

April 7, 2026

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 2:00 pm

Aloha Chair Justin Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica, and committee members of the House Committee on Education.

My name is Adrien Gomez, a UH graduate student, submitting this testimony as an individual representative in **support of House Bill HCR91**. This measure recognizes the threat of increasing temperatures in Hawai'i to students' health and limits outdoor opportunities across public schools. The Bill reports that only 21 percent of elementary schools meet the recommended 30 percent tree canopy coverage needed to provide shade and cooling. Additionally, schools in lower-income communities have reduced tree canopy coverage and higher health risks due to greater heat exposure.

According to the 2022 Hawai'i State Climate Summary, temperatures in the Hawaiian Islands have consistently increased by 2.6°F since 1950. The threat of rising temperatures is exacerbated by the climate's humidity and moisture in the air, which makes it difficult for an individual's body to regulate its own temperature (Combs, 2025). This is a health concern for all populations, but specifically keiki, kūpuna, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic illnesses are more susceptible to heat-related illnesses (Hawai'i State Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency, 2020). In 2022, the City and County of Honolulu Climate Change Commission reported that vulnerable communities disproportionately experience negative impacts of climate change. The lack of green space, prevailing winds, and proximity to bodies of water, paired with heat-absorbing concrete, raises environmental temperatures. One of the recommended actions from the 2022 report included prioritizing shading for community gathering spaces, which aligns with Bill HCR91. Community spaces were described as campuses, neighborhoods, and city centers. Strategies for the recommendation included increasing plants and vegetation to provide shading, which can reduce a building's cooling and electrical costs by 25 percent. The report proposes that increased shade in public areas can reduce heat across Hawai'i and encourage outdoor activities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of **HCR91**

References

- City and County of Honolulu Climate Change Commission. (2022). Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Building Operation - Guidance Document. *Hawai`i Natural Energy Institute University of Hawai`i at Mānoa*.
<https://www.hnei.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/HCCC-Reducing-Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions-From-Building-Operation.pdf>
- Combs, L. (2025) How DO Hawai`i Residents Handle the Heat? Here's What You Told Us. *Honolulu Civil Beat*.
<https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/09/civil-beat-survey-how-hawaii-handles-heat/>
- Hawai`i State Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency. (2020) Keep Cool O`ahu. *Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency*.
<https://www.resilientoahu.org/keepcooloahu>
- Stevens, L.E., Frankson, R., Kunkel, K. E., Chu, P.S., & Sweet, W. (2022) Hawai'i State Climate Summary 2022. *NOAA Technical Report NESDIS 150-HI*. NOAA/NESDIS, Silver Spring, MD, 5 pp. <https://statesummaries.ncics.org/chapter/hi/>