



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1202, H.D. 1, RELATING TO TEACHER COMPENSATION.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

DATE: Thursday, February 12, 2026 **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Anne T. Horiuchi, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments on this bill.

This bill would require that teachers entering or reentering the service of the Department of Education (DOE) be placed at a salary rating equal to that of an incumbent teacher with an identical number of years of experience. Additionally, the bill requires the DOE to recognize all prior teaching experience, whether in the State or elsewhere, and prohibits limiting the number of years of prior teaching experience that may be credited.

However, the bill conflicts with section 89-9(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), which makes "wages" a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. Pursuant to section 89-2, HRS, "wages" expressly includes the "number of incremental and longevity steps, the number of pay ranges, and the movement between steps within the pay range and between the pay ranges on a pay schedule under a collective bargaining agreement." By mandating placement at a certain pay range based on years of experience, the bill directly regulates matters that fall within the statutory definition of wages.

As written, the bill would therefore conflict with chapter 89, HRS, which requires wages to be negotiated through collective bargaining. Moreover, section 89-19, HRS, provides that adjustments made in accordance with chapter 89 take precedence over all contrary legislation.

The bill's proposed provision is similar to the one formally contained in section 302A-627, HRS, which was repealed by Act 146, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022. That repeal promoted consistency within chapter 89, because salary placement is a negotiable subject under the collective bargaining. Reinserting a similar provision may recreate the same conflict.

To promote consistency with chapter 89, HRS, the Department recommends that the proposed section 302A-627(a), HRS (starting on page 1, line 3), be amended to clarify that its provisions apply only if negotiated through collective bargaining, as follows:

(a) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, **if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement pursuant to section 89-9,** any teacher with more

(Page 1, line 5, suggested changes Ramseyered against the existing text of the bill and in bold.)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



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

Date: 02/12/2026

Time: 09:30 AM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: LAB

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1202, HD1, RELATING TO TEACHER COMPENSATION.

Purpose of Bill: Recognizes prior teaching experience at an equal salary rating for teachers entering or reentering into the service of the Department of Education. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1202, HD 1, relating to teacher compensation. The Department cannot support this bill in its current format given the fiscal constraints facing the state today. However, we look forward to working with the Legislature to find a way forward.

Currently, the Department credits up to six (6) years of teaching experience towards initial salary classification because Article XX, Salaries, Section I of the Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) Unit 5 collective bargaining agreement states in part: "Those teachers with prior experience shall be placed in the same step as in-service teachers with equivalent years of service. No more than six (6) years of verified non-DOE teaching experience may be credited as determined by the DOE."

While the Department acknowledges Hawaii's pressing need to attract and retain teachers, it believes that employee compensation is best addressed through collective bargaining.

The Department appreciates this proposal but asks that if funding is appropriated for this bill that it not affect our Department's Board of Education approved budget requests.

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 1202, HD1.

HB-1202-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 2:50:45 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB1202

Aloha Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee,

I support HB1202. Credit for prior teaching experience should be the primary basis for recognizing experience in teaching positions, and this bill restores that standard to statute rather than leaving it solely in a collective bargaining agreement.

HB1202 is a necessary and straightforward correction. I respectfully urge your support.

Mahalo,

Teri Kia Savaiinaea

Individual Capacity

HB-1202-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:55:18 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brett Kulbis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Sayama and Committee Members,

My name is Brett Kulbis, I'm a 26yr retired Navy Veteran, who took a solemn oath to defend the Constitution from all enemies foreign and domestic, and that oath didn't expire when I retired. I live in Ewa Beach.

I STRONGLY SUPPORT BILL HB-1202 HD1.

HB-1202 HD1 amends section 302A-627, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to ensure that any licensed teacher with more than one year of teaching experience who enters or reenters the Department of Education (DOE) is placed at a salary rating equal to that of an incumbent DOE teacher with the identical number of years of experience. The bill further clarifies that the DOE must recognize prior teaching experience, whether earned in Hawai'i or elsewhere, without imposing an arbitrary cap on the number of years that may be credited. In addition, HB-1202 HD1 preserves and strengthens existing law granting credit for active-duty United States military service toward salary, leave eligibility, and seniority, up to four years.

This measure addresses a long-standing problem in our public schools: experienced educators who move to Hawai'i or return to DOE are too often placed at salary steps that do not reflect their actual years of service, resulting in pay inequities, morale issues, and preventable turnover. Studies and recent policy discussions in Hawai'i have highlighted that under-crediting years of experience contributes directly to teacher shortages, salary compression, and the loss of mid-career teachers who are essential to school stability and student success. By ensuring that prior teaching experience is recognized at the same rate as that of incumbent teachers, this bill promotes basic fairness, improves transparency in compensation, and makes Hawai'i more competitive in recruiting and retaining qualified educators.

HB-1202 HD1 is also an important statement of support for our veterans. Crediting documented active-duty service toward step placement, leave, and seniority acknowledges the skills, discipline, and leadership that military members bring into the classroom. This provision will help attract more veterans into teaching at a time when the state is seeking to strengthen both its educator workforce and its support for those who have served our country.

For these reasons, I strongly support HB-1202 HD1 and respectfully ask you to pass this bill out of committee. Truly, do it for Hawaii's keiki.

Respectfully,

Brett Kulbis

HB-1202-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 4:23:38 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Duffy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support. This bill to recognize prior teaching experience at an equal salary rating for teachers entering or reentering the DOE makes sense. Please support.

HB-1202-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 5:25:15 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelley Oates-Wilding	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully support the bill HB1202, which aims to provide teachers with incentives to continue their valuable work. As a former international teacher trained in Australian and University Lecturer in Teaching Methods, it's been a long time since I last stood before a class at Likelike Elementary.

Like many others in Hawaii, I couldn't afford to raise my children on the meager teacher salary I was receiving. As a single parent, I unfortunately left teaching in the DOE and started my own organization.

Good teachers are passionate about their profession, so their contributions often go unappreciated because they are happy to work tirelessly without receiving adequate recognition or compensation. Regardless of the incentives provided, they deserve more. Their impact on our future is immeasurable and far more significant and better spent than more funds allocated for the problems later like remedial education, our prisons, more law enforcement, and even homelessness. If we invest more in good educators in the public system, teach them how to follow the constitution, understand their own moral compass, learn basic manners and develop self-love and patriotism, we can eliminate many of the issues that plague our society in adulthood.

Thank you for your time and consideration in supporting this bill for our future.

Sincerely,

Shelley Oates-Wilding

Teacher / Lecturer BE

HB-1202-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:16:39 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Valdez	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Board Members!

I support this bill recognizing prior teaching experience at an equal salary rating for educators entering or reentering the Department of Education. Crediting experience is fair, strengthens recruitment and retention, and shows respect for teachers' professionalism. But instead making it effective 3000, it would be nice to start it in 2027 so that we dont have to worry about shortage of teachers if any previous teachers would like to reenter DOE.

Mahalo,

Nancy Valdez

HB-1202-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:53:52 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vernelle Oku	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

- Since 1969, a maximum of 6 years was allowed for salary placement credit. Yet in 2022, Sen Kidani's bill SB2819 removed the credit for teaching experience claiming failure to adequately promote teacher compensation.
- This bill is to recognize prior teaching experience at an equal salary rating for teachers entering or reentering the DOE.
- No one should come into a job with years of experience and expect to be paid the same as a 22 year old. Experience in the classroom matters