

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

2705

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 23 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2125
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Education, to which was referred S.B. No. 2125 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO TEACHER LICENSING,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to:

- (1) Remove the three-year employment limit for unlicensed teachers hired on an emergency basis; and
- (2) Require that unlicensed teachers hired on an emergency basis make continuous and verifiable progress toward satisfying licensing requirements.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Education, Hawai'i State Teachers Association, Teacher Lounge, and thirty individuals.

Your Committee received testimony in opposition to this measure from the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and two individuals.

Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Executive Office on Early Learning.



Your Committee finds that the State is facing a chronic teacher shortage that is most severe in certain subject areas and geographic regions, including hard-to-fill positions and rural schools. The Department of Education relies on approximately one thousand emergency hire teachers, unlicensed individuals with bachelor's degrees hired on a year-to-year contract, to supplement the shortage. Currently, emergency hires may be employed for three years before they are required to have obtained licensure or leave the classroom. Your Committee further finds, however, that barriers to licensure can impede an emergency hire's licensing timeline. Teacher education program registration timelines, examination costs, and access issues for emergency hires on neighbor islands often delay licensure. The rigid permit limit does not account for these variances, often requiring the Department to dismiss dedicated educators from employment and thereby disrupting student learning, straining school communities, and discouraging educators from continuing to serve in the State. This measure provides much-needed stability for students and schools without compromising professional standards by removing the three-year employment limit but requiring emergency hires to demonstrate continuous, verifiable progress toward licensure.

Your Committee acknowledges the concerns raised in testimony that removing the time limit for licensure will allow unlicensed individuals to teach for an extended period without completing essential pedagogical preparation, thereby lowering educational standards. Your Committee recognizes that emergency hires are not a long-term solution to the State's teacher shortage, but they are a necessary means to ensure students in rural and underserved areas are instructed by a dedicated educator. According to testimony received by your Committee, the licensure timeline for an emergency hire is often two to three years under optimal conditions, not accounting for any barriers or delays. Therefore, amendments to this measure are necessary to address the functionality of emergency hire permits as temporary bridges to full licensure, not as parallel or permanent hiring pathways.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Restoring existing statutory language that authorizes the Department of Education to employ unlicensed individuals on an emergency basis; and



- (2) Clarifying that no unlicensed individual may be employed by the Department of Education for more than five years.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Education that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2125, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2125, S.D. 1, and be placed on the calendar for Third Reading.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Education,



DONNA MERCADO KIM, Chair



