



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

Date: 02/03/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2122, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers. Appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) has concerns with HB 2122 that establishes a Teacher Housing Assistance Program, and cannot support it in its current form. However, the Department looks forward to working with the Legislature to find a way forward.

The Department supports efforts to address Hawaii's teacher recruitment and retention challenges. Our state's high cost of living and shortage of affordable housing impact our ability to attract and retain qualified educators throughout our school system.

While the Department understands the intent of this measure, the successful implementation of HB 2122 would require additional dedicated staff resources to establish the teacher housing assistance program, process applications, verify eligibility, and administer this program.

The Department remains committed to working with the Legislature to develop comprehensive solutions to our educator workforce challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2122.



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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Andrea Eshelman
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: HB 2122 – Relating to Teacher Housing

Position: Support

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

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

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

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **strongly supports** H.B. 2122, which establishes a teacher housing assistance program to provide housing vouchers for our educators. This measure is a critical step in addressing the severe financial burden placed on our public educators.

Teachers in Hawai'i are financially struggling under the weight of the state's high cost of living. A study noted in this bill ranks Hawai'i 51st out of all states and the District of Columbia for starting and median teacher salary when adjusted for these expenses.

This financial strain has created a persistent retention crisis. Approximately ten percent of the state's teachers leave the profession, relocate, or switch schools every year. Currently, only fifty to sixty percent of teachers have remained at their school for five years or more.

Chronic teacher turnover forces the department to rely on emergency hires and substitute teachers to fill vacancies. These challenges are especially difficult at hard-to-staff schools, where stability is most needed for student success.

H.B. 2122 offers a practical solution by providing up to \$700 per month to help with rent, mortgage payments, or a down payment on a primary residence. This assistance is targeted toward educators with a household income below eighty percent of the area median income.

Importantly, the program requires a commitment to teach at a hard-to-staff or charter school for no less than five consecutive years. This requirement ensures that the state's investment leads directly to the long-term classroom stability our students deserve.

By helping teachers secure stable housing, we can improve recruitment efforts and keep committed professionals in our schools. We respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
('AHA KULA HO'ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR:	HB 2122 RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING
DATE:	February 3, 2026
TIME:	2:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE:	Committee on Education
ROOM:	Conference Room 309 & Videoconference
FROM:	Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director State Public Charter School Commission

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

The State Public Charter School Commission ("Commission") appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 2122** which establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers and appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

The Commission appreciates the inclusion of public charter schools in this measure as charter schools are a part of the public education system. The inclusion of public charter school teachers in this measure allows the proposed teacher housing assistance program to have a significant impact on the public school system as a whole.

The Commission is available to work with this committee, the DOE, and our public charter schools in moving this legislation forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
The House of Representatives
Committee on Education

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 3, 2026

H.B. 2122 – RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on H.B. 2122, which proposes to establish a Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers and appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

Under Act 172, SLH 2023, the legislature identified affordable housing as a key strategy for recruiting and retaining the education workforce; not just teachers. Similarly, the legislature should consider providing a "workforce home assistance program" to make other government employees eligible since they face the same low salaries and high cost of living.

The HGEA represents thousands of employees who work for the DOE and public charter schools who make less than a starting Hawaii teacher's salary. Some of these employees also work in hard-to-staff locations with high turnover. They, too, should benefit from a housing assistance program being administered by the department for which they work. They, too, deserve to be eligible for a housing voucher to assist with rent, mortgage, or a down payment for their primary residence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 2122.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



Testimony to the House Committee on Education

Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair

Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 2:00PM

Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

RE: HB2122 Relating to Teacher Housing

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

My name is Sherry Menor, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber"). The Chamber supports House Bill 2122 (HB2122), which establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to certain eligible teachers. Appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

HB2122 aligns with our 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii: An Economic Action Plan, specifically under the policy pillar for Economic Action. The Teacher Housing Assistance Program described in this bill will lift a significant cost burden off the teachers that educate Hawaii's future workforce. Creating economic security for our teachers decreases turnover and reinforces a stable learning environment for our keiki. The effect would be improved quality of life for teacher, and therefore improved quality of life for students and families.

Emergency hiring and substitute teachers in the event turnover create measurable negative impact for learning outcomes in the classroom. In an article published by the *American Educational Research Journal*, a study of more than 850,000 New York City 4th and 5th graders observed that students experiencing teacher turnover demonstrated lower test scores by anywhere from 6-10% of a standard deviation, depending on the subject matter. These negative effects were found to be emphasized in disadvantaged communities. While these differences might seem small, they represent a material difference in performance across hundreds of thousands of students. This impact diminishes institutional return on investment for the State education system and depresses the learning outcomes of our future workforce. HB2122 is a measure that improves quality of life and stability for our teachers and represents an important investment in the future of our keiki and economies.

For these reasons, the Chamber respectfully asks to pass House Bill 2122. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii is the state's leading business advocacy organization, dedicated to improving Hawaii's economy and securing Hawaii's future for growth and opportunity. Our mission is to



Chamber *of* Commerce HAWAII



foster a vibrant economic climate. As such, we support initiatives and policies that align with the 2030 Blueprint for Hawaii that create opportunities to strengthen overall competitiveness, improve the quantity and skills of available workforce, diversify the economy, and build greater local wealth.



HOUSE BILL 2122, RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING

FEBRUARY 3, 2026 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 2122, relating to teacher housing, which establishes the Teacher Housing Assistance Program to provide housing vouchers to eligible teachers. Appropriates funds out of the Teachers' Housing Revolving Fund.

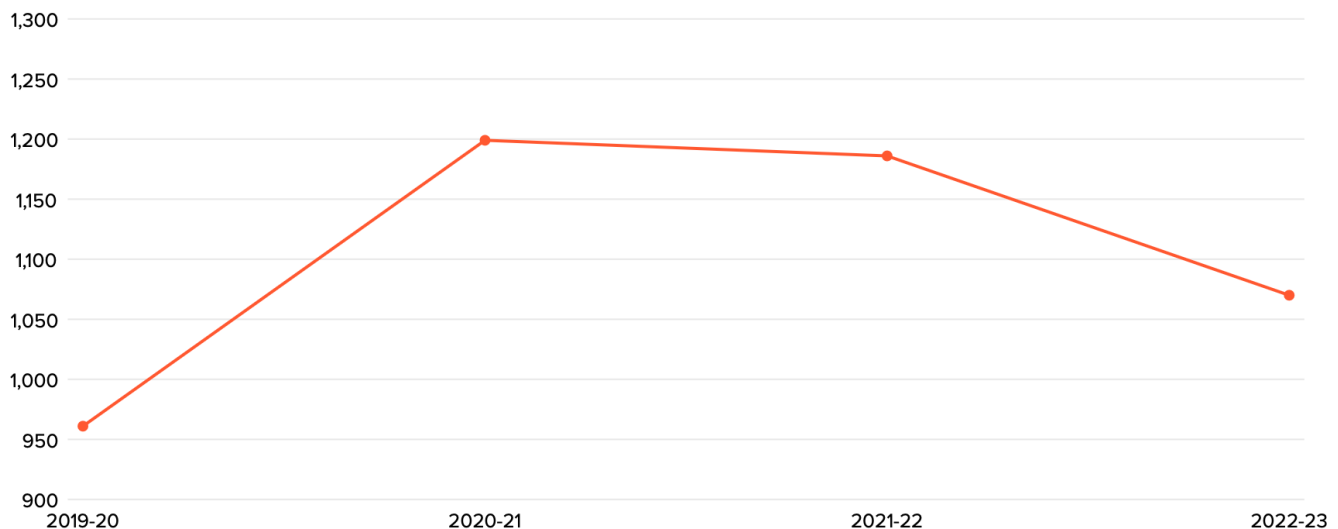
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education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

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the State Legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. Establishing programs to make housing affordable for teachers and other members of the education workforce would help offset the low wages experienced by Hawai'i's educators.

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

Voluntary teacher separations, 2019 to 2023

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



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

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

These trends are further exacerbated by the aging teacher workforce. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association has repeatedly cautioned against being overly optimistic about positive teacher retention data, with a wave of experienced educators expected to retire in the next few years. Moreover, the state is over reliant on unlicensed teachers to fill vacant positions. A December report found that 48 percent of new teachers in classrooms statewide are not fully licensed. As the Honolulu Star-Advertiser's editorial board recently wrote, "That is completely unacceptable."

We need to find permanent solutions to address our state's ongoing teacher shortage. Hawai'i residents face some of the highest housing costs in the nation, at more than twice the national average. **Researchers who authored the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach 2025* report found that a full-time worker would need to earn \$49.19 per hour—or \$102,315 per year—to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market value in our state,** with

Honolulu experiencing a 67 percent increase in fair market rent between 2005 and 2015. Average rent for a two-bedroom unit surpassed \$2,000 well before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

One out of every four households in Hawai'i report that they are "doubling up" or are three paychecks or less away from being homeless, per the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. **Additionally, 52 percent of households are severely cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing.**

A recent survey conducted by the Holomua Collective found that 60 percent of residents face worries about not being able to pay a monthly bill and 63 percent face difficulties in saving money from their paychecks for future emergencies, retirement, or other expenses. A staggering 70 percent of middle-class respondents to Holomua's survey say they will—or are unsure if they will have to—relocate in the coming years. As Holomua Collective states in its report on the findings, "These are the very workers powering Hawai'i's economy, now on the brink of leaving their homes behind." That population includes the teachers who are tasked with educating our keiki.

To deliver the schools our keiki deserve, we must recruit and retain qualified educators. Our children's future depends on our ability to meet that challenge.

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



January 30, 2026

**Testimony in Support of H.B. 2122
Relating to Teacher Housing**

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the Committee,

Aloha United Way **supports H.B. 2122**, which establishes a Teacher Housing Assistance Program to improve recruitment and retention at schools facing staffing challenges.

Hawai'i's teacher shortage is deeply tied to our housing crisis. Each year, roughly 10% of teachers leave, relocate, or switch schools, with cost of living cited as a primary driver. When adjusted for cost of living, Hawai'i consistently ranks near the bottom nationally for teacher pay, making it increasingly difficult for educators to afford to live in the communities they serve.

These pressures also fuel outmigration. According to Aloha United Way's 2024 *Facts and Figures* Report, 37%¹ of households have someone considering leaving Hawai'i, rising to 41% among ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households. These are working families who earn too much to qualify for assistance but still cannot afford basic necessities like housing. Teachers are not immune to these forces. When educators leave the state, schools lose experience, students lose stability, and communities lose trusted anchors.

H.B. 2122 offers a practical solution by providing housing vouchers to full-time teachers committed to teaching in Hawai'i. By helping cover rent, mortgages, or down payments, this bill removes a key barrier to retention and supports teachers in building long-term careers here.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support of H.B. 2122. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way

¹ <https://www.auw.org/about/alice-initiative/alice-reports/>

HB-2122

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 5:54:32 PM

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

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Oppose

2122 HB RELATING TO TEACHER HOUSING.	EDN	309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE	Feb 3, 2026 2:00 PM
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