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**Testimony of KAREN EWALD, Executive Director
State Foundation on Culture and the Arts**

**Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE & ARTS
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026 Conference Room 309 at 9:45AM**

**HOUSE BILL 2436
RELATING TO
ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Dear Chair Kapela and members of the Committee,

The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA), is dedicated to the promotion, perpetuation, and preservation of culture and the arts in Hawai'i.

SFCA **SUPPORTS** H.B. 2436 which establishes within the Department of Education arts integration coordinator positions and arts integration specialist positions to support fine arts education and arts integration in public schools statewide. Appropriates funds.

Arts Integration Specialists established in the Department of Education would provide guidance for educators in implementation of arts integration standards in curriculum, and establishing an Arts Integration Specialist in a complex area level would give educators and the administration a dedicated contact who can help support these needs.

Additionally, the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts' Artists in the Schools program recipients would benefit greatly from this measure. Arts Integration Specialists would be a "point person" for Teaching Artists on the SFCA roster preparing to draft a grant proposal for a residency. An Arts Integration Specialist can also be a source of knowledge and connectivity for arts integration and youth arts experiences both inside and outside of the classroom for the students, administration, educators, parents and guardians.

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



HOUSE BILL 2436, RELATING TO ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FEBRUARY 4, 2026 · CAA HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 2436, relating to arts integration in public schools, which establishes within the Department of Education arts integration coordinator positions and arts integration specialist positions to support fine arts education and arts integration in public schools statewide.

This measure recognizes arts education as a central part of a well-rounded education and aligns with growing evidence that arts participation fosters academic success, socio-emotional growth, and equitable learning outcomes for students. Research shows that arts education is positively associated with key indicators of academic achievement.

A major study sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts found that students who participate regularly in arts learning demonstrate higher levels of academic engagement, greater school attendance, and enhanced writing skills. According to the National Endowment for the Arts' "The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth" report, low-income students with sustained arts involvement show statistically significant gains on academic measures compared with peers who have limited arts exposure, including stronger school grades and greater civic engagement.

Additionally, a large, randomized study conducted in Houston public schools demonstrated that increased access to structured arts learning was linked with reduced disciplinary incidents, improved writing performance, and other meaningful academic outcomes. These findings highlight that arts education not only enriches students' creative expression, but also supports core academic skills such as literacy, communication, and critical thinking.

Arts-integrated instruction—where arts experiences are deeply connected to core academic content—further amplifies learning growth and student engagement. A research synthesis commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, encompassing multiple studies on arts integration, found that when arts learning is intentionally integrated with subjects like math, science, and language arts, students show measurable improvements in understanding complex concepts and applying knowledge in real-world contexts.

These benefits extend beyond standardized measurements. Arts education is associated with improved attendance and school climates, which correlate with long-term academic success. Students engaged in the arts report stronger connections to school, higher motivation to learn, and greater resilience, important outcomes for students who may struggle in traditional classrooms or face barriers outside of school.

In Hawai'i, supporting arts integration responds to local educational priorities and community values. The Hawai'i State Department of Education's Fine Arts standards emphasize that the arts support critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication — competencies aligned with college, career, and civic readiness. Integrating arts learning across the curriculum not only cultivates cultural expression, but also fosters a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for students of all backgrounds.

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HB-2436

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:01:48 PM

Testimony for CAA on 2/4/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Meehan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB 2436 which would appropriate funds for 2 positions: an integrations arts coordinator and a arts integration specialist.

Our public schools need arts and education in our schools and qualified individuals to support this important program.

Please support HB 2436. Thank you.

Ted Meehan



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

Date: 02/04/2026

Time: 09:45 AM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: CAA

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2436, RELATING TO ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes within the Department of Education arts integration coordinator positions and arts integration specialist positions to support fine arts education and arts integration in public schools statewide. Appropriates funds.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education respectfully provides comments for HB 2436.

The Department of Education values a well-rounded education and recognizes that the fine arts are essential to the "whole-child" development of Hawaii's students. The Department is appreciative of the Legislature's efforts to expand opportunities for creative expression and high-quality fine arts instruction across our islands.

Currently, the Department's Fine Arts program, covering Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts is overseen by one Fine Arts Specialist and one State Office Teacher who supports 168 elementary schools and 90 secondary schools, so the new positions across the islands would be ideal. Thus, it is with much difficulty and regret that given the overall fiscal constraints facing the state with a finite source of funds, and the prioritized Department's Board approved state budget requests, the Department is unable to support the bill at this time.

The Department remains committed to do all that is possible within given resources and community partnerships, to continue to promote the Fine Arts program in our schools, integration of Fine Arts with other content areas, provide professional development, and increase opportunities for students across the state.

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