



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

Date: 03/23/2026

Time: 01:11 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: EDU

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1840, HD2, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Permits the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years. Requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board extend the five-year period in the case of a declared state of emergency. Establishes a graduation goal for the University of Hawaii and requires a report to the Legislature on the progress toward achieving that goal. Requires the Department of Education to provide training to assist emergency hires in passing the Praxis examination and require the training be mandatory for emergency hires in their fourth and fifth years as a condition of employment. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

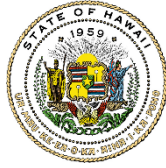
Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 1840 HD2, which expands the duration of the emergency hire period and allows non-licensed teachers time to become fully qualified teachers.

Hawaii continues to experience teacher shortages, and extending the emergency hire period provides schools with stability and continuity in our classrooms. Students benefit from stability when teachers can remain in classrooms without disruption, particularly in hard-to-staff and rural schools. This flexibility is critical as the Department works to recruit and retain qualified educators in a highly competitive labor market.

The Department appreciates that this measure not only addresses immediate staffing needs but also invests in long-term solutions that will be in the best interest of our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1840, HD 2.



STATE OF HAWAII

Executive Office on Early Learning

Ke'ena Ho'okele Ho'ona'auao Pae Kamali'i o Hawai'i Moku'aina
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

TO: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 1840, H.D. 2 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Committee: EDU
Date: Monday, March 23, 2026
Time: 1:11 p.m.
Location: Conference Room 229

Executive Office on Early Learning's Position: **SUPPORT**

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) offers the following comments in support of H.B. 1840, H.D. 2. EOEL supports extending the length of time the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) may employ emergency hire permit holders to five years, and defers to the University of Hawai'i and the HIDOE regarding the graduation goals and Praxis examination training requirements in the bill.

This measure aligns with the Early Learning Board's current framework of policy priorities, which are grounded in the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan. Specifically, the bill advances State Plan Building Block 4: Early Childhood Workforce, by providing additional flexibility to HIDOE, EOEL, and the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission to meet the staffing needs of the public PreK system.

EOEL appreciates the House Consumer Protection & Commerce Committee's amendments, which broaden the bill's scope to address challenges faced by a wider range of emergency permit holders seeking licensure within the current timeframe. This approach responds to workforce realities while maintaining a defined, time-limited permit structure, ensuring emergency hire permits serve as temporary bridges to full licensure, not permanent or parallel hiring pathways.

The H.D. 2 helps address a unique situation currently facing our Public PreK workforce. Highly qualified EOEL Public PreK teachers must have graduated from a State-Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP) and hold a teaching license in Early Childhood Education. This is a set of qualifications for which there had been no significant demand prior to the recent expansion of the Public PreK program, which began in 2023.

We continue to work with the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and higher education partners to ensure pathways are responsive to this new demand. However, until the system adjusts, options for emergency permit holders teaching in EOEL public PreK classrooms to obtain a license in Early Childhood Education remain extremely limited.

There are no post-baccalaureate programs in the State that lead to a teaching license in Early Childhood Education, which is often the fastest route to licensure. In addition, there is only one active Master's degree program in Hawai'i that leads to initial licensure in Early Childhood Education, offered by Chaminade University.

Informal feedback from emergency permit holders currently teaching in EOEL classrooms underscores both their commitment to the profession and the structural challenges they face as they pursue licensure. They estimate that completing their programs will take between two and four years, and some shared that they pursued a second bachelor's degree, not by choice, but due to the limited availability of alternative pathways. In addition, we've heard from teachers who struggle to piece together financial support for coursework outside of the University of Hawai'i system, which is not currently eligible for the State's Early Childhood Educator Stipend program. Given these challenges, extending the permit limit to five years would meaningfully reduce pressure, allowing them to better balance coursework with full-time teaching responsibilities and personal obligations as they pursue licensure.

We appreciate the Legislature's ongoing investment and shared commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's early learning system for our youngest keiki and their 'ohana. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of H.B. No. 1840, H.D. 2.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)

<http://CharterCommission.Hawaii.Gov>
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

FOR: HB 1840 HD2 Relating to Education
DATE: March 23, 2026
TIME: 1:11 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education
ROOM: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

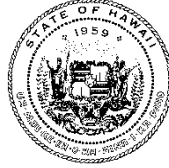
Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Committee:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony in **SUPPORT OF THE INTENT of HB 1840 HD2**, which:

1. Allows the Department of Education and public charter school teachers to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five years;
2. Requires the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to extend the five year limitation in the case of a declared state of emergency;
3. Establish a goal for the University of Hawaii to double the number of persons who graduate as newly licensed teachers; and
4. Requires the DOE to provide training to assist emergency hire teachers in passing the Praxis examination and require training to be mandatory for certain emergency hire teachers.

The Commission appreciates that this measure is intended to address teacher retention and recruitment by allowing prospective teachers more time to satisfy licensing requirements and completion of teacher preparation programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD
650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

March 23, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

PERSON TESTIFYING: Mitzie Higa, Licensing Specialist, on behalf of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB)

DATE: March 23, 2026

TIME 1:11 pm

LOCATION: Conference Room 229 and Video Conference

TITLE OF BILL: HB 1840HD2

POSITION: Opposes HB1840HD2

Chair Donna Mercado Kim Vice-Chair Senator Michelle Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully opposes HB1840HD2, which Permits the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years. Requires the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board extend the five-year period in the case of a declared state of emergency. Establishes a graduation goal for the University of Hawai'i and requires a report to the Legislature on the progress toward achieving that goal. Requires the Department of Education to provide training to assist emergency hires in passing the Praxis examination and require the training be mandatory for emergency hires in their fourth and fifth years as a condition of employment.

HTSB wants to point out that the Emergency Hire Permit was created with the intention to be an exception, not the norm. This is evident in the criteria set forth by statute. It was created for hard-to-fill areas, and individuals were given three years to become licensed. **The purpose of Chapter 302A is to have licensed, qualified teachers teaching our public school children in Hawai'i. The three-year mark was to ensure that individuals would enter a State Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP) as soon as possible while getting paid as a full-time teacher. A SATEP for an Emergency Hire teacher does not take three years to complete as is the norm, as it was intended.**

In order to qualify for an Emergency Hire Permit (EHP), the individual must possess a bachelor's degree and be enrolled in a SATEP. Completion of a SATEP as an EHP holder should take 1-2 years since the individual would have already obtained a bachelor's degree. In the event that the individual is unable to meet the requirements for licensure before the expiration of the individual's third EHP, there is a mechanism in place through the Hawaii Administrative Rules that would allow the individual an additional fourth EHP provided the individual meets the criteria set forth by law.

For individuals who possess a J-1 Visa, have completed a State Approved Teacher Education Program on the mainland or internationally, and hold a teaching degree, all that is required is passing the Praxis tests. The Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) is already providing preparatory Praxis exam assistance to J-1 Visa holders, and it would be beneficial for EHP holders to receive the same assistance so they can pass their Praxis tests sooner and become licensed earlier, which would lead to higher salaries.

This bill will only delay the completion of a SATEP for our teachers with Emergency Hire Permits in a timely manner and cause students in our public school system to be without a qualified, licensed teacher for five (5) years instead of three (3).

HTSB's position is grounded in our Vision of a highly esteemed public education system supported by rigorous professional teacher standards that foster student success, and our Mission to collaboratively set high licensing and credentialing standards that:

1. Ensure every child in Hawai'i has a qualified teacher
2. Promote professionalism and teaching excellence
3. Build public confidence in the teaching profession
4. Strengthen accountability to the public

Extending Emergency Hire Permits beyond three years directly conflicts with these commitments.

High-quality, equitable education depends on **well-prepared teachers** who are equipped to persevere and grow during their early years in the classroom. **Research and experience show that teachers who enter through fast-track or alternative routes, particularly in urban districts, often begin underprepared and leave the profession at higher rates. Our state's Emergency Hire Permit structure is designed to mitigate this by requiring individuals to pursue an official teaching degree within the three-year window, or if they are teachers with a degree, but received their teaching degree from an out-of-state or an out-of-country institution, then they just need to pass the Praxis tests for Core, Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT), and Content.**

To qualify for an Emergency Hire Permit, individuals must already hold a **bachelor's degree**. Completing a post-baccalaureate program or master's degree typically requires only one to two years, well within the existing three-year timeframe. Extending the permit to five years would allow individuals with any bachelor's degree, even in unrelated fields such as fashion design, to teach in our elementary or special education classrooms, or any classroom, for a longer period without completing the essential pedagogical preparation.

These facts are especially concerning because Emergency Hire teachers are most often placed in elementary and special education classrooms, where strong foundations in literacy, numeracy, differentiated instruction, and support for multilingual learners are critical. In some cases, students have had Emergency Hire teachers every year of elementary school. As we continue to address learning loss from the COVID-19 years, **further lowering preparation expectations would compound existing challenges.**

Other states that have reduced their qualification standards are now experiencing negative consequences from those policy shifts. More data may be found here-[\[Responding to the Data How Texas Is Re-thinking Teacher Certification.pdf\]](#) Hawai'i should not follow that path. Doing so would be a disservice not only to

our keiki, but also to individuals who aspire to become fully licensed, highly qualified teachers in our communities.

While Hawai'i faces significant teacher shortages—ranging from 1,000 to 1,200 vacancies at the start of each school year—**lowering standards is not the solution. Instead, our state should invest in strategies that strengthen the profession, including:**

- 1. Supporting ways to teacher retention**
- 2. Paying off student loans for SATEPs for Hawai'i public school teachers**
- 3. Expanding National Board Certified Teacher pathways**
- 4. Increasing mentoring and induction support, especially for those with Emergency Hire Permits**
- 5. Providing study sessions for those who need to pass Praxis tests for initial licensure**
- 6. Implementing a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program with structured guidance and tuition support (Teacher candidates can earn while they learn, without having to pay for tuition, thus they will not accumulate student loans)**

The approaches listed above uphold qualified teachers while addressing workforce needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. For the reasons stated above, the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board respectfully **asks the Committee to oppose this bill.**



Testimony in Support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125

Submitted by: The Teacher Lounge Team

Position: Support

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125.

Our organization works closely with schools and educators across Hawai'i, including J-1 teachers who are actively serving in classrooms while working toward full licensure. These educators play a critical role in maintaining instructional continuity, particularly in rural, neighbor island, and high-need schools where staffing challenges are most acute.

These teachers are fully committed to Hawai'i's students and are making documented progress toward licensure. However, the current licensure and permit timelines often do not reflect the practical barriers educators face. Required licensure exams involve multiple components that take significant time to prepare for, schedule, and complete successfully. The cumulative cost of exams and preparation materials can exceed \$1,000, creating a substantial financial burden.

Access challenges further complicate the process. On neighbor islands, limited in-person testing capacity can result in long delays that are outside a teacher's control. Virtual testing options are often not viable due to testing restrictions, technology limitations, or living situations that do not meet strict testing environment requirements.

When permit limits are rigidly applied without accounting for these realities, effective teachers may be forced to leave classrooms despite making steady progress toward licensure. This disrupts student learning, strains school communities, and can discourage educators from continuing to serve in Hawai'i.

While the J-1 teacher program allows educators to serve for up to five years, in practice the combined effects of licensure timelines, testing access, and permit limitations often reduce effective classroom service to no more than three years. This shortened window limits schools' ability to retain experienced teachers and undermines the stability that students and school communities need, as well as limits the cultural exchange and soft diplomacy impact of the J-1 teacher exchange program.

Students benefit most from stability—when teachers are able to remain in their classrooms long enough to build relationships, strengthen instructional practice, and support school culture. Policies that allow reasonable flexibility while maintaining licensure standards help ensure that schools can retain qualified, committed educators while safeguarding educational quality.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support of HB1825 / SB2616 and HB1840 / SB2125. Mahalo for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's students and schools.

Respectfully submitted,
The Teacher Lounge Team

Your Global Teaching Network

www.teacherlounge.org

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 5:07:16 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| amy agbayani | Testifying for The Legal clinic | Support | In Person |

Comments:

Testimony in support submitted by

Amy Agbayani, President The Legal Clinic

The Legal Clinic is a non-profit organization that provides legal representation and support for low-income immigrants. We strongly support legislation extending J-1 visa holders and other emergency hires from be eligible for 5 years. My testimony will focus only on the need and contributions of H-1 visa holders who teach in our public schools.

The bill will help Hawai'i address teacher shortages by providing competent teachers particularly where there are shortages in various geographic areas and disciplines.. In addition, J-1 visa holders with cultural and linguistic skills can work with students from these backgrounds. The Department of Education currently has over 200 J-1 visa teachers from the Philippines and administrators attest the program helps meet teacher shortages and the teachers perform valuable service to their students. My personal contact with some of these teachers and comments from my community contacts makes me confident that these teachers and the students are well-served.

These J-1 visa teachers can serve at any of the public schools and can teach in multicultural classrooms. It is also important to note that they were assigned to some schools with high proportion of local and immigrant Filipino students. As noted, Filipino students are the largest ethnic group in the public schools and immigrants from the Philippines represent the largest country of origin group, making up nearly half—or 45.8 percent—of all immigrants in Hawai'i. Currently there are 32,044 (10%) students who are enrolled in programs to learn English.

We support this bill as it will benefit our schools by having Visiting International Educators available to teach for the duration of their J-1 visa.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, March 23, 2026 at 1:11 pm

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840, HD2 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloh Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, Senator Hashimoto for my Maui district, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I am also an attorney licensed in the state of Hawaii for over 25 years. Early in my career I worked on gender equity in STEM as a workforce development issue, focusing on issues in recruitment and retention. I have written over ten peer-reviewed papers on best practices in the field.

I am writing today in **strong support of HB 1840, HD2**, Relating to Education, which permits the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years; requires the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to extend the five-year period in the case of a declared state of emergency; establishes a graduation goal for the University of Hawai'i and requires a report to the Legislature on the progress toward achieving that goal; requires the Department of Education to provide training to assist emergency hires in passing the Praxis examination; and requires the training be mandatory for emergency hires in their fourth and fifth years as a condition of employment.

One of the key workforce development areas I identified in my work with K-12 teachers and administrators and with professors and administrators of our institutions of higher education in Hawaii was the gaps in the education-to-workforce pipeline. This is an issue that we continue to see today when it comes to the education, recruitment and retention of teachers. Before attending law school, I attended the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, concurrently with a subject matter Master's degree program, to obtain a professional degree in teaching. I actually completed the coursework and practicum for the professional degree in teaching, but, in order to get a teaching license, at the time, required a one-year, unpaid, teaching practicum with the Department of Education. I could not afford to work for free for a year, so I went to work in a different field which later led me to law school.

That someone like me, who worked full-time while pursuing both a subject-matter Master's degree and a professional degree in teaching should have switched course because of the barriers put in place to pursuing my desired career of teaching highlighted for me the education-to-workforce barriers between the College of Education at UHM and the Hawaii State Department of Education. While this bill does not address that particular barrier, and I would encourage the Committee to question the College and Department on that issue, it does address a corollary issue I also have personal knowledge of.

A friend of my daughter's is a fine young man with a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from the University of California. He does not have a teaching degree, he has a subject-matter degree in chemistry. He wanted to explore teaching as a career, and applied as an emergency hire to teach science at Baldwin High School in Wailuku, Maui. In another sign of the dysfunction at the Department of Education, this young man was hired about one week before school started, although he had applied months prior. He had no classroom management experience, there were no curricular materials provided, and yet, under the mentorship of the head of the Baldwin Science Department, he fully embraced his new job.

It was not without its bumps in the road, but I had the wonderful opportunity to witness him "find his calling." He would come home from school almost every day and say, "I love my job!" He understood that, under the current law, he would need to get his teaching license within three years to keep this job that he loved.

Unfortunately, because he was hired just before the school year started, it kind of interfered with his ability to register for teaching degree programs within the UH system. It is also hard to get a teaching degree within the UH system from a neighbor island. When the end of his first year teaching at Baldwin was complete, there was some difficulty for him in retaining his position, even though the head of the Science Department was leaving for another school, and there seemed that there would be no experienced science teachers there. Part of the barrier for him was that he was not yet enrolled in a teaching degree program, and the timing now for him to complete a UH-affiliated program would not work, so he enrolled in a more costly online teaching degree program out of state, rather than taking advantage of programs through the UH system he would have qualified for. This is how the current three-year limit for emergency hires can create a barrier for people who want to stay and teach as a profession in Hawaii.

It has been a great experience to witness someone who, like me, wants to pursue a teaching career here in Hawaii. We have chronic shortages of teachers, filled now with teachers on J-1 visas. It is important to have skilled, knowledgeable, professional teachers. **I request your support of HB1825, HD2** because it will allow people, especially neighbor islanders, with desirable subject-matter degrees a more appropriate amount of time to get their teaching degree so that they can remain in their schools, avoid them having to pay for expensive online programs instead of going through the UH system simply because of a shortage of time under the current law, allow them the time to pursue a Master's degree rather than a teacher licensing degree alone, and help build the pipeline of experienced teachers like my friend to provide an excellent education for our students.

Thank you for your time and for supporting teachers and students by supporting HB1825, HD2.

Mahalo nui,

Christine L. Andrews, J.D.
Wailuku, Maui



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

**Testimony of Liza Ryan-Gill
In SUPPORT of HB1840 HD2**

Committee on Education

**Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair**

Hearing Date: March 23, 2026

Dear Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle N. Kidani, and members of the Committee on Education,

My name is **Liza Ryan-Gill**, and I submit this testimony in support of **HB1840 HD2**, which permits the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five years rather than three, requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to extend the period further in a declared state of emergency, establishes a graduation goal for the University of Hawai‘i, and requires the DOE to provide Praxis examination training to emergency hires, making such training mandatory in years four and five as a condition of continued employment.

I am the **Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)**, and I am testifying on behalf of HCIR. HCIR is a statewide coalition of immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations working to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen Hawai‘i’s shared future. Education is one of the most powerful tools we have to promote equity, opportunity, and long-term public well-being, and this bill represents an important step toward ensuring that Hawai‘i’s education system can serve all students fairly and effectively.

Hawai‘i faces a persistent, well-documented teacher shortage. Emergency hires are a critical tool for keeping classrooms staffed, but the current three-year limit creates instability and can force schools to lose experienced emergency teachers before they can complete the licensure process. Extending the emergency hire period to five years gives schools and educators the runway they need to build stability, preserve continuity for students, and retain teachers who are already serving their school communities. Just as importantly, the bill does not simply extend the timeline without accountability. By requiring Praxis examination training and making that training mandatory in years four and five, HB1840 HD2 creates a more meaningful pathway toward full licensure. This is a bridge to long-term workforce stability, not a permanent workaround.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

This bill also matters for equity and cultural responsiveness. Many emergency hires, including educators from the Philippines and other countries, serve in schools with high percentages of students from those same communities. These educators often bring important linguistic, cultural, and community knowledge into the classroom. Allowing them to remain in their positions longer supports strong student-educator relationships, continuity of instruction, and a deeper sense of belonging for students and families. For immigrant and mixed-status families in particular, schools are often among the most trusted public institutions. Stability in the classroom matters. When students feel safe, supported, and understood in their learning environments, they are better able to succeed academically, participate fully in school life, and contribute positively to their communities.

HB1840 HD2 also reflects sound long-term public policy. The state of emergency provision adds important flexibility when Hawai'i is facing disasters or disruptions that make staffing even more difficult. At the same time, the University of Hawai'i graduation goal helps connect short-term staffing needs with long-term teacher pipeline development. Together, these provisions recognize that Hawai'i must both retain the educators currently serving students and invest in a stronger future workforce.

Strong educational policy is also sound community policy. Investments in inclusive, stable, and supportive education systems lead to better student outcomes, a stronger workforce, and more resilient communities. When schools are able to retain committed educators and students have continuity in their classrooms, Hawai'i benefits socially, economically, and culturally.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB1840 HD2**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Liza Ryan gill

Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1840, HD2 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Senate Committee on Education

Sen. Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Sen. Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 23, 2026 | Conference Room 229 | Letter Date: March 22, 2026

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic supports HB1840, HD2, which strengthens Hawai'i's educator workforce by extending the allowable period for emergency hire teachers from three to five years, requiring support and training for licensure, and promoting long-term stability in our schools.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing immigrant justice across Hawai'i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy, TLC supports policies that create fair and practical pathways for individuals – including many noncitizen professionals such as teachers on J-1 visas – who are contributing meaningfully to our communities while working toward professional certification.

HB1840, HD2 recognizes the realities facing Hawai'i's education system and the individuals stepping in to meet urgent workforce needs. Emergency hire teachers play a critical role in addressing persistent staffing shortages, particularly in hard-to-fill positions and underserved schools. The current three-year limit often forces capable and effective educators out of the classroom before they can complete licensure requirements, disrupting student learning, and undermining workforce stability.

HB1840, HD2 addresses this challenge by extending the allowable employment period for emergency hires to five years, providing a more realistic and attainable pathway to licensure. For international educators on J-1 visas, a five-year permit period is also helpful because it aligns with the duration of their authorized stay under the J-1 visa program. HB1840, HD2 further requires training and support for all teachers working toward certification, ensuring that the policy not only helps to retain teachers longer, but also aids them in successfully becoming fully licensed educators.

TLC urges the Committee to pass HB1840, HD2 to support workforce stability for our schools, strengthen educational continuity for our students, and promote fair and practical pathways for the dedicated educators serving Hawai'i's communities.

Submitted on behalf of The Legal Clinic and
Board President Amefil Agbayani,

Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, March 23, 2026 at 1:11 pm, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840, HD2 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, Senator Hashimoto of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veronica Mendoza, Founding Executive Director of Roots Reborn and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui - *The People in Action Maui*. Roots Reborn **strongly supports HB 1840, HD2**, Relating to Education, permits the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years; requires the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board extend the five-year period in the case of a declared state of emergency; establishes a graduation goal for the University of Hawai'i and requires a report to the Legislature on the progress toward achieving that goal and requires the Department of Education to provide training to assist emergency hires in passing the Praxis examination and require the training be mandatory for emergency hires in their fourth and fifth years as a condition of employment.

Roots Reborn is a grassroots, multicultural immigrant-justice and disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities on Maui and beyond. Born out of the August 2023 wildfires, we immediately stepped in to move aid, navigate systems alongside families, and build the trusted relationships that still anchor our work today. What began as wildfire response has grown into essential infrastructure for immigrant communities facing overlapping crises—from recovery and housing instability to shifting federal policies, increased enforcement, and rising fear.

In our work we have identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers, such as the current limitations for a visiting international educator permit for educators on the J-1 visa program caused by the limit of emergency hires to three years.. House Bill 1840, HD2 would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal J-1 program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach grades K - 12 in accredited schools, and federal standards provide for a three year visa term that can be extended to five years if certain criteria are met. House Bill 1840, HD2 would facilitate J-1 visa extensions from three to five years.

House Bill 1840, HD2 seeks to extend from three to five years the period for which emergency hire teachers may be employed by the Department of Education, facilitating J-1 visa extensions from three to five years, helping foreign teachers stay at our schools longer, reducing turnover and building more integrated school communities. For this reason, Roots Reborn respectfully requests that you vote **in support of HB 1840, HD2**.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica', written over a white background.

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*
El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 2:51:43 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Nandita Sharma | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of this Bill.

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 3:43:58 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jennifer Lum | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

For the following reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS HB1840 HD2. Hawai‘i faces a persistent, well-documented teacher shortage. Emergency hires are a critical tool for keeping classrooms staffed — but the current three-year limit creates instability and forces schools to lose experienced emergency teachers before they can complete the licensure process. Extending the emergency hire window to five years gives schools and educators the runway they need. Critically, the mandatory Praxis training requirement in years four and five turns the extension into a genuine pathway toward full licensure — not simply a delay of the underlying problem. This is a bridge, not a permanent workaround.

This bill also matters for equity and cultural responsiveness. Many emergency hires — including educators from the Philippines, Kenya, and other countries — serve in schools with high percentages of students from those same communities. Allowing these educators to remain in their classrooms longer supports student-educator relationships and continuity. The state of emergency provision adds important flexibility for disasters, and the UH graduation goal pairs near-term retention with long-term pipeline investment. The Senate Education Committee is well-positioned to advance this practical workforce measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Jen Lum, ‘Ewa Beach

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 3:47:14 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Thaddeus Pham | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and EDU Committee Members,

As a Hawai‘i resident concerned with the states educational and economic welfare, I write in **strong support of HB1840 HD2**, which permits the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five years rather than three, requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to extend the period further in a declared state of emergency, establishes a graduation goal for the University of Hawai‘i, and requires the DOE to provide Praxis examination training to emergency hires, making such training mandatory in years four and five as a condition of continued employment.

Hawai‘i faces a persistent, well-documented teacher shortage. Emergency hires are a critical tool for keeping classrooms staffed — but the current three-year limit creates instability and forces schools to lose experienced emergency teachers before they can complete the licensure process. Extending the emergency hire window to five years gives schools and educators the runway they need. Critically, the mandatory Praxis training requirement in years four and five turns the extension into a genuine pathway toward full licensure — not simply a delay of the underlying problem. This is a bridge, not a permanent workaround.

This bill also matters for equity and cultural responsiveness. Many emergency hires — including educators from the Philippines, Kenya, and other countries — serve in schools with high percentages of students from those same communities. Allowing these educators to remain in their classrooms longer supports student-educator relationships and continuity. The state of emergency provision adds important flexibility for disasters, and the UH graduation goal pairs near-term retention with long-term pipeline investment. The Senate Education Committee is well-positioned to advance this practical workforce measure.

Please PASS HB1840 HD2.

Mahalo,

Thaddeus Pham

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 9:53:08 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Ana Laura Flores-Garcia | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee,

My name is Ana Flores, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB1840 HD2, which requires the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator’s J-1 visa program.

I am a multilingual mother and member of our Hawai‘i community. I am testifying as an individual. As a parent raising children here, I understand firsthand the importance of educational consistency and the deeply positive impact that caring, culturally competent educators have on our keiki. Our schools deserve staffing pathways that support classroom stability and promote educational excellence for all students. HB1840 H2, is critical for this purpose by aligning teacher permitting requirements with the federal J-1 exchange teacher program. When permit timelines are not aligned with J-1 visa durations, it creates avoidable uncertainty for school administrators and visiting international educators alike. This can lead to disruptions in staffing and classroom continuity for our students—especially in schools serving multilingual and culturally diverse communities.

By directing the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board to create an alternative permit pathway that aligns with the J-1 program duration, this bill provides a practical, common-sense solution.

As a parent, I especially appreciate how visiting international educators contribute to the cultural competency and linguistic diversity that reflect our state’s rich heritage. Ensuring pathways that support these educators helps our children see the world in broader, more inclusive ways, and it fosters a learning environment that values diversity and global understanding.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **PASS HB1840 HD2.**

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Ana Flores

anaflores.mpa@gmail.com

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 8:05:19 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| James E Raymond | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Thank you. I am a member of Indivisible Windward.

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 9:24:58 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Martha Nakajima | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support this bill. Thank you. Martha Nakajima, Honolulu, member of Indivisible

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 9:29:29 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kanani Kai | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I strongly Support HB1840.

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii.

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 9:46:03 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Karen A Valasek | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2125/HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would amend Section 302A-804 of the HRS concerning the hiring of unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis. This bill would remove a three year limit on the emergency hires and extend the maximum time to five years during which the person is making progress toward obtaining a teaching certificate. This would harmonize the J-1 visa timelines with the emergency teacher timeline.

Foreign teachers are an important part of the response to our extreme teacher shortage. Several hundred positions are presently filled with noncitizens who are here with J-1 visa status. Extending the maximum time these persons can provide education to our K-12 keiki while they are meeting the requirements for a teaching certificate is good planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Karen Valasek

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 9:49:36 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ron Brown | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

please support this needed and sensible measure

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 11:08:37 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| John Wassell | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2125/HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would amend Section 302A-804 of the HRS concerning the hiring of unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis. This bill would remove a three year limit on the emergency hires and extend the maximum time to five years during which the person is making progress toward obtaining a teaching certificate. This would harmonize the J-1 visa timelines with the emergency teacher timeline.

Foreign teachers are an important part of the response to our extreme teacher shortage. Several hundred positions are presently filled with noncitizens who are here with J-1 visa status. Extending the maximum time these persons can provide education to our K-12 keiki while they are meeting the requirements for a teaching certificate is good planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

JJ Wassell

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 12:20:40 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Tim Huycke | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support HB 1840.

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 12:58:06 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jessie L Gonsalves | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Teachers are incredibly needed on the island keiki need to be taught. Teachers are so important in our community. Support this bill to hire more teachers. Thank you from a mom who is apart of Indivisible hawaii.

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 1:19:24 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Wilbert & Laura Costa Sr | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

We support the hiring of more credible teachers, education assistance, and a clean house in the DOE. How is it possible that the superintendent for the DOE gets an astronomical raise when he is not doing his job by fulfilling his duty of making it a point to have schools staffed properly? There are a lot of problems with the DOE and school administrators. Administrators are fudging numbers, withholding supplies from teachers that were requested a year and a half ago, and passing students who should not pass to make their schools look good. Again, we need teachers who want to teach, not just collect a paycheck. There are hundreds of good teachers out there who want to teach. Ween out the duds that are passing idiots and put real teachers in their place. Thank you for letting me vent...

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 2:48:59 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Brodie Lockard | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 5:57:26 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dawn Morais Webster Ph.D. | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I strongly support this bill because it offers several benefits that serve the community:

- Schools & educators get more time to complete licensure -less disruption for students
- The mandatory praxis training offers a real path to licensure.
- Supports culturally responsive staffing: many emergency hires serve students who share their cultural backgrounds

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 8:33:15 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lily Troy MD | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB1840

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 11:00:16 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cory Harden | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

member, Indivisible

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 4:11:56 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Younghee Overly | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support HB1840 HD2 which would permit the DOE and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three years. This would help teachers with J-1 visa more time to make progress to receive a teaching certificate from the State. This would help with dealing with our severe teacher shortage.

Younghee Overly, a member of Indivisible Hawaii

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 9:05:42 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| David Cuthbert | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

As an individual, and a member of East Hawai'i Indivisible, I support HB1840 HB2. This bill promises to maximize education of our keiki while not adding a monetary cost. And, during the two additional years that an unlicensed teacher is teaching her teaching skills are better ever.

David Cuthbert, Pahoa

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 9:53:12 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jessica Kuzmier | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of HB1840 because I believe it will help with our state's qualified teacher shortage. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 10:23:00 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Gail Morrison | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2125/HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would amend Section 302A-804 of the HRS concerning the hiring of unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis. This bill would remove a three year limit on the emergency hires and extend the maximum time to five years during which the person is making progress toward obtaining a teaching certificate. This would harmonize the J-1 visa timelines with the emergency teacher timeline.

Foreign teachers are an important part of the response to our extreme teacher shortage. Several hundred positions are presently filled with noncitizens who are here with J-1 visa status. Extending the maximum time these persons can provide education to our K-12 keiki while they are meeting the requirements for a teaching certificate is good planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Gail Morrison, Honolulu

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 1:41:49 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

LATE

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Calvin Black | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am a member of Indivisible. Thank you for supporting this bill.

LATE

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 7:19:57 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Randall John Francisco | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am writing in strong and continued support of this legislation that provides J1 educators additional time for the examination towards licensure when the first 2+ years is dedicated to successfully teaching and surviving the tremendous cost of living, especially on Kauai and the rural neighbor islands. Mahalo Nui Loa and Selamat Po for your consideration. Volunteer and one of many. many community partners.

LATE

March 22, 2026

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1840

Relating to Teacher Licensing (Emergency Hires)

To: Chair of the Committee on Education / Committee on Finance

From: Debra Andres Arellano, PhD

Position: Former Emergency Hire & Former High School Administrator

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong **support** of this measure to extend the emergency hiring period for unlicensed individuals from three years to five years. My support comes from a dual perspective: first, as someone who served as an emergency hire during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and second, as a former high school administrator who has seen firsthand why we need to improve our retention efforts.

The Financial and Professional Reality of Emergency Hires

Many people do not realize the immense financial and emotional burden placed on emergency hires. During the pandemic, we stepped in to ensure classrooms remained functional during a global crisis. However, the "unforgiving timeline" of a three-year permit creates a pressure cooker environment.

Emergency hires are often starting at the lowest pay scales—salaries that are, frankly, insulting given the cost of living in Hawai'i. Expecting an educator to manage a full-time classroom, navigate the emotional needs of students, and simultaneously fund and complete a rigorous licensure program within 36 months is often a mathematical and physical impossibility.

An Administrator's Perspective on Retention

In my time as a high school administrator, I saw a recurring, heartbreaking pattern: talented, dedicated "emergency" educators who loved their students but were forced out of the profession. We lose them not because they lack the skill or the heart, but because of:

- **The Rigid Timeline:** Three years is often not enough time to clear bureaucratic and financial hurdles, especially for those on neighbor islands or in high-need areas.
- **Lack of Structural Support:** Emergency hires are often "thrown into the deep end" with minimal mentorship.

- **Financial Exhaustion:** When you combine low starting pay with the high cost of MTEL/Praxis exams and prep courses, many simply cannot afford to stay.

Why Five Years Matters

Extending this period to five years is not "lowering the bar." Instead, it provides a **realistic bridge** to licensure. It allows these educators to gain the stability they need to actually succeed in their certification programs rather than burning out and quitting. When an emergency hire leaves, the students lose the most—they lose a consistent, caring adult who has already started building relationships in the community.

We need to treat our emergency hires as the future of our workforce, not as temporary "band-aids." I urge you to pass this bill to give these dedicated individuals the time, grace, and support they need to become the fully licensed, long-term teachers our keiki deserve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Debra Andres Arellano

Debra Andres Arellano, PhD

LATE

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 7:25:32 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kehaulani Coleman | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Thank you

LATE

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 10:17:23 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Candice Lanette | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support this and I am a member of Indivisible Hawaii.

LATE

HB-1840-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 10:31:58 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Malialani Dullanty | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Malialani Dullanty, Kānaka Maoli and resident of Moku o Keawe. I am writing this testimony to urge the committee to support HB1840 HD2 in order to extend the emergency teacher hiring period to five years. This not only supports our school systems and keiki, but provides incentive and ability for praxis training.

I urge the committee to support this bill.

Me ka mahalo,

Malialani Dullanty