be taken.**

It is critical for student development that the early diagnosis of the disability occurs so that the whole learning community, parents and teachers and the schools themselves, can provide and promote appropriate academic and personal support for students as they grow and learn and be implemented at the earliest age possible.

This act of recognition by the State of Hawaii sets the stage for support and services for our students/citizens and their families PreK through 18/adult learners in the Hawaii Education system.

Professionally and personally, I am proud to have served as the Dean of Students at Leeward Community College who initiated the "College's Disability Services Office (DSO) that provides academic accommodations, counseling and assistive technology to students with documented learning disabilities."

I would trust that WAM take this long overdue leadership role at this time.

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 7:48:12 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Zimdahl	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Noelle Zimdahl, and I am a parent leader in my community. Most importantly, I am a mother to a child with a learning disability in reading, one that many people and states know as dyslexia, and I am writing in SUPPORT of HB 1891.

My child attends school in Hawai‘i, the only state where the Department of Education fails to define dyslexia and, as a result, frequently undermines her learning needs and robs her of basic human dignity, true acceptance. The Hawai‘i DOE needs to appropriately define dyslexia to improve access to learning, properly assess, and, most of all, build self-confidence in our dyslexic student population.

Currently, just over half of Hawai‘i’s students are considered proficient in reading. Indicator 17 on the [2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report](#) highlights that only 11.82% of the 3rd & 4th-grade students with disabilities were proficient on the Smarter Balanced Assessment-ELA Literacy. These two data points highlight the need to revise the Hawai‘i DOE dyslexia screening process and to consistently use evidence-based, structured literacy instruction to benefit all students at all schools, public and charter.

Our most vulnerable student learners are the most successful when parents/families can review assessment results in a timely and equitable manner. The Smarter Balanced Assessment, as a tool for tracking student progress, fails to engage parents in their students' learning because students take it in the spring, and results are not available until the summer or even the following school year. The SBA results are no longer valid by the time a parent can review them with the school team to develop remediation plans, which is imperative for students with disabilities. Replacing the SBA with a learning growth test, such as NWEA MAP testing, would mitigate this issue. Schools and parents can see results that correlate to the Common Core learning standards. The NWEA MAP testing also compares students' results to their previous scores to show how much they have grown toward their learning goals. Comparing students to themselves rather than to a national average is a more equitable way to assess students with disabilities.

My daughter had the privilege of attending a school that used a structured literacy program from 1st to 3rd grade. A move across the Island prompted a school change, and we were devastated to learn that the program that worked so well for her was not used state-wide. Our confident child, who had worked so hard and was seeing growth, was replaced with a child who cowered at the

idea of school, especially reading; her learning gap was the only thing that grew that year. It took several years for her to regain her confidence in reading and writing and to start closing her learning gap again.

It doesn't have to be this way; the beauty of life is change. Passing HB1891 would give all students, especially our most vulnerable, access to the education my daughter received during those first couple of years of school. If the goal is to make Hawai'i the best place in the world to raise a child, I implore you to support structured literacy and HB1891.

Thank you for your time. Mahalo.

-Noelle Zimdahl, mother & advocate

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 8:05:36 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

When we have data and improved techniques to help children who struggle with something as foundational as reading how can we not support them?

I struggled in the classroom as a student growing up in Hawaii and it wasn't until college on the mainland that a teacher took me to the side and started asking questions.

I am now on a path to be an educator in Hawaii myself and a core reason is to help students as soon as I can in their educational journey.

I was saddened to learn Hawaii would be the last state to recognize dyslexia. Let us move forward and help our children as soon as we can so that they may be less likely to be incarcerated and rather help our communities to be stronger.

Thank you,

Andy Damon

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 8:26:03 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Mansfield	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Date: April 5, 2026

Bill: HB 1891 HD1 SD1 (Relating to Literacy)

Position: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha esteemed Committee members.

My name is Alyssa Mansfield. I am a mother of two young children (ages 5 and 7) currently navigating Hawai‘i’s education system (at Le Jardin Academy in Kailua). I am also a professor in higher education, a position I have held since 2015. I write to you today not just as an educator, but as a mother who refuses to watch our keiki fail because our state refuses to name their struggle.

We are the only state that does not officially recognize dyslexia. That is not a quirk of policy; it is a structural failure that HB 1891 finally corrects.

As a professor, I sit across from young adults every year who have slipped through the cracks. They are bright, creative, and resilient, yet they cannot read at a proficient level. They have developed elaborate coping mechanisms to hide their illiteracy. I have seen the shame in their eyes and the frustration when they realize that intervention came a decade too late. The administration in Washington may value profits over people, but here in Hawai‘i, we have the power to fortify our local systems. This bill is our firewall against educational neglect.

The Fiscal Argument (For the Ways & Means Committee):

I know this committee is rightly focused on the bottom line. You have heard the DOE argue that they lack the support to implement this. With respect, I argue that we cannot afford not to pass this bill.

The testimony submitted notes that nationally, 30% to 50% of the incarcerated population has learning disabilities like dyslexia. Hawai'i is not immune to this statistic. Currently, we are funding the end of the pipeline (prisons, social services, unemployment) rather than funding the beginning (literacy screening and structured literacy).

Every keiki who leaves third grade unable to read is a potential cost to this state of over \$500,000 in future social services and justice system involvement. Conversely, early identification of dyslexia costs less than a single textbook per student. Many of the required screening tools are free or low-cost. This bill is not a burden; it is the most fiscally responsible investment we can make.

The Reality of the Classroom:

I have heard the DOE's opposition. They say they will not receive the needed support. I sympathize with overwhelmed administrators. But burying our heads in the sand is not a strategy. By not passing this bill, we are asking general education teachers to solve a problem they haven't been trained to see. We are asking dyslexic children to try harder, rather than teaching them differently.

HB 1891 provides the roadmap: universal screening, evidence-based interventions (Structured Literacy), and professional development. It supports our pre-teacher programs so that the next generation of educators arrives on day one knowing how to teach all brains to read.

A Mother's Plea:

My children are 5 and 7. They are at the exact age where this bill makes the difference between a lifetime of shame and a lifetime of opportunity. I am fighting for them, but I am also fighting for the child in Waimānalo who is being labeled "lazy" when she is actually dyslexic. I am fighting for the boy in Ewa Beach who is acting out in class because he is terrified of reading aloud.

We have an administration that is actively dismantling federal education protections. In that hostile environment, it falls to us—the local legislators, the parents, and the community—to raise the tide for all people of Hawai‘i. HB 1891 is that rising tide.

Conclusion:

The students from Le Jardin Academy’s Literacy Advocacy Academy have given up their recess and their spring break to beg you to see them. They have shown more courage than adults often do. Let us match their courage with action.

Please do not let this bill die in the final committee because of a fear of the work ahead. The work is necessary. The cost of doing nothing is our children’s futures.

I urge the Committee to pass HB 1891. Vote YES.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

Alyssa Mansfield

Mother, Professor, & Hawai‘i Resident (Kailua, Oahu)

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 8:53:54 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Darren Taiariol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this legislation, our youth who have difficulty related to education need our support. Let's guide them through a path of success and show them we support and care. This legislation is of the utmost importance.

HB-1891-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 10:48:05 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Burroughs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

"My name is Tommy Burroughs and I am 9 years old. I found out I have dyslexia and with all my teacher help at LJA since Kindergarten, I hardly feel it because I have conquered dyslexia. Reading feels harder for me because I have dyslexia and it will for all kids who are like me but if teachers know how to help, it does not have to stop you. Please help all kids in Hawaii by supporting this bill so teachers know how to help us with reading, screeners so we know sooner and can get the help and so we can know we learn different and can advocate for that help. Please help us!" -Tommy, 9 year old with dyslexia and dyscalculia

"Hi. My name is Trevor Burroughs. I am 7. Reading is really hard and takes me a lot of time and extra work. My teacher is dyslexic and tells me all the time that it is our superpower. Because my teacher and my mom who is a teacher too help me all the time I am learning how to read but it is still really hard for me. I wish all teachers knew how to teach me how to read like them because all my teachers didn't know and I felt really confused all of kindergarten and didn't understand reading. Please help us. We want reading to feel easy and fun like it is for the other kids in my class." -Trevor, 7.5 year old with dyslexia

My name is Kevin Burroughs and I am born/raised on Oahu. I struggled all through school, bounced around from schools and never seemed to figure it out. I later learned that I have dyslexia and unfortunately, no one knew how to help me as I was growing up. Both of my kids also have dyslexia and I beg you to pass this bill so they do not grow up in the same system I went through. I always felt bad about myself and not good enough with teacher who didn't know how to teach me. No kid should feel the way I did due to a learning difference. After becoming an adult and learning strategies myself, I am a proud and successful HPD officer serving our community.