



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

Date: 04/06/2026

Time: 10:32 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: WAM

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1840, SD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Hawaii 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. 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 HTSB to extend the five-year period in the case of a declared state of emergency. Requires the Department of Education to provide support to assist emergency hires in meeting the requirements of licensure and require the training be mandatory for emergency hires in their fourth and fifth years. Effective 7/31/2055. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 1840, HD 2, SD 1, 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 within 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 supports the establishment of a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of a J-1 visa program, which improves alignment between federal timelines and State licensure requirements.

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, SD 1.



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

April 06, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

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

DATE: April 06, 2026

TIME 10:32 am

LOCATION: Conference Room 211 and Video Conference

TITLE OF BILL: HB 1840,HD2,SD1

POSITION: Opposes

Chair Donovan Dela Cruz and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully opposes HB1840,HD2,SD1 which would require 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. It also 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 HTSB to extend the five-year period in the case of a declared state of emergency. Requires the Department of Education to provide support to assist emergency hires in meeting the requirements of licensure and require the training be mandatory for emergency hires in their fourth and fifth years..

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.** Since they already need a bachelor's degree as part of the requirements for an Emergency Hire Permit, their SATEP will be a graduate degree, so it will take 1-2 years. **If exigent circumstances beyond the individuals' control prevent them from obtaining licensure within three years, the Hawai'i Administrative Rules already allow HTSB to suspend the rules and grant the individual a fourth Emergency Hire Permit.** Also, those with J-1 Visas, or those who attended a State Approved Teacher Education Program on the mainland, who already have a teaching degree, just need to pass their Praxis tests, and what they really need, that HIDOE is now offering this year, is study help for these exams.

Applicants may take and pass these Praxis exams, before they apply for a license, or within their first year, and then become a licensed teacher, and earn a higher salary because of it.

The HIDOE states that the implementation of the J-1 Visa program has been a resounding success at Board of Education meetings. The HTSB requests clarification regarding the term “resounding success”. Based on the information provided by HIDOE, the term resounding success appears to be equated with an increase in the number of internationally certified teachers currently employed in public schools statewide, as well as those set to arrive in 2026-2027. HIDOE has yet to provide HTSB with any data regarding measurable gains and improvements in students’ improved academic performance directly attributed to J-1 visa teachers.

This bill incorrectly states that the State’s existing rules limit the full potential of prospective international teachers participating in the J-1 visa program. The HTSB is able to issue licenses, provided that the applicant meets the criteria set forth by law. Under the current policy, International applicants have applied for licenses and permits, and **those who have met the licensure requirements have been issued the appropriate licenses.**

HTSB is tasked by law to establish licensing and certification standards that govern teacher licensing and certification in Hawai’i, ensuring that public school children are taught by teachers who are qualified to engage in the teaching profession without negatively impacting their pupils' educational process.

HTSB is only administratively attached to the Hawai’i Department of Education (HIDOE). The legislature intentionally separated HTSB from the HIDOE to ensure that the licensing body would not be the same department or entity as the employer, as this would pose an inherent conflict of interest. This bill deprives HTSB of its ability and autonomy to establish its own licensing and certification standards and instead mandates HTSB to lower its licensing requirements, including allowing the extension of Emergency Hire Permits from the current three years to five years, as this bill proposes.

HTSB notes that, while this bill was well-intentioned, it is not the answer to the problem. Part of the solution could be for individuals interested in teaching in our state to take their Praxis exams before they even come to the U.S., as Praxis is international and offers testing options they may be able to use before coming to the U.S. In fact, some individuals have started taking at least one Praxis test before they move here. The Praxis tests J-1 visa holders struggle with most are the Praxis Core Reading and Writing tests, which are foundational skills aligned with our standards and taught in our schools. **Currently, 34 J1 Visa holders have also been placed in classrooms that are outside their teaching license in their home country.** For example, an individual might be licensed in their country in Secondary Mathematics, but in Hawai’i, they have been placed in a 2nd-grade elementary classroom. **This is concerning for our students who need the foundational reading and writing skills.** We are glad that HIDOE is now offering Praxis study support for these J-1 Visa holders, as they all need to take the Praxis Core, and the reading and writing tests are what they struggle with most. It has been reported that principals have also been reimbursing them for passed Praxis tests, but this is at the principal's discretion and depends on their Title II funding.

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:

- Ensure every child in Hawai'i has a qualified teacher
- Promote professionalism and teaching excellence
- Build public confidence in the teaching profession
- 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 exams 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.

This is 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, **lowering preparation expectations would compound existing challenges.**

We should learn from other states, such as Texas, that reduced their qualification standards and licensing requirements for Emergency Hire Permits, and are now experiencing negative consequences from those policy shifts, including student learning loss, which is very concerning. [[Responding to the Data How Texas Is Re-thinking Teacher Certification.pdf - Google Drive](#)] 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 or requirements for licensure, or extending the number of years an individual may teach with only an Emergency Hire Permit, is not the solution. Instead, our state should invest in strategies that strengthen the profession, including:**

- Supporting ways to teacher retention [[Teacher Turnover in the United States: Patterns, Drivers, and Policy Strategies | Learning Policy Institute](#)]-noting teacher turnover was higher among

teachers who were not fully certified (20.1%) than among fully certified teachers (14.7%). Among teachers with 1–3 years of experience, not fully certified teachers left at rates about 40% higher than fully certified teachers (24% vs. 17%).

According to this recent research, the factors are most strongly associated with teacher turnover. (Which accounts for why we have such a shortage here in Hawai'i. If we could retain our teachers, we wouldn't have such a large teacher shortage each year. According to recent research in Hawai'i, over 50% of our teachers do not stay in the classroom beyond 5 years. Thus, if we are able to retain our teachers, we will not have this large a shortage of teachers)

In this particular research, it is noted that after accounting for teacher and school characteristics, three factors are most strongly associated with turnover:

- **Compensation:** Higher pay is linked to higher retention. On average, with every \$1,000 increase in salary (adjusted for cost of living), the probability of turnover decreased by about 0.34 percentage points.
- **School leadership:** Teachers who report having more effective and supportive leadership are significantly more likely to stay in their schools. Turnover rates were cut in half when comparing teachers who reported low versus high levels of leadership effectiveness and supports (18.7% vs. 9.0%).
- **Job and workplace satisfaction:** Teachers with high job and workplace satisfaction were significantly less likely to leave their schools than teachers with low satisfaction (8.0% vs. 22.0%).

Another way that the employer may help with retention is by increasing mentoring and induction support, especially for those with Emergency Hire Permits

These findings underscore the association between teacher turnover and compensation and working conditions. Although compensation is not under the purview of HTSB, we have tried to build on teacher retention by;

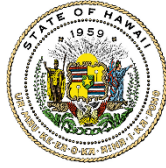
- Expanding National Board Certified Teacher pathways (which HTSB is successfully doing)
- Writing a SAEF Grant, and receiving federal funding, for the implementation of a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program with structured guidance and tuition support (a program where Teacher candidates can earn while they learn, without having to pay for tuition, which would mean no student loans and higher pay as a full-time salaried teacher).
 - Under the guidance of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (“DLIR”) HTSB wrote the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12, using DLIR’s template and federal and state requirements for an apprenticeship program. The Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 Teachers were adjusted with input from the unions involved.
 - The State Apprenticeship Council approved the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 teachers, pending the required Consult and Confer process between the employer (HIDOE) and the unions, the Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA), and the Hawai'i Government Employees Association (HGEA). While HTSB is not a party to the Consult and Confer meetings, as the sponsor, not the employer, HTSB was invited by the employer to attend some meetings and assisted HIDOE in answering questions posed by HSTA afterward, which were not questions raised at those meetings. This included answering questions about federal and state regulations required for apprenticeships and the SAEF grant for employers. The HGEA

responded to HIDOE that they were satisfied with the Consult and Confer meetings, but will wait for HSTA to sign the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 Teachers. The Director of DLIR will not sign the Standards until the Consult and Confer process has ended and the unions have signed off on the Standards, which is norm with Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

- HTSB, as the sponsor of the \$4.62 million SAEF grant, cannot spend SAEF grant funds and implement the program until the Consult and Confer process has been resolved and parties have signed the Standards. HSTA and HGEA will have continual opportunities to conduct Impact Bargaining after the signing of the Standards. The SAEF Grant is the federal funding source, and the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 Teachers is the guide for implementing the program. Once the Standards are signed, HTSB will be allowed to use SAEF Grant federal funding to offer subgrants to UH Colleges to pay the tuition for their students who are or will be entering State Approved Teacher Education Programs (SATEPs) and are employed by our Hawai'i Public Schools. These students who are currently employed as Educational Assistants (EAs) or Teacher Assistants (TAs) by HIDOE will eventually become qualified teachers employed by HIDOE, which is one solution to the teacher shortage problem. Further, HIDOE has agreed to pay these individuals who are selected for the Registered Apprenticeship Program as EAs since HIDOE needs EAs. These students are recognized as members of the HGEA and per the Standards will be part of their collective bargaining unit and any salary scale shall be determined by the collective bargaining contract in place.

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.



STATE OF HAWAII

Executive Office on Early Learning

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

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.B. No. 1840, S.D. 1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Committee: WAM
Date: Monday, April 6, 2026
Time: 10:32 a.m.
Location: Conference Room 211

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, S.D. 1. EOEL supports extending the length of time the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) may employ emergency hire permit holders from three to five years, and defers to the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and the HIDOE regarding the establishment of an alternative pathway for the J-1 visa program.

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.

H.B. No. 1840, S.D. 1 addresses challenges faced by 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 continue to serve as temporary bridges to full licensure, not permanent or parallel hiring pathways.

Due to a unique set of circumstances, it is especially difficult for emergency permit holders working as Public PreK teachers to meet the current timeframe. Highly qualified EOEL Public PreK teachers are required to graduate from a State-Approved Teacher Education Program

(SATEP) and hold a valid teaching license in Early Childhood Education. Demand for these qualifications was minimal 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, the options available for emergency permit holders teaching in EOEL public PreK classrooms who need 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 highlights both their strong commitment to the profession and the structural challenges they face in pursuing licensure. Many estimate it will take two to four years to complete their programs. Some reported pursuing a second bachelor's degree—not by choice, but due to limited alternative pathways. Teachers also described the difficulty of balancing full-time work, coursework, and family responsibilities. One shared that she is managing these demands while also serving in the Air Force Reserve. In addition, some teachers struggle to secure financial support for coursework outside 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, S.D. 1.



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Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Item: HB 1840, HD2, SD1 – Relating to Education

Position: Support

Hearing: Monday, April 6, 2026, 10:32 am, Room 211

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** H.B. 1840, HD2, SD1, to help address the state's persistent teacher shortage. By extending the employment limit for emergency hires from three to five years, this bill allows schools to retain dedicated educators who are already established in their classrooms but may need additional time to complete the licensing process.

This change provides much-needed stability for students and schools without compromising professional standards. Completing a licensure program—which often includes student teaching and rigorous exams—is incredibly difficult while managing a full-time classroom workload. Under the existing law, a teacher who is performing well but has not completed every requirement by the end of their third year will be let go.

Extending the timeline will allow the education system to capitalize on the valuable experience an emergency hire has gained. It also helps circumvent the difficulties associated with vacant positions and the use of long-term substitutes.

H.B. 1840, HD2, SD1 maintains important protections by ensuring unlicensed individuals are only hired when no licensed teacher is available. It also preserves transparency through regular reporting to the board regarding the progress of these hires and the status of teacher shortages across the state.

By focusing on actual progress toward licensure rather than an arbitrary deadline, we can support the growth of our workforce and keep committed professionals in our schools. We respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo.



COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Monday, April 6, 2026 at 10:32 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840, HD2, SD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Senators Hashimoto and DeCoite 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, SD1**, Relating to Education, which requires the Hawaii 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.

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. House Bill 1840, HD2, SD1 would add a new Section 302A-802 to the HRS requiring the 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. 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, SD1 would require the Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

House Bill 1840, HD2, SD1 seeks to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned to the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program, helping foreign teachers at our schools stay 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, SD1**.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written in a cursive style.

Veronica Mendoza

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



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-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 1:49:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Testifying for The Legal Clinic	Support	Written Testimony Only

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.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1840, HD2, SD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Sen. Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 6, 2026 | Letter Date: April 5, 2026

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic supports HB1840, HD2, SD1 which strengthens Hawai`i's educator workforce through practical solutions to address persistent teacher shortages. 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 accessible pathways for individuals – including noncitizen professionals – who are contributing meaningfully to our communities while working toward professional certification.

HB1840, HD2, SD1 recognizes the realities facing Hawai`i's education system and the individuals stepping in to meet urgent workforce needs. The bill builds upon prior versions by extending the allowable employment period for emergency hire teachers from three to five years, while continuing to require active progress toward licensure as well as support to help educators meet certification requirements. SD1 further recognizes the valuable role of international teachers in Hawai`i's education system by requiring that the Hawai`i Teacher Standards Board develop an alternative pathway for visiting international educator permits that is aligned with the duration of the J-1 visa program. This provision promotes stability for schools and students and ensures that qualified international educators can continue to teach without disruption for the duration of their authorized stay.

Emergency hire teachers and international educators play a critical role in addressing staffing shortages, particularly in hard-to-fill positions and underserved schools. The current three-year limit often forces capable educators out of the classroom before they can complete licensure requirements, disrupting student learning, and undermining workforce stability. Extending this period to five years promotes continuity that benefits students, strengthens school communities, and supports long-term workforce development. We urge the Committee to pass this measure.

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

Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 7:40:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

Thank you

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 7:55:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dwight T. Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Hawaii resident, a registered voter, and a member of IndivisibleHawaii.

I am in support of HB1840 HD2 which would add a new Section to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach in accredited schools in grades K - 12. The federal standards provide a three year term of the visa which can be extended if certain criteria are met to five years. HB1840 HD2 would require the Board to fully implement the federal program.

I believe this would benefit Hawaii's chronic and severe teacher shortage. I urge your support for this bill.

= Dwight Martin =

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 8:31:34 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Brandt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 9:03:10 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aimee E McCullough	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 HD2 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach in accredited schools in grades K - 12. The federal standards provide a three year term of the visa which can be extended if certain criteria are met to five years. HB1840 HD2 would require the Board to fully implement the federal program.

There are several hundred teachers in Hawaii under the J-1 program, dealing with our chronic, severe, teacher shortage. The rules of the program require the visa holders to make progress toward receiving a teaching certificate from the State. Since the benefits of the program to our K-12 educational system in Hawaii are significant, it makes sense to require the Board to maximize the availability of qualified candidates.

I urge you to Pass HB1840 HD2

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

AM

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 9:51:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

member, Indivisible

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2026 9:57:06 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support HB 1840.

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 2:10:46 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

HB1840 HD2 J-1 VISA EXTENSION TO 5 YEARS

I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB1840 HD2 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach in accredited schools in grades K - 12. The federal standards provide a three year term of the visa which can be extended if certain criteria are met to five years. HB1840 HD2 would require the Board to fully implement the federal program.

There are several hundred teachers in Hawaii under the J-1 program, dealing with our chronic, severe, teacher shortage. The rules of the program require the visa holders to make progress toward receiving a teaching certificate from the State. Since the benefits of the program to our K-12 educational system in Hawaii are significant, it makes sense to require the Board to maximize the availability of qualified candidates.

I urge you to Pass HB1840 HD2

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 6:50:32 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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 HD2 SD1. This bill promises to maximize education of our keiki at not additional cost. And, during the two additional years that an unlicensed teacher is teaching her teaching skills continue to improve.

David Cuthbert, Pahoa

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 6:54:18 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jane Aquino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 HD2 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach in accredited schools in grades K - 12. The federal standards provide a three year term of the visa which can be extended if certain criteria are met to five years. HB1840 HD2 would require the Board to fully implement the federal program.

There are several hundred teachers in Hawaii under the J-1 program, dealing with our chronic, severe, teacher shortage. The rules of the program require the visa holders to make progress toward receiving a teaching certificate from the State. Since the benefits of the program to our K-12 educational system in Hawaii are significant, it makes sense to require the Board to maximize the availability of qualified candidates.

I urge you to Pass HB1840 HD2

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill

Jane Aquino, Indivisible Hawaii

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:35:20 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 9:14:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcela Montalto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Extending the J-1 visa program is an important investment in education, cultural exchange, and economic growth. The program brings students, researchers, teachers, and professionals from around the world to share knowledge and skills while building lasting connections with the United States. By continuing and strengthening this program, we support innovation, enrich our communities with diverse perspectives, and promote mutual understanding across cultures. An extension of the J-1 visa program also helps universities, hospitals, and businesses maintain access to global talent that contributes meaningfully to research, training, and local economies.

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, April 6, 2026 at 10:32 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840, HD2, SD1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Senator Hashimoto for my district, Senator DeCoite of Maui, 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 and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui – The People in Action Maui. I am writing today in **strong support of HB 1840, HD2, SD1**, Relating to Education, which requires the Hawaii 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; 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 HTSB to extend the five-year period in the case of a declared state of emergency; and requires the Department of Education to provide support to assist emergency hires in meeting the requirements of licensure and require the training be mandatory for emergency hires in their fourth and fifth years.

Early in my career I worked on gender equity in STEM as a workforce development issue for many years. I focused on issues in recruitment and retention and wrote over ten peer-reviewed papers on best practices in the field. One of the key workforce development areas I identified in my work with K-12 teachers and administrators 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.

In my work I identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers to recruiting and retaining teachers for our schools on Maui. One such barrier is lack of consistency between federal and state standards for visiting international educator permits for educators on the J-1 visa program. House Bill 1840, HD2, SD1 would help remedy this situation and improve the pathway for longer retention of teachers on the J-1 visa program by requiring the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal J-1 program standards provide for a three year visa term that can be extended to five years if certain criteria are met. House Bill 1840, HD2, SD1 would require the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

House Bill 1840, HD2, SD1 would also permit the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five, rather than three, years. 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 that 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, with the intention of becoming a teacher, 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, 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, who had applied months prior, was hired about one week before school started. 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 was too late for him to then register for teaching degree programs within the UH system. It is also hard to get a teaching degree within the UH system while teaching full-time on 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 this young man 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 with the three-year limit, 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. In addition, this young man intended to get a Masters Degree in Education, not just a teaching degree, but the three-year time limit to acquire a teaching license also made this impossible.

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, SD1** because it will allow people, especially on neighbor islands, with desirable subject-matter degrees a more appropriate amount of time to get their teaching degree so that they can remain in their schools. This will 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, and will help build the pipeline of experienced teachers like my friend to provide an excellent education for our students.

House Bill 1840, HD2, SD1 also seeks to adopt and facilitate the federal standard that allows for J-1 visa extensions from three to five years, helping foreign teachers at our schools stay longer, reducing teacher turnover and building more integrated school communities with more experienced teachers. For this reason, I respectfully request that you vote **in support of HB 1840, HD2, SD1**.

Mahalo for supporting our schools and our valued J-1 visa teachers,

Christine Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 10:25:13 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MARK ANTHONY T. DOMINGO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Mark Domingo, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB1840. I am currently serving as a teacher in Maui District under a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa.

As a J-1 educator, I moved across the world to share my expertise and cultural heritage with the keiki of Hawai‘i. However, the current misalignment between my federal visa (which allows for up to five years of service) and the State’s permit limitations creates a "ticking clock" that benefits no one. HB1840 provides a crucial fix by aligning the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) permits with the full duration of our J-1 visas.

A personal perspective, in my classroom, my students have become my second family. They don't just see me as a "visiting teacher"; they see me as their mentor and a stable figure in their daily lives. Under the current three-year limit, I would be forced to leave these students just as we have built deep trust and as I have fully mastered the nuances of the Hawai‘i Department of Education system.

In addition, from a fiscal perspective, HB1840 is a common-sense efficiency measure. The State of Hawai‘i already invests heavily in our onboarding and integration. Forcing a qualified educator to leave after three years when federal law permits five results in a poor return on that investment. Every time a J-1 teacher is forced out early, the State must spend thousands of dollars more to recruit and train a replacement. This bill ensures that taxpayer dollars are used effectively by retaining the talent already in our classrooms. Teacher turnover is expensive. Research indicates that replacing a single teacher can cost a district upwards of **\$20,000 to \$30,000** when accounting for recruitment, hiring, and lost productivity. By extending the term of existing, proven teachers, HB1840 prevents the State from having to spend these funds to fill the same position every three years. Also, Hawai‘i spends millions on "hard-to-staff" salary differentials (ranging from **\$3,000 to \$10,000+ per year**) to fill vacancies in rural areas like Lāna‘i or Moloka‘i. J-1 teachers often fill these exact roles. By retaining these teachers longer, the State stabilizes its workforce in high-need areas without needing to increase the "bounty" for new recruits.

Finally, passing this bill means, it prevents unnecessary teacher turnover in a state already facing a chronic teacher shortage. It recognizes the high-level credentials and years of experience that J-1 teachers bring from our home countries. By extending the emergency hire period from three to

five years, the bill gives educators like myself and many of my local colleagues the realistic timeframe needed to complete state-specific licensing requirements while working full-time.

In closing, I chose to come to Hawai‘i because I believe in the potential of its students. HB1840 allows me to fulfill that commitment and provides the structural support necessary to keep qualified, passionate educators in the classrooms where they are needed most.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1840. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your support of our schools and teachers.

Sincerely,

MARK DOMINGO

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 11:12:00 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 HD2 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section to the HRS requiring the Teacher Standards Board to adopt policies which would make it easier for foreign teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. The federal program offers foreign teachers an opportunity to teach in accredited schools in grades K - 12. The federal standards provide a three year term of the visa which can be extended if certain criteria are met to five years. HB1840 HD2 would require the Board to fully implement the federal program.

There are several hundred teachers in Hawaii under the J-1 program, dealing with our chronic, severe, teacher shortage. The rules of the program require the visa holders to make progress toward receiving a teaching certificate from the State. Since the benefits of the program to our K-12 educational system in Hawaii are significant, it makes sense to require the Board to maximize the availability of qualified candidates.

I urge you to Pass HB1840 HD2

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Gail Morrison, Honolulu

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 10:38:09 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure which will protect teachers in trining and increase our pool of educators.

Judith White, Kapaa

Member Kauai Indivisible

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 12:32:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse Hutchison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm writing in strong support. Thank you!

Testimony in Support of HB1840

April 3, 2026

Senate Committee on Ways & Means
State of Hawaii

Subject: Strong Support for HB1840 – Relating to Education

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB1840, which extends the allowable employment period for emergency hire teachers from three years to five years.

Hawai'i continues to face a persistent teacher shortage, and our schools depend on dedicated educators—many of whom are working diligently toward full licensure while actively serving in the classroom. Under the current three-year limitation, capable and effective teachers are often forced to leave just as they are gaining experience and nearing completion of their certification requirements. This creates unnecessary disruption for students, schools, and communities.

HB1840 provides a practical and thoughtful solution by extending the timeline to five years. This change recognizes the reality that completing licensure requirements while teaching full-time is both rigorous and time-consuming. Allowing additional time supports these educators in successfully completing their credentials while continuing to serve our keiki.

The extension aligns with the federal J-1 visa program timeline, ensuring consistency and maximizing the contributions of international educators who bring valuable cultural perspectives and teaching experience to Hawai'i's classrooms.

Extending the employment period will improve teacher retention, strengthen continuity of instruction, and foster deeper relationships between teachers, students, and the community.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Sonia Topenio
Community Volunteer

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 2:11:31 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 4:59:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
john savino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB1840 - extend J1 visa program

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 5:35:33 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Weygan-Hildebrand	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

Please support HB1840 (HD2) as a practical step to address Hawaii’s teacher shortage by keeping classrooms staffed now while building a stronger, long-term pipeline of licensed teachers.

To strengthen the measure, the State should prioritize recruiting highly qualified emergency hires and ensure that there is no disproportionate reliance on them in higher-needs schools. All students, regardless of where they attend school, deserve equitable access to educators who are well-prepared to teach our islands' children.

Decisions on this measure should remain student-centered—focused on ensuring every classroom has a capable teacher and every student now or in the future has a fair opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 12:08:06 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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.

Testimony In SUPPORT of HB1840 HD2 SD1

Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 6, 2026

Dear Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Jeremiah Brown, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB1840 HD2 SD1**, 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, and permits the Department of Education and charter schools to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five years rather than three, with mandatory Praxis preparation support in years four and five.

As an educator who works closely with immigrant students, I have seen the positive impacts of teachers who share students' culture and language. In addition to that, the teachers here on J-1 visas are experienced, knowledgeable, and effective educators.

Hawai'i's teacher shortage is chronic, and the J-1 visa program is one of the most effective tools we have to address it. Three hundred sixty-five internationally certified educators currently serve in 101 public schools statewide. But a critical barrier remains: Hawai'i's 3-year emergency hire limit cuts off J-1 educators before they can complete the full 5-year visa program, despite federal rules allowing the full term. The SD1 amendment restores the bill's original core purpose: HTSB must develop a formal permit pathway aligned to the J-1 visa duration, so educators can serve the full five years they are eligible for.

This matters for equity as much as workforce policy. 22.4% of our public school students identify as Filipino, but only 7.4% of educators share that background. J-1 educators bridge that gap, improving attendance, closing achievement gaps, and inspiring students to pursue careers in education. The mandatory Praxis support in years 4 and 5 ensures this is a genuine pathway to licensure, not a permanent workaround. States like Florida, Indiana, Ohio, and Texas already provide full 5-year visiting international educator permits. This bill brings Hawai'i in line with that standard while investing in the teachers who are already in our classrooms and the students who depend on them.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB1840 HD2 SD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Brown
Waialua, Oahu

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 4:59:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am writing in very strong support of this very important legislation for all of the aforementioned reasons stated as both the short and long-term solutions that will contribute to a strengthening Hawai'i for everyone. Mahalo Nui Loa for your consideration. Aloha.

Date: April 6, 2026

Time: 10:32am

Location: 211

Committee: WAM

TO: Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Barbara Oura Tavares

DATE: April 4, 2026

RE: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of HB1840, HD2, SD1 - Teacher Licensing

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

My name is Barbara Oura Tavares, and I am the Principal of Lihikai Elementary School on the island of Maui. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of HB1840, HD2, SD1 (SSCR 3260), which would allow the Department of Education to hire unlicensed individuals as teachers on an emergency basis for five years, rather than the current three years.

This extension is a vital and reasonable alternative to help maximize our applicant pool and fill the many vacant K-12 teacher positions across our state. Developing and growing people—both students and teachers—is a responsibility I am privileged to have and take very seriously, as it is how I can help build a stronger, more robust community here on Maui. Supporting this bill allows us to protect the investments we have made in our educators.

Please consider the following impacts this bill will have on our schools, particularly on the neighbor islands:

- **Realistic Timelines for Certification:** Teaching full-time is an incredibly demanding job. This bill gives viable candidates the necessary time to acclimate to these demands while simultaneously studying and preparing for the multiple rigorous exams required to earn a Hawaii State Teachers License. Finding one's rhythm and becoming a highly effective educator takes time and effort.
- **Support for International J1 Teachers:** Neighbor island schools have increasingly come to rely on international J1 teachers. It is important to note that these professionals are fully licensed and trained in their home countries; however, their licenses are currently unrecognized by the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board. It takes time for foreign educators

to acculturate to life in a new country and to navigate a brand-new educational system.

- **Retention of Hardworking, Dedicated Staff:** At Lihikai Elementary, I currently have 13 J1 teachers. They are strong, resilient people who approach each day with a growth mindset, reflecting their intention and resolve to be successful, licensed teachers in Hawaii. I see them working diligently every single day to improve their craft, build their educational efficacy, and build strong relationships with students, families, and colleagues. They have become deeply valued members of our school community.

Unfortunately, under the current three-year limitation, we are facing a heartbreaking reality. I have teachers who are just shy of successfully completing their Praxis exams who will be forced to return to the Philippines this June. They are not leaving because they want to, but simply because the clock has run out on their emergency hire status.

These emergency-hired individuals are some of the most determined and hardest-working people I know, and they teach with so much heart. We have invested heavily in them—both in and out of the classroom—to support their journey. Sending them away when they are on the cusp of licensure is a loss for our students, our school, and our community.

Giving these educators five years instead of three will keep dedicated, experienced, and deeply invested teachers in our classrooms where they belong.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB1840, HD2, SD1. I strongly urge the committee to vote YES on this bill and the proposed provisions.

Thank you for your time, your public service, and your thoughtful consideration of these points.

Sincerely,



Barbara Oura Tavares

Principal, Lihikai Elementary School

Barbara.Oura_Tavares@k12.hi.us

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 10:07:12 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the committee:

My name is Ana Flores, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB1840 HD2 SD1, 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 HD2 SD1, 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 SD1.**

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Ana Flores

anaflores.mpa@gmail.com

HB-1840-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 10:50:16 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

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

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to support HB1840.

Younghee Overly, a member of Indivisible Hawaii