



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

Date: 03/05/2026
Time: 02:00 PM
Location: 325 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Committee: JHA

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1559, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Prohibits a student from using a telecommunication device on school grounds during the instructional day, with certain exceptions. Requires a confiscated telecommunication device to be released only to the student's legal parent or guardian, who then has three months to retrieve the device or subject the device to forfeiture. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) agrees with the Legislature on the value of creating focused, safe, and high-achieving learning environments by reducing digital distractions as outlined in HB 1559 HD1, and offers comments on the bill.

On February 12, 2026, the Board of Education (Board) adopted a new statewide policy establishing consistent expectations for student cell phone use in public schools. This policy, which takes effect at the start of the 2026–2027 school year, already addresses the intent of this measure by establishing minimum requirements:

- **Elementary and Middle/Intermediate Schools:** Cell phone use is prohibited during school hours.
- **High Schools:** Cell phone use is prohibited during instructional time, with schools retaining discretion regarding use during non-instructional times such as lunch and recess.

The Department believes that a statutory mandate is unnecessary and may cause potential conflict, given this recent Board action. Specifically, HB 1559 HD1 defines "instructional day" to include lunch and recess for all grade levels, which removes the flexibility granted to high schools under the new Board policy to prepare students for the workforce where self-regulation is required.

The Department is currently developing implementation guidelines to operationalize the Board's policy for the upcoming school year. We respectfully request that the Legislature allow this Board-governed process to proceed rather than enacting a duplicative and more restrictive statute.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



ROY M. TAKUMI
CHAIRPERSON

**STATE OF HAWAII
BOARD OF EDUCATION
PAPA HO'ONA'AUAO**
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Thursday, March 5, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 325**

Measure: House Bill 1559 HD1, Relating to Education

Purpose of Measure:

Prohibits a student from using a telecommunication device on school grounds during the instructional day, with certain exceptions. Requires a confiscated telecommunication device to be released only to the student's legal parent or guardian, who then has three months to retrieve the device or subject the device to forfeiture. Effective 7/1/3000.

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Education (Board) appreciates the Legislature's concern regarding cellphone use in our schools, and respectfully offers comments noting that it believes House Bill 1559 HD1 is unnecessary.

The Board has been keenly interested in this subject, and has been proactively working to consider the best approach to policy, gathering input from stakeholders and the community including through the Department's extensive surveys of school communities, meeting with Department of Education personnel and others to better understand policy efforts in this area, and studying various approaches within and outside of the Department and the state.

As a result of this work and after considering further input from the community at the Board's February 12th general business meeting, including through the Board's student representative and via public testimony, the Board has adopted a policy regarding

student cell phone use in the schools. As such, the Board believes this legislation is unnecessary.

The policy is a unified approach that reflects students' developmental readiness and maturity and aligns with current Board policy related to technology use and instruction. It will help establish clear expectations at each school level.

The policy is intended to balance the benefits to student learning and engagement with the challenges posed by unregulated use, which can lead to learning disruption and impact student well-being.

In setting minimum requirements and possible exceptions to those requirements, the Board aims to provide the Department and schools with the flexibility necessary to respond to each local school context and students' developmental readiness, while also acknowledging parents' concerns around their students' safety. It should be noted that nothing in the policy prohibits the Department from permitting schools to establish more restrictive rules and regulations around the use of cell phones by students.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.



HEARING DATE: Thursday, March 5, 2026

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

CONFERENCE ROOM: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE and Room 309

BILL: HB 1559, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION (Telecommunication Devices)

TESTIFIERS: Hawaii Department of Education Principals from all Complex Areas

POSITION: COMMENTS / OPPOSE STATUTORY MANDATE

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

As principals representing every complex area across the state, we appreciate the opportunity to provide updated testimony on HB 1559, HD1. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Committee for acknowledging and addressing several of the implementation and operational concerns raised in our previous testimony.

Specifically, we note the inclusion of language in this draft that:

- **Addresses Liability:** Establishes that schools and administrators shall not be liable for the loss or damage of confiscated devices.
- **Refines Storage Protocols:** Allows for schools to determine their own storage operations and policies.
- **Defines Forfeiture:** Provides a clear three-month window and notification process before a device is deemed forfeited.

While these revisions show a thoughtful consideration of the administrative burden, our primary position remains unchanged: we strongly believe this issue should be managed through Board of Education (BOE) policy rather than a statutory mandate.

1. The Board of Education Action (February 12)

On February 12, the Board of Education passed a comprehensive cell phone policy. This action reinforces our stance that the BOE is the most appropriate body to regulate student conduct and technology use. A statutory mandate like HB 1559, HD1, creates a rigid framework that may eventually conflict with the BOE's ability to adapt to shifting technological landscapes or specific campus needs.

2. Implementation & Operational Realities

Despite the improvements in the HD1 draft, several concerns regarding the "instructional day" remain:

- **Scope of the Ban:** The current definition of "instructional day" includes lunch and recess. As previously noted, at the high school level, these periods are critical for students managing work schedules and family logistics.
- **Administrative Friction:** The requirement that devices be released only to a legal parent or guardian—and the subsequent requirement for three separate notifications—remains a significant clerical and relational hurdle. This mandate risks turning school offices into high-value storage facilities and places administrators in an unnecessarily adversarial role with families.

3. Effective Date

We note that the current effective date of July 1, 3000, suggests this remains a work in progress. We urge the Committee to allow the recently passed BOE policy to take effect and be evaluated before codifying these restrictions into state law.

Conclusion: The Hawaii Department of Education Principals Advisory Council (HIPAC) remains committed to "Phone-Free" learning environments that support student mental health and academic focus. However, because the BOE has already taken decisive action to address this issue, we respectfully submit that a statutory law is not necessary at this time.

Mahalo for your leadership and for considering the voices of Hawaii's school principals.

Respectfully,

The Hawaii Department of Education Principals Advisory Council (HIPAC)

Mavis Tasaka, Principal, Dole Middle School, representing Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani
 Sean Wong, Principal, Roosevelt High School, representing Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt
 Michael Jose, Principal, Aiea Intermediate School, representing Aiea-Moanalua-Radford
 Kendrick Kakazu, Principal, Maj. S. Wheeler ES, representing Leilehua-Mililani-Waiialua
 Bryan Rankie, Principal, Ho'okele ES, representing Campbell-Kapolei
 Garrett Arakawa, Principal, Momilani ES, representing Pearl City-Waipahu
 Rebecca K. Gebreyesus, Principal, Leihōkū ES representing Nanakuli-Waianae
 Danny Garcia, Principal, He'eia ES, representing Castle-Kahuku
 Allyson Doherty, Principal, Kailua ES, representing Kailua-Kalaheo
 Kimberly Castillo, Principal, Chiefess Kapiolani ES, representing Hilo-Waiakea
 Kim Williamson, Principal, Pāhoa High & Inter, representing Kau-Keeau-Pahoa
 Janice Blaber, Kealakehe Inter, representing Honokaa-Kealakehe-Kohala-Konawaena
 Gary Kanamori, Pukalani ES, representing Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kulanihakoi-Maui
 Richard Carosso, Lahainaluna HS, representing Hana-Lahainaluna-Lanai-Molokai
 Joseph Hicks, Kekaha ES, representing Kapaa-Kauai-Waimea

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 2:44:50 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

1559 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION.

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 4:01:10 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sadie Lei Deocares	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 21, 2026

Testimony in Opposition to HB1559

RELATING TO EDUCATION

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee,

My name is Sadie Deocares, and I'm a sophomore at H.P. Baldwin High School. I am writing against HB1559 regarding the prohibited use of cell phones and other use of technology during school hours.

I do agree that cell phones can be a distraction in the classroom, I've witnessed this and have been guilty myself. However, completely banning the use of these electronic devices seems unnecessary when you look at the whole picture. The bill specifically states, "Prohibits a student from using a telecommunication device on school grounds during the instructional day". A laptop is considered a telecommunication device and it is essential for everyday school usage as everything is now online. Another example is smart watches which are very useful, as it's much more subtle + effective for getting reminders and notifications without having to pull out your phones at the risk of disrupting a class.

I encourage you to make changes to this bill or to not go further with it. Make the bill more flexible! For example, no phone usage during class instructional time unless given permission to do so, versus no cell phone usage the whole school day, and there's no need to include "telecommunication devices". We understand this for lower grade levels (Middle and Elementary), but we're in High school. Most kids know when to get off their devices to

pay attention and maybe only need a warning. All we ask is for trust. If there's no trust, that's when we rebel in order to prove something.

Mahalo for this opportunity to share my voice and testify against HB1559.

Deocares, Sadie Lei

10th Grade

H.P. Baldwin High School

**To: Representative Tarnas, Chair
Representative Poepoe, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Re: Strong Opposition
Hearing: 03-5-2026, 2:00 PM**

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Mia Nishiguchi, and I am a senior at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai'i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity.

Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided. Allowing phones during designated times helps students practice digital responsibility while still maintaining strong academic boundaries in the classroom.

A tiered policy, with strict limits for all public school students, would be detrimental to the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all public high school students.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mia Nishiguchi

Kalani High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:43:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lily Leong	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Lily Leong, and I am a senior at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai‘i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:45:10 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eda choi	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Eda Choi, and I am a senior at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai'i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Eda Choi

Kalani High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:45:14 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelby Fukushima	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs House Committee,

My name is Taylor Wong and I am in strong opposition for HB1559 which prohibits and confiscates student telecommunication devices on school grounds during the instructional day. This bill is too restrictive as it takes away student’s personal devices- devices that students and their parents paid for. In the bill it defines that: “ "Telecommunication device" means any electronic device capable of connecting to the Internet or a cellular network and transmitting or receiving communications, including but not limited to cellular phones, smart phones, smart watches, tablets, and other similar devices.”” This means even student laptops and ipads that can be used for studying. This not only prevents students from being able to efficiently get school-work done, it leaves the schools with the responsibility to provide these electronic resources to complete classwork. Personal devices allow students to get work done at their own convenience, something devices provided by the schools cannot.

In addition, this bill is unfair for students without parents or parents who are unable to retrieve their child’s device after 3 months of confiscation. Although phone usage has been an issue, it shouldn’t be resorted to all devices. Personally, I heavily rely on using my personal laptop AND my phone to get all school work done and communicate with my parents. On school laptops it limits me to using only my school account. This means I am unable to log into my UH and personal accounts to do work for my online and dual credit classes. As a student who juggles multiple extracurriculars, sports, and dual course classes, it is vital for me to be able to use my personal devices. If this bill were to take place, this would mean less time for students like myself to be able to efficiently do work outside of their k12 accounts.

Our future is important, and taking away a vital resource is not a solution. I believe that lawmakers have the power to support our Hawaii youth by not taking away something that'll help them learn. I urge you to take into consideration the downsides of this bill.

Mahalo for your time!

Shelby Fukushima

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:45:58 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Wang	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Doris Wang, and I am a sophomore at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai'i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Doris Wang

Kalani High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:48:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lola Grant	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Lola Grant, and I am a sophomore at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai'i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Lola Grant

Kalani High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:50:08 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taylor Wong	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs House Committee,

My name is Taylor Wong and I am in strong opposition for HB1559 which prohibits and confiscates student telecommunication devices on school grounds during the instructional day. This bill is too restrictive as it takes away student’s personal devices- devices that students and their parents paid for. In the bill it defines that: “ "Telecommunication device" means any electronic device capable of connecting to the Internet or a cellular network and transmitting or receiving communications, including but not limited to cellular phones, smart phones, smart watches, tablets, and other similar devices.”” This means even student laptops and ipads that can be used for studying. This not only prevents students from being able to efficiently get school-work done, it leaves the schools with the responsibility to provide these electronic resources to complete classwork. Personal devices allow students to get work done at their own convenience, something devices provided by the schools cannot.

In addition, this bill is unfair for students without parents or parents who are unable to retrieve their child’s device after 3 months of confiscation. Although phone usage has been an issue, it shouldn’t be resorted to all devices. Personally, I heavily rely on using my personal laptop AND my phone to get all school work done and communicate with my parents. On school laptops it limits me to using only my school account. This means I am unable to log into my UH and personal accounts to do work for my online and dual credit classes. As a student who juggles multiple extracurriculars, sports, and dual course classes, it is vital for me to be able to use my personal devices. If this bill were to take place, this would mean less time for students like myself to be able to efficiently do work outside of their k12 accounts.

Our future is important, and taking away a vital resource is not a solution. I believe that lawmakers have the power to support our Hawaii youth by not taking away something that'll help them learn. I urge you to take into consideration the downsides of this bill.

Mahalo for your time!

Taylor Wong

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:56:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yurong Chen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Yurong Chen, and I am a sophomore at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai‘i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Yurong Chen

Kalani High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:56:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cindy Lin	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Cindy Lin, and I am a sophomore at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai‘i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Cindy Lin

Kalani High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 2:56:59 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aven Gittelman	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Aven Gittelman, and I am a sophomore at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai‘i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Aven Gittelman

Kalani High School

**To: Representative Tarnas, Chair
Representative Poepoe, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Re: Strong Opposition
Hearing: 03-5-2026, 2:00 PM**

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Kealalawai Diaz, and I am a junior at Hawai'i Technology Academy Public Charter School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai'i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

High school students juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kealalawai Diaz

Hawai'i Technology Academy Public Charter School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 4:05:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
arawi de la cuba	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Tarnas, Chair

Representative Poepoe, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Re: [Strong Opposition](#)

Hearing: 03-5-2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Arawi De la Cuba, and I am a senior at Kalani High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai'i State Board of Education already passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. However, as a student I strongly oppose this policy. I am one of many students who heavily rely on my own personal electronics to help with my schoolwork. With school work evolving every year and becoming more online, it is of high importance for me to have my devices in order to do the work given to me.

Students in High School use electronics for more than just school work as well. For purposes such as research, communication, and for planning their day (such as transportation, sports, and communicating with parents and coaches), electronic devices are essential for students all around. And having the problem of your own personal device being owned by the school after 3 months adds unnecessary pressure, especially to those whose parents cannot afford to come during school hours to get their device back. High School students are also very shortly going to be put into the real world where technology is everywhere and proper use of it is needed in order to survive. Prohibiting personal use of it will not only stunt their growth in terms of their use of technology but also deny possible opportunities to students in the future due to this policy.

I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide students a responsible and yet flexible use of their own personal technology.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Arawi De la Cuba

Kalani High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 4:35:16 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chazten Alvarado	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Representative Tarnas, Chair

Representative Poepoe, Vice Chair

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Re: [Strong Opposition](#)

Hearing: 03-5-2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Chazten Alvarado, and I am a junior at Pearl City High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, new legislation was passed to limit access to electronic devices in school, so I earnestly protest this more strict addition to it.

The world we live in today is held together through technology, and high school students are not exceptions to this. With stricter rules in place, students will be expected to forfeit their access to the world, and to their families. Many students ,myself included, rely on cellphones to communicate with parents to arrange for pick ups and drop offs, as well as other activities like community service and extracurricular activities.

From first hand experience as well, the need to ban all telecommunication devices is redundant as many classrooms already have rules in place to prevent excessive electronic usage (as well as the already established legislation for next school year). Another reason for this bill's redundancy is because many schools lack the necessary equipment for students to access online courses. For example, at pearl city, many computers are unusable due to slow internet connection or physical deformities caused by excessive usage. This is combated by phone usage which allows all students in a given class to be able to participate in said class activities. So unless the state is able to fund more investments in school electronic devices I earnestly protest this bill.

Despite that, many of you will still think that banning telecommunication devices is necessary, but let us think about the students who need them. Again, for example, I need my phone. I have a chronic autoimmune disorder and I need my phone to continue to track my health. I also have anxiety, and in a school where I am unable to track my health freely, I will be too nervous and anxious about the rules and I will not be able to recover. This statement is true for many others like me, and some will not be able to speak about it, so I pray to God you guys will vote NO on this bill.

Overall, a policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

(I actually hope you guys will oppose this bill for the health and safety of children like me who although may be an exception, are still going to be under duress at the thought of breaking rules. I hope you guys will oppose this bill from the bottom of my heart because I know you all are just trying to help us, and I know you all will find another way to improve or education (extended programs to schools like the programs found at mililani) thanks and hope you all have a great day after reading this .)

March 5, 2026

Testimony in Opposition to HB1559
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee,

My name is Luke Nohea Gee, and I am an 11th grader from Kealakehe High School. I am writing in opposition to bill HB1559, which would establish a uniform statewide policy restricting student use of telecommunication devices during the instructional day in public schools. I currently cannot support HB1559 in its current form.

There is no question that cell phones are a major distraction in classrooms. Many students use their phones during class instead of paying attention and learning from the instructor. As a student, I can say that many of my classmates and I are guilty of this.

However, as written, HB1559 is overly restrictive in its implementation. The definition of “instructional day” includes lunch, recess, and transitions, which removes flexibility for schools to manage device use outside of class time. Schools should be allowed discretion to regulate device use during non-instructional time in ways that reflect their campus culture and needs.

Additionally, the bill's confiscation-specific policy creates unintentional hardships for families and students. For working families without flexible schedules or reliable transportation, and for students without a responsible guardian, this creates hardships for both students and administrators.

I respectfully recommend the following amendments, aligning with the [Board of Education's Proposed Cellphone Policy Draft](#).

- Allows schools to exercise discretion in the use of telecommunication devices outside instructional time, including but not limited to lunch, recess, and before- or after-school hours.
- Allows schools to exercise discretion for the use of telecommunication devices as learning tools.
- Release a confiscated device to its original owner if the parent/guardian has not retrieved it within 30 days.

Without proper amendments, I cannot support this bill. HB1559 can protect education and keep students focused in classes while remaining practical and realistic with its implementation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB1559.

Luke Gee

I am opposed to this stricter level of banning devices that can connect to the internet and other networks. While I understand there may be advantages, there are significant disadvantages that come with it. This level of banning is a double-edged sword. I admit, I use my phone daily, but I can survive without it for a class period. A whole day, however, is a completely different matter and that is where the real problems begin.

First of all, HB1559 bans all devices that aren't provided by the school for the entire school day, with only narrow exceptions for emergencies. The purpose, I assume, is to improve student learning, attention, and well-being. In the 2026-2027 school year, the phone ban will only apply during instructional time, which I find reasonable. HB1559, however, extends this ban to lunch, recess, breaks, or any other time during the school day. That is one of the main reasons I oppose it.

Many campuses are large and spread out, making it difficult to stay in contact with friends or teachers. If a student is volunteering for an event like the culture fair and needs an early release, but is unsure about something, HB1559 would prevent them from using their phone without risking confiscation. Sure, email or in-person communication is possible, but during the school day, students may be in class or otherwise occupied, making quick, last-minute communication impossible. This law cuts off important communication between students, teachers, and club or event coordinators.

Secondly, the punishment under HB1559 is harsh. Confiscation is understandable, but requiring a parent or guardian to retrieve the phone is problematic. Parents are often busy with work, and requiring them to leave work to pick up a phone for a minor infraction creates unnecessary burdens. For example, a student using their phone briefly to confirm details about an event could be left unable to communicate with coordinators, while their parent rushes to the school to retrieve the device. This strict enforcement cuts off vital parent-student communication.

Proponents argue that banning phones will improve learning and attention, but I question blaming the device rather than the student. Learning and focus depend on a student's habits, mindset, and choices. Students choose whether to scroll through social media or pay attention in class. Phones do not "force" distraction, students make the decisions. Labeling phones as addictive, like a drug, misses the point: people use phones because they are useful, entertaining, and comforting, much like music or games. For many students, listening to music during free periods or recess helps them decompress, stay calm, and reset their focus. A total ban removes these small, healthy outlets and could actually worsen stress or mental health.

This law also creates a burden for parents. Many students rely on phones to navigate transportation or communicate safety concerns. If a student takes the bus home or needs to check in with a parent, confiscation could leave them without a lifeline. Parents may have to leave work early or make special arrangements simply because their child's device was taken for a minor use.

Finally, HB1559 does not teach responsibility with technology. A total ban removes the opportunity for students to learn self-control and responsible use of devices. Without access to phones, students miss the chance to practice managing distractions, making thoughtful choices, and balancing technology use with learning. The ban solves the symptom but not the underlying problem, which is the need for students to develop healthy habits with technology.

To summarize, HB1559 places an unnecessary burden not only on students, but also on parents and teachers. It limits communication, imposes strict and potentially unreasonable punishments, removes opportunities for responsible phone use, and could negatively affect mental health. While the intent is to improve learning and focus, the law may create more problems than it solves. For these reasons, I strongly oppose this stricter level of device banning.

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs committee,

My name is Kadiann Swanson, a current sophomore at Aiea High School, and I am in **strong opposition** to **HB1559**. Where this bill prohibits the use of all telecommunication devices, including and not limited to cell phones, smart watches, tablets, and laptops, during the entire instructional day. I understand that there is teacher discretion for these devices, however this bill doesn't even recognize the importance of these devices for students. I'm a current sophomore at Aiea High School where almost all of the school issued Chromebooks are broken to the point the keyboard is bulging outside of the laptop, keys on the keyboard are missing, and the screen doesn't even work. Due to this, countless students are forced to bring in their own personal laptops and devices to complete the mountains of online school work teachers have students do.

Also, this bill is only for high school students, where at this point they should be able to self-discern the ability to not use their phones in class. High school is supposed to be a time where students are being prepared for the outside world, there is no job in the world that will confiscate your personal devices. A state issued standard, that has been implemented to all public Hawaii schools since elementary, known as "General Learner Outcomes" (GLO's) are in place to foster independent thinkers and workers. Where in GLO-6 it requires students to be "Effective and Ethical Users of Technology" This bill would completely undermine the faith and trust in students to make their own decisions and recognize how to use their personal electronics responsibly and ethically.

Finally, restricting students from their personal devices during non-instructional time is completely unfair. Students who have free-period, TA classes, or honestly just want to have a break during recess or lunch should be able to use their personal devices to just take a break or work on things that are not allowed on school laptops. Dual-credit, for example, needs to be done on a personal laptop,

because you can't use the @k12.hi.us gmail accounts. Also, in our school's film and media pathway they work on projects that can't be saved to a cloud or are also blocked on school computers, so they need to work on their phone and/or personal devices. If teacher discretion is really the defining line here, this entire bill is redundant, and inputting more structure and laws that limit student autonomy.

School is supposed to be a safe, nurturing place for students. However, as we move further to a technology-centered world, taking away their autonomy to discern whether or not to use their devices during instructional time, ultimately diminishes the growth of the students; forcing the students to not think for themselves. During COVID, it was encouraged and required to use personal devices and electronics to complete school work. But now after 5 years, stripping students from this norm to flip a complete 180, will further stunt the educational and social growth of teens. I ask you to take my testimony into consideration and vote **against** HB1559.

Much mahalo,

Kadiann Swanson

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:28:42 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lotus Yasuda	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: David Tarnas, Chair

Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs House Committee

Re: Strong Opposition to HB1559

Hearing: 03-05-2026, 2:00 PM

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs House Committee,

My name is Lotus Yasuda, and I am a senior at Waipahu High School. I am writing in **strong opposition to HB1559**. While I agree with the aspect of providing a restriction to improve student engagement and focus, I respectfully urge the committee to consider a more flexible and developmentally appropriate approach for schools. In high schools, it is important to allow students to use devices during the instructional day, such as lunch, recess, passing periods, and study halls.

During lunch and recess periods, I utilize my telecommunication devices, specifically my computer and cell phone, to complete homework assignments and scholarship applications. It would be a great inconvenience to request teacher and administrator permission during each lunch period. As high school students juggle complex schedules, phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. As we, students, prepare for life after high school—college, careers, military, exploration—we must be “Effective and Ethical User[s] of Technology.” Most colleges, if not all, will not babysit students about using their phones or other devices during instructional time, so why should high schools?

While I understand the need to restrict the use of telecommunication devices on school grounds due to their distractive tendencies, I do not believe that this bill would encourage the growth of high school students’ independence as they transition to their lives after high school. Instead, this may push students to skip class periods or leave on “bathroom breaks” to check a text message or scroll on their devices. This leads to more hiding rather than learning.

Finally, the Hawai'i State Department of Education has already come out with a policy to address this issue and personalize it for elementary, middle, and high schools. Shouldn't the HIDOE and legislature be working collaboratively and trust one another to do what is best for our Hawai'i public school students?

Once again, I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Lotus Yasuda

12th Grade

Waipahu High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 9:37:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edmar Castillo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair PoePoe, and Members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs House Committee.

My name is Edmar Castillo, a freshman student at Maui High, and I oppose HB1559. Phones at my school serve safety and family communication needs. Many students contact their parents about rides, health issues, and other matters. This bill restricts students' personal devices that their parents PAY for. Our personal device such as our phones or computers, allow us to get our school work done on our own time during our own time. An example of using my personal computer at school is finishing my homework for my classes in the morning when teachers are not there yet. I use my personal device to do school work and catch up on what is happening at my school on their official Instagram or our class account. This bill strips away students' freedom at school. This not only prevents students from finishing at school, but also causes stress and a heavy workload of the homework we have to deal with later on, leaving it to the school to provide these electronics to complete our classwork, which we are not able to bring those computers home to finish our work. This will affect many students with personal electronics in Hawaii. A better approach to this involves the teacher's level rules rather than a statewide ban.

PLEASE reconsider this bill or change the confiscation rule. Mahalo for hearing students' voices.

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/5/2026 8:23:11 AM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Calla Cheung	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Calla Cheung, and I am a senior at Waipahu High School. I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to HB1559.

Last month, the Hawai'i State Board of Education passed a statewide cell phone policy to help strengthen classroom engagement, reduce distractions, and foster in-person interaction. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill, as it has already been addressed. As a student with busy working parents, I also have concerns about my school taking possession of my electronic devices after 3 months, especially for students facing hardships or guardians during unprecedented events.

Students like myself all juggle complex schedules, after-school jobs, extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation coordination. Phones are often essential for communicating with parents, employers, coaches, and bus services. For many students, especially those who rely on public transportation or care for younger siblings, access during breaks is not a luxury but a necessity in our ever-changing, technologically advanced world and society. Additionally, high schoolers are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, where responsible use of technology is expected rather than avoided.

A policy with strict limits for all public school students would be unnecessary given the new Board policy. I strongly urge you to oppose HB1559 to provide flexibility for locally committed and globally competitive students and to ensure responsible use of technology for all.

Sincerely,

Calla Cheung

Waipahu High School

HB-1559-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/5/2026 1:20:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Olivia Heltsley	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Chair David A. Tarnas and Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe,

My name is Olivia Heltsley, and I am a 10th grade student at Kalaheo High School. I am writing in respectful opposition towards HB1559.

I understand that phones can definitely be distracting. I see it everyday in my classes. However, I don't think a complete statewide ban during school hours is the right solution. As students, we're still learning how to manage our time and responsibilities, and part of that includes learning how to use technology appropriately and not just having it taken away from us.

Phones are not just for social media. In many of my classes here at Kalaheo, we use our phones to check assignments, look up information, take pictures about notes, and communicate with other classmates about group projects. Banning them completely, even with exceptions, could make things harder and more confusing for both teachers and students in means of reaching out and doing assignments.

I also wanna mention safety. Living in Hawaii, we know that emergencies can happen, whether it's a natural disaster or something happening on campus. Being able to quickly text a parent we're okay or reach out to them for help can make a huge difference in how safe we feel. Even if schools have official systems, having personal communication gives students and families peace of mind.

Another concern I have is that this bill takes away flexibility from individual schools. Every school is different, what works at one school might not work at another. Schools should be able to create their own policies based on what their students and teachers actually need instead of following one statewide rule.

Instead of banning phones starting in the 2027-2028 school year, I think we should focus on teaching students how to use their phones responsibly. Phones are a part of our generation and we're going to use technology in college and our future careers. Schools should help us learn how to manage it properly, not avoid it completely.

I respectfully ask you to reconsider HB1559 and think about solutions that teach responsibility instead of enforcing a full ban. Thank you so much for listening to my perspective as a student.

Olivia Heltsley