



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

Date: 02/05/2026
Time: 02:00 PM
Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2427, RELATING TO UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH.

Purpose of Bill: Entitles unaccompanied homeless youth, including runaway youth, with the rights, as provided by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, to immediate enrollment in school, full participation in school activities, and access to comparable school and educational services provided to other students. Establishes a student-centered, safety-first protocol for unaccompanied homeless youth enrolling in or attending school.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides comments on HB2427, which would codify federal McKinney-Vento protections for unaccompanied homeless youth. While the Department remains committed to protecting all students experiencing homelessness, the inclusion of "runaways" in this specific measure triggers conflicts with three legal frameworks that currently prioritize law enforcement intervention over educational stability. Specifically, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §571-31 mandates immediate police custody for runaways, a requirement that directly contradicts the "safety-first" and "student-centered" goals of this bill. Furthermore, without explicit legal safe harbors, school staff remain vulnerable to "Harboring a Minor" charges under HRS §709-904 and potential disciplinary action for failing to meet the mandated reporting requirements of HRS §350-1.1, which may classify unaccompanied status as neglect.

While the proposed measure effectively serves unaccompanied youth without active runaway reports, inter-departmental coordination is required to ensure educational stability for students in runaway status, as the current bill language may create conflicts between departments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

Judith F. Clark
48-218 Kamehameha Highway
808-499-9966
Judithforceclark@gmail.com
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

February 4, 2026

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Education

Testimony in Support of HB 2428 Relating to Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

As a community advocate, the former Executive Director of Hawaii Youth Services Network, and a person with lived experience of youth homelessness, I strongly support HB 2427.

Unaccompanied homeless are the most vulnerable and least recognized segment of Hawaii's homeless population. They experience many challenges and barriers in obtaining educational services. The supports and services mandated by the federal McKinney-Vento Act and implemented in Hawaii Schools through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Office are critically important to enable unaccompanied homeless youth to participate in school.

This bill will ensure that unaccompanied can enroll in school, participate in activities, and obtain transportation, meals, and supplies. This bill provides a safety net for our most vulnerable children and youth.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,


Judith F. Clark, MPH

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIAĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKALE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKALE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKUĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKALE

February 4, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Jun D. Yang, Coordinator on Homelessness
Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions

SUBJECT: **HB2427 – RELATING TO UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH.**

Hearing: February 5, 2026, Time 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

AGENCY'S POSITION: The Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS) submits this testimony in strong support of HB2427, which relates to unaccompanied homeless youth and their access to education and supportive services.

The purpose of this measure is to align Hawai'i's Department of Education policies with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 to ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth, including runaway youth, are afforded all rights guaranteed under federal law. This bill establishes clear statutory protections for immediate school enrollment, full participation in academic and extracurricular activities, and access to transportation, meals, and educational services without requiring parental presence or traditional documentation.

Additionally, the bill establishes a student-centered, safety-first protocol when unaccompanied homeless youth enroll in or attend school. This protocol prioritizes trauma-informed responses, coordination with the Office of Youth Services and complex-area homeless liaisons, and continuity of education while appropriate assessments and supportive interventions occur.

SOHHS supports this measure because unaccompanied homeless youth represent one of the most vulnerable populations within Hawai'i's homelessness response system. These youth often face compounded risks related to housing instability, family conflict, abuse, or neglect, and disruptions to education can significantly increase their likelihood of long-term homelessness, justice system involvement, and poor health outcomes.

HB2427 directly advances the goals of the Hawai'i Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) Ten-Year Strategic Plan, which emphasizes prevention, early intervention, and cross-system coordination to reduce inflow into homelessness. By removing barriers to school access and embedding a coordinated, safety-focused response among education, youth services, and community partners, this measure supports the Plan's focus areas of Organization and Leadership and reinforces a housing-focused and prevention-oriented approach.

Ensuring educational stability for unaccompanied homeless youth is a critical upstream strategy that helps prevent the transition from youth homelessness into chronic adult homelessness. SOHHS views this bill as an important step in strengthening Hawai'i's statewide homelessness response system and ensuring that no youth is denied stability or opportunity due to housing instability or lack of guardianship.

For these reasons, SOHHS respectfully urges the Committee to pass HB2427. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to protecting Hawai'i's most vulnerable youth.

HB-2427

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:51:30 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JR Dowd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is JR Dowd from Makiki and I am writing in strong support of this measure. As someone who works with students and families experiencing homelessness, I know that unaccompanied youth are some of our most vulnerable kids in the state. For many school is one of the only safe spaces they have, and the opportunity to continue their schooling regardless of their housing situation is paramount. Further protecting them through a state statute would go a long way to ensuring their educational rights to attend school are secure. Education is one of the few paths out of instability for our students, I support this measure to ensure all have this opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JR Dowd

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HB-2427

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 11:06:04 AM
Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB 2427

Committee on EDN | 5 February 2026

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

My name is Julie Matsumoto and I am a student from Mililani High School. I am writing in support of HB2427, a bill relating to unaccompanied homeless youth.

This bill would entitle unaccompanied and runaway homeless youth to immediate school enrollment, full participation in school activities, and educational services under the McKinney-Vento Act while establishing a safety-first, non-reporting protocol for school staff.

I stand in strong support of this bill because I have a close friend who ran away from home and became homeless due to ongoing physical, drug, and alcohol abuse from her parents. Despite these circumstances, she wanted to stay in school, graduate, and pursue a professional career. However, without a parent or guardian, accessing education and school services became unnecessarily difficult. Allowing immediate enrollment, access to transportation, meals, and extracurricular activities without requiring parental involvement gives these students stability during an extremely vulnerable time. No student should ever have to choose between their safety and their education.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support this bill.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

Julie Matsumoto

Mililani High School