



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

Date: 02/10/2026

Time: 02:15 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1840, 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. Repeals 6/30/2031.

Department's Position:

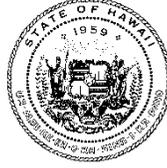
The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 1840, which would develop a visiting international educator permit that would align with the full duration of the federal J-1 teacher exchange program. Federal law allows J-1 teachers to serve for up to five years, yet Hawaii's current three-year permit can force authorized teachers out of classrooms early. Aligning state policy with the full J-1 term will help ensure students benefit from the complete period of service these educators are approved to provide.

Students benefit from stability when teachers can remain in classrooms without disruption, particularly in hard-to-staff schools. J-1 teachers are fully trained and licensed professionals in their home countries and are placed in high-need areas such as special education, secondary math, and science.

Having a visiting international educator permit that aligns with the full J-1 program also maximizes the State's investment in recruitment, onboarding, and support. Allowing teachers to serve the full authorized term improves workforce stability and ensures Hawaii's students receive the greatest benefit from these experienced educators.

The Department remains committed to working with the Legislature to develop comprehensive solutions to our educator workforce challenges.

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



STATE OF HAWAII

HAWAII TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

650 IWILEI ROAD, SUITE 268

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817

February 10, 2026

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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

DATE: February 10, 2025

TIME: 2:15 pm

LOCATION: Conference Room 309 and Video Conference

TITLE OF BILL: HB 1840 J-1 Visa Program; Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board; Visiting International Educator Permit

POSITION: Opposes HB 1840

Chair Woodson and Members of the House Committee on Education:

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) respectfully **opposes HB1840**, relating to education, 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.

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board does not have any of its teaching licenses based on where an applicant is applying from. International applicants are already able to apply and receive all the types of permits or licenses offered, according to the license requirements on each application that are already set in place. Setting the criteria for the requirements of each license is what the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board does, and why it is an attached agency to the Hawaii Department of Education, not part of it. This allows the HTSB to decide these criteria for license weighing in what is best to provide high quality teachers for our schools in Hawaii, without a conflict of interest. By state law, our Board makes the rules for licensure as defined by the Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) for HTSB. **This bill is unnecessary, and HTSB wants to be able to license, renew licenses, and add-fields to licenses, at our agency as we already do.**

HTSB knows this bill was good intentioned, but it is not the answer to the problem. What we all should be concerned with is how J1 visa holders are being taken advantage of by loan sharks who are offering them high interest loans in other countries to move to the U.S. with super high-interest loans (around 50% interest!) to pay for their flights, moving expenses to move to the U.S. to work, relocation fees, flights, etc. licensing, etc. to become a teacher in the U.S. At the National Conference for State Legislatures (NCSL) a few years back, there was a labor session and a resolution that specifically dealt the protecting those with J1 Visas. **They decided to add language to the NCSL resolution to protect J1 teachers from 3rd party "coyote" companies offering J1 Visa holders these high-interest loans.** They even charged them a licensing fee even when states, such as ours, **have no licensing fee.** They have had major problems in many other states before we even heard about it in Hawai'i, so they were letting us know. NCSL Passed this resolution with those

protections for J1 teachers. This is how our J1 visa holders should be protected. They need to be protected from these loan sharks.

Here are links to documents that explain more that were shared at NCSL. AFL-CIO [Use and Abuse of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Teacher Program — Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO](#) Note: Make sure you check out the articles they cite as well at the bottom of this report. Here is also a report from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) [Importing Educators: Causes and Consequences of International Teacher Recruitment](#) who is more aware of this problem as it hit them first. [Start on page 17 to see the fraud and the 'coyote' recruiting tactics that are being used.]

At HTSB we only have 4 Licensing Specialists that license everyone. Our licensing is free to all who apply, since we are now funded by the legislature for our operations. HTSB used to rely on licensing fees, but now we have ZERO licensing fees, since being funded by the legislature.

And again, HTSB does NOT charge licensing fees, so they do not have to pay that in addition to test fees. Other states, like Alaska, mentioned in the preamble do charge a licensing fee (About \$200), Nevada, and North Carolina.

In their last contract negotiations, HSTA already increased the pay for Emergency Hires in their last contract (for 2024-2027). Salaries for those with Emergency Hire Permits were at \$ \$45,593 per year, prior to this new contract, and now their salary was increased to \$50,325 per year for the 2023-2024, then \$51,835 per year for this school year 2024-25, then it will be \$53,649 for the 2026-27 SY. Through negotiations, HSTA has already bargained for those with Emergency Hire Permits to earn \$6,242 more this year (2024-2025) and even more this year. **However, once J1 applicants pass the Praxis tests (as well as those from other states with a teaching degree), they may gain their full license and be on the HIDOE Licensed Teacher pay level that started at \$53,390 per year 2024-25 SY, and then \$55, 250 per year in the 2026-27 school year.**

Lastly, there are for-profit companies out there, even in the U.S., offering "International Teacher degrees", and some of them are BAD actors.

This bill is unnecessary, and HTSB wants to be able to license, renew licenses, and add-fields to licenses, at our agency as we already do. We already license and permit teachers from other countries.

Therefore, we humbly ask this committee to **oppose** this bill.



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

February 10, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: **HB 1840 -- RELATING TO EDUCATION**

HEARING: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 @ 2:15 pm; Conference Room 309

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA supports HB 1840 with comments.

This bill is intended to strengthen Hawai'i's ability to use the BridgeUSA J-1 visa teacher program to address ongoing teacher shortages while also improving educator diversity and cultural exchange in our public schools. The bill does this by requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to create an alternative "visiting international educator permit" that is aligned to the duration of a teacher's J-1 visa program, recognizing that current licensing requirements can be costly and difficult to complete within the typical three-year visa period. By better aligning the permit with the visa timeframe, the measure aims to improve teacher retention, maintain instructional continuity for students, and allow Hawai'i to benefit from the full period of service these qualified educators are eligible to provide

This bill would help classrooms and students by improving stability and continuity in hard-to-staff schools by reducing turnover and disruptions when visiting international teachers are otherwise forced out before they can complete Hawai'i's full licensure process. It also supports better student outcomes by strengthening educator diversity and representation, which the bill notes can help close achievement gaps and improve attendance and behavioral outcomes, while giving students more relatable role models in the classroom. Finally, by reducing costly and time-intensive testing barriers (often exceeding \$1,000) for already-qualified international educators, the measure promotes a more equitable pathway that can keep effective teachers in Hawai'i's public schools longer and maximize the benefit of their service.

HB 1840 testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued.

In closing, this bill is a practical, time-limited step that gives the State a clearer framework to support qualified visiting international educators and the schools that rely on them. By setting up a defined permit option with a sunset date, the bill allows Hawai'i to test and refine this approach while keeping accountability in place.

Thank you for hearing HB 1840

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 6:03:56 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	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 hb1840 requiring the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a Visiting International Education Permit aligned with the duration of an educators J-1 visa. 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 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

House Committee on Education

Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair

Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

February 9, 2026

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic supports HB1840, which directs the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for visiting international educators to obtain permits aligned with the duration of their J-1 visas.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing immigrant justice across Hawai'i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy, TLC welcomes and commends the fair and transparent pathway this bill will create for qualified noncitizen professionals to access stability and contribute fully to Hawai'i's schools and communities during their authorized stay.

HB1840 recognizes the important role international educators play in strengthening Hawai'i's educational system. J-1 educators are experienced, trained professionals who are often placed in hard-to-fill positions and schools facing persistent staffing shortages. Currently, Hawai'i's three-year emergency hire permit often forces effective J-1 teachers to leave prematurely, disrupting student learning, especially in rural and neighbor island schools.

HB1840 addresses this challenge by allowing permits to remain valid for the duration of an educator's J-1 exchange program participation - reducing unnecessary procedural barriers and legal uncertainty, while promoting instructional continuity. International teachers gain greater clarity and security, and students benefit from the full term of service these teachers are authorized to provide.

TLC urges the Committee to pass HB1840 to support workforce stability for our schools, strengthen educational continuity for our students, and promote fair treatment and peace of mind for our visiting international educators.

Sincerely,

Christina Sablan

Community & Policy Advocate



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

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

In SUPPORT of HB1840

Relating to Education

Hearing: Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 2:15 PM (EDN), Room 309 & Videoconference

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

My name is Liza Ryan Gill, testifying on behalf of the **Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)**, a coalition of immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations working statewide to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen our shared future. HCIR respectfully submits this testimony **in strong support of HB1840**.

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 HB1840 represents an important step toward ensuring that Hawai‘i’s education system serves all students fairly and effectively.

HB1840 supports educational policies that recognize the diverse realities of Hawai‘i’s students and families, including those from immigrant and mixed-status households. When students feel safe, supported, and valued in their learning environments, they are better able to succeed academically, participate fully in school life, and contribute positively to their communities. Conversely, barriers to access, instability, or exclusionary practices undermine not only individual student outcomes but the strength of our public education system as a whole.

For immigrant and migrant families, schools are often the most trusted public institutions. They are places where children develop skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Policies that strengthen inclusivity, clarity, and access in education help ensure that no child is left behind because of language, background, or family circumstances. HB1840 advances these goals by reinforcing Hawai‘i’s commitment to educational equity and student well-being.

Importantly, strong educational policy is also sound public policy. Investments in inclusive and supportive education systems lead to higher graduation rates, a more skilled workforce, and stronger communities. When students are empowered to learn and thrive, Hawai‘i benefits socially, economically, and culturally.

For these reasons, the **Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights respectfully urges the Committee to PASS HB1840**.



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

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

With gratitude,

Liza Ryan Gill

Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:49:38 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mala Wingerd	Indivisible: Active Member - Local, State, & National	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally, as a retired teacher/professor, and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill



Committee on Education
Chair Justin Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica

February 10, 2026, 2:15 pm 309 via Videoconference
HB1840 J-1 Visa Program, Teacher Standards Board

TESTIMONY

Judith Mills Wong, Legislative Committee, Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN)
Support for HB1840 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters **supports HB1840**. This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 would require the Board to fully implement the federal program, including five years of eligibility.

The League believes levels of government share the responsibility to provide an equitable, quality public education for all children from pre-K through grade 12. A quality public education is essential for a strong, viable, and sustainable democratic society and is a civil right.

There are several hundred teachers in Hawaii under the J-1 program, helping us to deal 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 2:15 pm
Via Videoconference
Conference Room 309
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, Rep. Amato 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**, 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 would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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 would require the Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

House Bill 1840 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 turnover and building more integrated school communities. For this reason, Roots Reborn respectfully requests that you vote **in support of HB 1840**.

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*



LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

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

Here is a written testimony in support of HB100 or SB123 bill as Ma. Arriesa B. Tejano, 5th Grade Teacher at Kahakai Elementary School:

Testimony in Support of HB100 or SB123.

To the Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

I, Ma. Arriesa B. Tejano, 5th Grade Teacher at Kahakai Elementary School, is writing to express my wholehearted support for HB100 or SB123, I have seen firsthand the benefits that international visiting teachers bring to our classrooms and our students.

The current requirements for international visiting teachers to obtain a teaching license in Hawaii can be a significant barrier to entry, resulting in unnecessary exams and paperwork that can be daunting. HB100 or SB123 seeks to eliminate these unnecessary hurdles, allowing international visiting teachers like myself to focus on what matters most: providing high-quality education to our students.

By granting international visiting teachers an extended emergency hire permit, we can ensure that our students receive consistent and high-quality instruction from experienced educators who are passionate about teaching. This is especially important for our students who may not have the same access to educational resources or opportunities as their peers in other parts of the world.

Furthermore, extending the stay of international visiting teachers for 5 years will provide our students with the consistency and stability they need to thrive academically. It will also allow us to build stronger relationships with our students and their families, leading to better academic outcomes and a more positive school culture.

I urge you to pass HB100 or SB123, which will not only benefit international visiting teachers but also our students, schools, and communities. By supporting this bill, we can attract and retain top-notch educators from around the world, providing our students with the best possible education and setting them up for success in an increasingly globalized world.

Mahalo for considering my testimony. I look forward to working with you to make HB100 or SB123 a reality.

Sincerely,

Ma. Arriesa B. Tejano
5th Grade Teacher
Kahakai Elementary School
Kailua-Kona, Big Island, Hawaii

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:14:38 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Freddie Abulencia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm Freddie Abulencia, and this is my third year participating in a cultural exchange program as an international teacher. One of my goals is to promote cross-cultural collaboration with my colleagues and equip students with global perspectives. As a J1 teacher, I strongly support HB1840, which requires the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board to develop an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit aligned with the duration of the educator's J-1 visa program. This will help international teachers complete the 5-year program and maximize their contributions as international educators. This bill ensures strong classroom stability and continuity, benefiting learners through deeper cultural exchange and enhanced global awareness. Mahalo!

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:05:09 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Good day! I'm a teacher hired under emergency hire permit and a J1 Teacher.

I am writing this testimony in strong support of expanding the Emergency Hire Teacher License validity from three years to five years. I offer this not only from my personal experience, but from the lived reality of many international and J-1 teachers who are committed to serving students with excellence while navigating an extremely demanding licensure process.

I am currently a J-1 teacher who is deeply eager and fully committed to teaching for five years. However, the present three-year emergency hire window is often not enough to complete all licensure requirements, particularly the Praxis examinations. This is my second year. I take Praxis test every year, and I passed 2 out of the 5 tests. I can remember the moment of preparations for the test, after preparing my lesson for the next day, I will endeavor my time reviewing the materials for the Praxis and will go to bed 2:30 in the morning. This is a concrete example of an obstacle that I personally encountered. I am not complaining in somehow but I am speaking on my personal struggle to become license. This action shows my eagerness to get license but it seems HTSB has no heart and can't acknowledge our contribution as international teacher. That after 3 years of giving our best in the classroom we will be nowhere to be found. I can personally say that the computer-based test is difficult because even some local teachers are not passing the test. I think from the ratio of 10 promising educators who will take the Praxis, only 3 will successfully hurdle the exam. Another, there was a time that my praxis score was cancelled where in I paid almost \$200 for it. I negotiated if I can retake the test or my payment will be refunded or can I take the exam without waiting for another 28 days, the ETS denied my appeal. However, if time will be expanded, I can definitely say that the 5 years' time will be reasonable enough to get license.

The obstacles are real and layered: limited testing schedules, financial cost of multiple exams, adjustment to a new curriculum and assessment framework, visa responsibilities, cultural transition, and the full workload of being a classroom teacher. Preparing for multiple Praxis tests while teaching full time in a new educational system is not simply difficult — it is overwhelming. Extending the emergency license to five years would not lower standards; it would create a realistic and humane pathway to meet them.

I come to this role with strong professional foundations. I hold an advanced degree earned in my home country and bring 12 years of teaching experience in the Philippines. These years were not passive service — they were years of active classroom leadership, curriculum work, student

mentorship, and instructional growth. Last school year, my principal evaluated my performance as Highly Effective Teacher, affirming the quality of my instruction, classroom environment, and professional practice. These outcomes demonstrate that emergency hire teachers like myself are not unprepared — we are already contributing meaningfully to student success while completing additional licensing steps.

If the goal is to retain committed, high-quality educators for the benefit of students and schools, then policy must recognize both standards and circumstances. Empathy and rigor are not opposites — they can work together. Expanding the emergency hire license to five years acknowledges the real barriers teachers face while honoring demonstrated effectiveness, prior qualifications, and proven classroom impact.

I respectfully urge the **HTSB** to consider these factors with compassion and practicality. Many of us are not asking for shortcuts — we are asking for sufficient time to meet the requirements properly while continuing to serve students well. We are ready to teach, ready to grow, and ready to stay — if given a fair and realistic opportunity to do so.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:36:36 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Raymart Jayson M. Fundal	Special Education Teacher	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TO: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair (Committee on Education) **TO:** Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair (Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce) **AND:** Members of the Committees

DATE: February 8, 2026

RE: STRONG SUPPORT for HB1840 - Relating to Education; J-1 Visa Program; Visiting International Educator Permit

Aloha Chair Woodson, Chair Nakashima, and Members of the Committees,

My name is **Raymart Jayson M. Fundal**. I am a dedicated Special Education Teacher currently serving in my third year of teaching in Hawaii’s public school system.

I am writing to you today with a heavy heart but a hopeful spirit to express my **strong support** for **HB1840**. I humbly ask and implore you to pass this measure, which would align the Visiting International Educator permit with the duration of the federal J-1 visa program (5 years).

The Professional Need: Stability for Special Education Students As a Special Education teacher, my students require consistency, trust, and routine more than anyone else. Every time a teacher leaves due to licensure hurdles or visa misalignment, these students suffer. By streamlining the state permit to match our 5-year federal visa, you ensure that I can remain in the classroom focusing on my students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) rather than worrying about administrative barriers that might cut my service short.

The Personal Reality: The Financial Burden I want to be transparent about the reality of being a J-1 teacher. To come here and serve the children of Hawaii, **I paid approximately \$13,000 USD in placement and processing fees.**

This was a massive investment and a leap of faith. Now, in my third year of teaching, **I am still in debt.** I am still paying off the cost of just getting here.

The reality of living in Hawaii is that the cost of living is incredibly high, and it does not always match the salary we receive. We are barely making ends meet. My goal is to complete the full 5-year term allowed by the J-1 program. This timeline is essential for me to:

1. Finally pay off the debt incurred to come here.
2. Provide for my family back home, which is the reason I made this sacrifice.
3. Ensure my time here is financially viable, rather than leaving with a net loss.

Conclusion If our permits are not streamlined to match our 5-year visas, the uncertainty and potential loss of employment would be devastating financially. It would mean taking on massive debt to serve Hawaii's keiki, only to leave with nothing to show for it.

I am begging you to see us not just as temporary workers, but as dedicated educators who have sacrificed greatly to be here. Please pass HB1840 to give us the security we need to finish our contracts, pay our debts, and continue serving the special needs students who rely on us.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for hearing my plea.

Sincerely,

Raymart Jayson M. Fundal
Special Education Teacher
Kainalu Elementary School
808-286-8642
rjmunifundal060596@gmail.com

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:50:20 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leo Martus	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB1840 and related bills addressing teacher retention, permit duration, and licensure pathways. I am a J-1 teacher currently teaching in Hawai‘i, and I am deeply committed to serving students and schools in this state. However, under the current system, J-1 teachers are given only three years to remain in Hawai‘i if we do not pass the Praxis within that timeframe. While the intent of maintaining high standards is understandable, the reality on the ground makes this timeline extremely challenging and, for many capable teachers, unrealistic.

Living and working in Hawai‘i presents unique hardships for J-1 teachers. We are far from our families and support systems, adjusting to a new culture, curriculum, and assessment expectations while teaching full-time. At the same time, the cost of living in Hawai‘i is extraordinarily high, making it difficult to save money or invest in repeated Praxis testing, preparation materials, and licensure fees. Before even arriving in Hawai‘i, many of us spent significant personal funds on placement fees, visa processing, credential evaluations, relocation, and initial living expenses. These financial and emotional pressures compound the difficulty of meeting licensure requirements within only three years.

Extending permit duration and creating more flexible licensure pathways, as proposed in HB1840, would be a meaningful step toward retaining dedicated teachers who are already serving Hawai‘i’s students. Many J-1 teachers are effective, hardworking, and deeply invested in their school communities, yet are at risk of being forced to leave not because of poor performance, but because of rigid timelines that do not reflect real-world challenges. Supporting this bill would not lower standards—it would provide fairness, stability, and a realistic opportunity for committed educators to succeed, remain in Hawai‘i, and continue contributing to the long-term strength of our public education system.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:46:38 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cherie Mae Pablo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing to support HB1840. I am an international teacher currently teaching in Hawaii, and this bill is very important to me and many other teachers like me.

Right now, some international teachers have teaching permits that end before their J-1 visa ends. This is stressful and confusing. Teachers who are doing their jobs well are sometimes forced to stop teaching even though they are allowed to stay in the U.S. and want to continue helping students.

When teachers have to leave early, schools struggle to find replacements, and students lose consistency. This is especially hard for students who need routine, support, and stable relationships with their teachers.

HB1840 fixes this problem by allowing teaching permits to match the length of the J-1 visa. This makes sense. It helps teachers stay, helps schools keep staff, and helps students continue learning without interruption.

I respectfully ask you to pass HB1840. This bill supports teachers, schools, and most importantly, Hawaii's students.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:35:09 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marie Ruth B. Gubatan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am a Special Education teacher employed under an Emergency Hire Permit in Hawai‘i. I am writing in support of HB 1840, which seeks to provide greater stability and flexibility in teacher permitting.

Emergency hire special education teachers are already working directly with students who have diverse and complex needs, ensuring compliance with IEPs, collaborating with service providers, and maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment. Granting a five-year permit would allow teachers like myself the necessary time and stability to complete licensure requirements while continuing to provide uninterrupted, high-quality services to our most vulnerable learners.

I respectfully urge your support of HB 1840.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Marie Ruth B. Gubatan

Emergency Hire Special Education Teacher

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:08:58 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jezreel Baldonado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is **Jezreel Baldonado**, and I am a **J-1 international teacher currently teaching in Hawai‘i**. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to teach here, and I write in support of **HB1840** because it reflects a thoughtful understanding of the realities faced by visiting educators and the students we serve.

I came to Hawai‘i through the J-1 exchange program with the intention of contributing meaningfully for the full duration of my program. Teaching here has meant building relationships with students, learning their strengths and needs, and creating consistent routines that help them feel supported and confident in the classroom. I am thankful to the Hawai‘i State Department of Education and my school for welcoming me and trusting me with the education of their students.

While I am fully authorized at the federal level to teach for several years, the current state licensing process presents challenges for J-1 educators. The requirements are designed for permanent licensure, yet visiting teachers must complete them within a limited and often compressed timeframe while simultaneously adjusting to a new education system, curriculum, and community. This process can be complex, costly, and difficult to navigate within the scope of a temporary exchange program.

HB1840 offers a practical solution to this misalignment. Establishing a visiting international educator permit aligned with the duration of the J-1 visa, the bill acknowledges that international teachers are already carefully screened, credentialed, and hired based on Hawai‘i’s instructional needs. Aligning the permit with the visa allows educators and schools to plan with clarity and focus on teaching rather than administrative hurdles.

In the classroom, stability makes a difference. At the beginning of the year, some students were hesitant to participate or unsure of expectations. Over time, as routines became familiar and trust developed, those same students began to engage more confidently and take academic risks. That growth happens because students know who will be there each day. Policies like HB1840 help preserve that continuity so learning can progress without disruption.

This bill supports students, schools, and educators alike. It promotes retention, instructional consistency, and classrooms where teachers can fully invest in their work. HB1840 does not

lower standards—it simply creates a permit pathway that matches the purpose and timeline of visiting international educators.

I respectfully ask for your support of **HB1840** and thank you for your continued commitment to Hawai‘i’s public education system.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jezreel Baldonado

J-1 International Teacher from the Philippines

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:58:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zara Jane Molato MARALIT	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators and Representatives,

I am currently a J-1 teacher in Hawai‘i. I arrived on October 12, and although I am still new to the state, I would like to share how policies that allow J-1 teachers to serve for up to five years would be a tremendous help to educators like me.

As a J-1 teacher hired through an agency, coming to Hawai‘i required a significant financial investment. Before even stepping into the classroom, I had to cover agency fees, visa-related expenses, relocation costs, and other out-of-pocket payments. On top of this, there is added pressure to pass required licensure exams such as the Praxis. Each attempt involves additional fees, and failing an exam not only affects licensure—it also creates financial and emotional stress for J-1 teachers who are already adjusting to a new country, school system, and culture.

The possibility of being able to teach in Hawai‘i for up to five years provides much-needed stability. It gives J-1 teachers enough time to recover from initial expenses, improve professionally, and fully focus on supporting students without the constant worry of time limitations and financial strain. Extending this opportunity allows teachers to grow into their roles, strengthen classroom instruction, and become more effective members of their school communities.

Although I am new, I am deeply committed to serving Hawai‘i’s students. Policies that support J-1 teachers help reduce teacher turnover and ensure that students benefit from consistent, dedicated educators who want to stay and contribute long-term.

I respectfully urge you to consider supporting these measures, as they provide meaningful relief to J-1 teachers while also addressing the ongoing teacher shortage across the state.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

TO: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair (Committee on Education)
TO: Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair (Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce)
AND: Members of the Committees

DATE: February 9, 2026

RE: STRONG SUPPORT for HB1840 – Relating to Education; J-1 Visa Program; Visiting International Educator Permit

Aloha Chair Woodson, Chair Nakashima, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Farah Nichole Balisi, and I am currently in my first year as a dedicated Special Education Teacher within Hawaii's public school system. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1840, which seeks to align the State's Visiting International Educator permit with the five-year duration of the federal J-1 visa program.

Ensuring Stability for Hawaii's Keiki

In the realm of Special Education, consistency is the foundation of student progress. My students rely on established routines and deep bonds of trust to succeed. When administrative misalignments force qualified teachers to leave prematurely, it is the students who bear the brunt of that instability. Extending the state permit to five years ensures that I can continue focusing on my students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) without the looming threat of a shortened service term.

The Economic Reality of International Educators

While I am deeply committed to my role, the financial reality of serving as a J-1 teacher is significant:

- **Upfront Investment:** I invested approximately \$13,000 USD in placement and processing fees to bring my expertise to Hawaii.
- **Ongoing Debt:** Entering my third year of service, I am still working to pay off the debt incurred just to begin my employment here.
- **Cost of Living:** High living expenses in Hawaii, coupled with the responsibility of supporting family back home, make the full five-year term a financial necessity.

Without this alignment, international educators face the risk of leaving Hawaii with a net financial loss, despite years of dedicated service to our community.

Conclusion

I ask you to view this bill not just as a policy change, but as a commitment to the educators who have made immense sacrifices to serve Hawaii's children. Matching our permits to the five-year federal visa provides the stability we need to fulfill our contracts, resolve our financial obligations, and—most importantly—provide uninterrupted support to the special needs students who rely on us.

I humbly urge the Committees to pass HB1840. Thank you for your time, your leadership, and the opportunity to testify on this vital matter.

Sincerely,

Farah Nichole B. Balisi
Special Education Teacher
Puuhale Elementary School
Farahnicholebalisi@gmail.com

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:53:22 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christa Anna Maria Villaran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an individual under the J-1 visa program, this program has helped us greatly in our career path in education. At first, this opportunity was never an option because it is difficult for us to leave our families and be away from them for a long period of time. However, as the cultural exchange program broadened our expertise, we came to realize that we can help change the lives of future generations.

As a special education teacher in Hawai‘i, we are required to balance instructional responsibilities, student behavior management, and the facilitation of meetings that directly support student growth. With the current requirement to pass the Praxis Exam within three years, preparing for the exam has become extremely challenging. By the time the workday ends, there is often very little mental or physical energy left to dedicate to studying due to the demands of our profession.

Granting an extension of the emergency teaching license permit for five years without the immediate requirement of the Praxis exam would provide meaningful benefits to educators participating in this cultural exchange program. This flexibility would allow us to focus our energy on what truly matters—effective instruction, student progress, and meaningful collaboration with families, colleagues, and support teams.

More importantly, this bill would offer educators the stability, encouragement, and professional respect needed to continue serving our students with dedication and consistency. Reducing the pressure of a high-stakes exam allows teachers to invest more fully in their classrooms, refine their instructional practices, and provide higher-quality support to students with diverse needs. It also promotes teacher retention, ensuring continuity for students who rely on stable relationships and consistent educational support.

We sincerely hope this bill will be passed as a form of assistance, support, and recognition of the contributions educators willingly bring to the Hawai‘i education system. This extension would not only empower teachers to succeed professionally, but it would also strengthen the learning experiences of the haumāna of the Hawai‘i community—today and for years to come.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:28:47 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rhonel Bandiola	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1840 to extend the emergency hire permit from three to five years. While I have been teaching in a Hawaii classroom, particularly in Kihe, i for seven months, I bring with me a decade of professional experience from the Philippines, which has equipped me with the classroom management skills, content depth, and engaging pedagogies that my students respond to so well. This bill is vital because it provides the continuity our students deserve. For the Filipino students in my classes, my presence is more than just academic; it is a connection to their roots. Through our "talk stories" and shared cultural values, they see their heritage honored in the classroom, fostering a sense of belonging that is essential for their success. By extending this permit, you are ensuring that these students do not lose a stable, experienced mentor just as these critical bonds are being formed.

Beyond the local connection, my role as an international educator opens a window to the world for all my students. They are deeply curious about life in Southeast Asia, and our discussions about different educational systems and cultural values have sparked a newfound global awareness in them. For instance, after a lesson on the Caste System, a student shared with me how moved she was to realize the ongoing struggle for equity in the world, stating she felt a new motivation to advocate for equal access for all. This is the heart of the J-1 exchange—turning history lessons into calls for empathy and social responsibility. Extending this permit to five years allows experienced teachers like myself to fully integrate into our school communities and continue inspiring Hawaii’s keiki to become informed, compassionate global citizens. I urge you to pass HB1840 to support the stability and diversity of our educational workforce.

Aloha!

I am Berly Ann G. Cular, a J-1 Cultural Exchange Teacher currently teaching 8th Grade Math at Lahaina Intermediate School in Maui. I am honored to testify in strong support of the International Visiting Teacher License Bill, which would provide much-needed recognition and stability for international educators like myself, who are dedicated to serving Hawaii's students.

I have been teaching for 20 years, with extensive experience in mathematics education in the Philippines. Through rigorous training, professional development, and classroom practice, I have developed effective teaching strategies that not only enhance students' mathematical skills but also foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and a growth mindset. Since arriving in Hawaii, I have worked hard to bridge learning gaps, build students' confidence in math, and create an inclusive, culturally responsive learning environment.

While I am fully willing to take the Praxis exam, I firmly believe that my credentials, training, and years of experience should also be valued. International teachers like me have already met high standards in our home countries, and we continue to demonstrate excellence in our teaching practices here in Hawaii. By supporting this bill, you acknowledge the contributions we bring and provide us with the opportunity to continue making a difference in our students' lives.

Additionally, extending the teaching period to a maximum of five years is a crucial step in supporting international educators. The impact we make does not happen overnight—it takes time to build relationships, adapt to the educational system, and contribute meaningfully to student learning. Allowing us to stay for up to five years means we can further strengthen our teaching, mentor students effectively, and contribute to the long-term success of Hawaii's schools.

Hawaii faces an ongoing teacher shortage, and international educators help fill this gap with dedicated, highly trained professionals who bring valuable perspectives to the classroom. By passing this bill, you are not only recognizing our commitment but also ensuring that students continue to receive high-quality instruction from passionate and experienced educators.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony. I urge you to support this bill, as it will not only benefit international teachers but also strengthen the entire education system in Hawaii. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

BERLY ANN G. CULAR

Math 8 Teacher

Lahaina Intermediate School

Maui, Hawaii

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:17:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Joy Da-ao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Proposed Testimony in Support of the Bill (with Amendment)

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

My name is Mary Joy, and I am a J-1 teacher currently serving under an emergency permit in the State of Hawai‘i. I am here today to express my strong support for this bill, with one important recommendation: that emergency permit teachers be allowed to renew after three years, rather than be limited by a rigid five-year requirement without renewal flexibility.

J-1 teachers like myself came to Hawai‘i to help address the ongoing teacher shortage, especially in hard-to-fill classrooms. We are not here temporarily in our commitment—we are here to serve students, support schools, and grow professionally as educators. Many of us teach full-time, handle the same responsibilities as fully licensed teachers, and consistently demonstrate dedication to our students and school communities.

While we fully support the goal of meeting licensure requirements, including the Praxis examination, the reality is that many J-1 teachers face significant challenges. These include adapting to a new education system, cultural transitions, and balancing full teaching loads while preparing for high-stakes exams. Allowing renewal after three years provides reasonable time for teachers to grow, prepare, and succeed—without disrupting student learning or school stability.

We want to be very clear: we are committed to completing the Praxis requirements. We are willing and open to taking the Praxis yearly, if required, as a way to show continued progress and accountability. A three-year renewal does not reduce standards—it supports teachers while still holding us responsible for meeting them.

Strict limits without renewal flexibility may unintentionally push out dedicated, effective teachers who are already serving Hawai‘i’s students well. This would further worsen the teacher shortage and negatively impact classrooms that rely on continuity, trust, and strong teacher-student relationships.

In closing, I respectfully ask the Legislature to support this bill with an amendment allowing renewal after three years, while still requiring continued progress toward Praxis completion. This balanced approach supports students, schools, and teachers—and strengthens Hawai‘i’s public education system.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and continued support of educators in Hawai‘i.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:13:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KARMELA FAJARDO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am currently serving as a teacher here in Hawai‘i under the J-1 program. I respectfully ask for your support in extending the emergency hire permit to five years.

Before coming to Hawai‘i, I was already a licensed professional teacher in the Philippines. I completed four to five years of higher education and passed our national licensure examination after years of consistent study and preparation. Becoming a teacher was never something I took lightly—it required discipline, financial sacrifice, and long-term commitment.

Coming here to teach was both a professional opportunity and a personal dream. However, the reality of transitioning to a new country has been more challenging than I expected. As a late arrival to Hawai‘i, I am still adjusting—not only culturally and professionally, but financially. I took out loans just to participate in the cultural exchange program. Placement fees, document processing, airfare, and relocation expenses were significant. Up to now, a large portion of my salary goes toward repaying those loans, covering the high cost of living in Hawai‘i, and paying for required renewals and professional expenses.

I understand that the Praxis examination is required for full licensure. I am not avoiding that responsibility. I am reviewing and doing my best to prepare. However, the content and structure of the exam are different from what I studied in my home country. It takes time to adjust to new standards, new terminology, and new expectations while also teaching full-time.

Although there is no limit to how many times the Praxis can be retaken, each attempt is costly. The exam fees and preparation materials add up quickly. I do not want to take the exam simply to comply with a deadline while feeling unprepared. I want to take it when I am mentally ready, academically confident, and financially stable enough to focus fully on doing my best.

It may be asked why, if I was able to take a loan to come here, I cannot immediately prioritize paying for licensure exams. The reality is that my first years here are focused on financial survival—repaying debt, adjusting to Hawai‘i’s cost of living, and stabilizing my daily life. Extending the emergency hire permit to five years would give educators like me breathing room. The first two to three years are often the most difficult. Having additional time would reduce the pressure of strict timelines and allow us to prepare properly rather than rush through the process under stress.

This extension would not lower standards. Instead, it would allow committed teachers to meet those standards thoughtfully and successfully. Stability also benefits students. When teachers are allowed to remain in their classrooms longer, we are able to build stronger relationships, better understand our school communities, and grow more confident in our practice.

As J-1 teachers, we are also required to return home under the 212(e) rule after completing the program. Extending the permit would allow us to maximize our service to Hawai'i before fulfilling that requirement. It would give us hope that even if our first years are financially tight and challenging, we still have time to grow, save, and complete our licensure journey with confidence.

I came to Hawai'i to serve, to learn, and to contribute meaningfully. I remain committed to meeting licensure requirements. I simply ask for reasonable time to do so in a way that sets me—and my students—up for long-term success.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 2:40:46 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileene Ladera	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good day. My name is Eileene Ladera, and I am a J-1 exchange teacher currently teaching in Hawaii. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of HB 1840.

As a J-1 teacher, I serve in the classroom every day alongside my American colleagues, working with students who depend on consistent, qualified, and caring educators. My role goes beyond teaching academic content—I support students’ social and emotional growth, collaborate with families, and contribute to a positive school culture.

HB 1840 is important because it supports fairness and stability for educators who are already actively serving in our schools. Policies that recognize and protect teachers help ensure continuity in the classroom, which directly benefits students. When teachers are supported, students receive better instruction, stronger relationships, and a more stable learning environment.

J-1 teachers help address ongoing teacher shortages and often serve in high-need schools. We bring dedication, global perspectives, and a strong commitment to our students. Many of us wish to continue serving the same schools and communities we have grown to love. HB 1840 helps create opportunities for schools to retain experienced teachers who are already trained, effective, and invested in student success.

Supporting HB 1840 is an investment in students, educators, and school communities. I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of this bill and to continue supporting policies that strengthen public education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Eileene Ladera

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 1:52:45 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support HB1840.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 6:47:38 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Bonk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN).

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.

Thank you.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 8:06:42 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janet Teare	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for supporting this bill to align the International Educators permit with the J-1 visa.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 8:22:16 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Kamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1840. I am submitting this as an individual and as a member of Indivisible Hawaii. Mahalo.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 11:21:17 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 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

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:01:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Support.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:17:42 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity.

Younghee Overly, a member of Indivisible Hawaii

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 1:37:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danielle Goren	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to show my support for HB1840 both as a resident of Lahaina, Hawai'i, and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill

Danielle Goren

Lahaina, Hawai'i

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 2:56:39 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:52:45 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Please support,

Judith White, Kapaa

Member, Kauai Indivisible

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:07:50 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Thank you

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:09:39 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Please support this sensible measure, which among other things helps address the critical teacher shortage in Hawaii schools. Thank you!

Committee on Education
Chair Justin Woodson, Vice Chair Trish La Chica

February 10, 2026, 2:15 pm 309 via Videoconference
HB1840 J-1 Visa Program, Teacher Standards Board

TESTIMONY

Stephen Munkelt, Legislative Committee, Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN)
Support for HB1840

Chair Fukunaga], Vice Chair Lee, and Committee Members:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill

Stephen Munkelt

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:42:15 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathryn Peterson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is an important bill. Thank you.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:01:11 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bruce Wingerd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a University Professor (Retired), I understand the needs of Hawaii's education programs include good qualified teachers to fill our classrooms. HB1840 will help to support this important need, without which our students will suffer.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:13:22 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Sylvester	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair

Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 2:15 pm

Via Videoconference

Conference Room 309

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1840 - RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, Rep. Amato 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 HB 1840**, 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.

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 would help remedy this situation and improve the pathway for longer retention of teachers on the J-1 visa program by adding a new Section 302A-802 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 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 would require the Teacher Standards Board to fully implement the federal program and facilitate visa extensions from three to five years.

House Bill 1840 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**.

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

Christine Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:17:36 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen Hester	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:38:33 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Elmer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the Bill to align the International Educators permit to align with the J-1 visa

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:07:13 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roberta Baker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for supporting this bill.

I am a memembr of Indivisible Hawaii.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:45:33 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

This program gives teachers an opportunity to share their skills in a new setting, grow professionally, and enrich classrooms with global perspectives. Teachers' time in the United States helps build mutual understanding and lifelong connections between educators and their host communities.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:15:58 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Estrella S Marin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Estrella Marin, as someone who lives in hawaii. I do support HB 1840. I also volunter with Indivisible of Hawaii.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:51:32 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mona Eisa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing you today in strong support of HB1840 as it relates to education. I am urging you to please pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Mona Eisa, Honolulu, HI

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 3:50:05 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I SUPPORT HB1840

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:56:16 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Kathryn Afable	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for supporting HB1840.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 5:19:51 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alicia Hedlesky	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

02/08/2026

Committee on Education

Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair

Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1840

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

My name is Alicia Hedlesky, a resident of Moloa'a, Kauai and a member of Indivisible Hawaii. I am writing to strongly support SB1840, which would help alleviate the teacher shortage in Hawaii.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify on this important issue,

Alicia Hedlesky

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:21:04 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN).

Mahalo, Gail Morrison

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:15:21 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 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

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:22:15 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1840

DS Matsunaga in Waimea, Hawaii Island

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:38:35 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Addressing critical teacher shortages should be of the highest priority for the Hawaii State Legislature. Currently there are too many barriers to obtaining teacher licensure for Hawaii residents and US Citizens, but there are even more barriers for international educators who would otherwise be able to help contribute and rectify the disadvantages that Hawaii's children are subject to due to lack of adequate numbers of qualified professionals in the teaching field. I support this bill and believe that if it passes the state will be much better off in both the short term and the long.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:50:43 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Collat	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill

To: Hawaii State House Committee on Education
Hearing Date/Time: Friday February 10, 2026, 2:15 pm
Place: Hawaii State Capitol, CR 309 & Videoconference
Re: Judith Ann Armstrong supports HB1840 Relating to Education

Dear Chair Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Vice Chair Rep. Trish La Chica and members of the Committee on Education

I, Judith Ann Armstrong, support HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith Ann Armstrong

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:54:38 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynda Suesue	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 1:56:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill

Karen Valasek

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 2:10:27 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 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

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 2:46:38 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vernadeth Salas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB1840

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Vernadeth Salas and I am a J-1 teacher currently teaching in Hawai‘i. I am writing to **strongly support HB1840**.

I support this bill because it will allow teachers like me to teach in Hawai‘i **without the stress of taking the Praxis exams and spending a large amount of money to pursue certification**. Preparing for these exams takes a lot of time, money, and energy. Instead of focusing on studying for tests, I want to focus on **planning lessons, helping students, and becoming a better teacher**.

Many J-1 teachers come to Hawai‘i with **significant debt** from our home countries. For our three-year stay, it is very difficult to save money and pay our debts in the Philippines while also covering our living expenses here. Visa sponsors also require many fees for monthly and yearly renewals, which adds to the financial burden.

It is very stressful to know that we are working hard, paying many fees, and still only allowed to stay in the United States for a short period of time. This bill would help reduce stress for international teachers and allow us to focus on teaching and supporting Hawai‘i’s students.

Thank you for considering my testimony and for supporting teachers and students in Hawai‘i.

Mahalo,

Vernadeth Salas

J-1 Teacher, Hawai‘i

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 4:20:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Romeo Grande Jr	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a J-1 visiting teacher from the Philippines currently participating in the Inter-Cultural Education Program in Hawaii. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to teach and serve Hawaii's students while engaging in this meaningful cultural exchange.

House Bill 1840 would be tremendous help to J-1 teachers by providing an alternative pathway for a visiting international educator permit that aligns with the duration of the J-1 Visa Program. Obtaining a state teaching license presents significant financial and logistical challenges for many of us, including the high cost of exams, limited preparation of time, some areas are not aligned with the content knowledge and pedagogy, barriers related to testing locations especially for teachers assigned to remote areas such as Lanai City.

This bill would offer much-needed support to international educators who are committed to meeting Hawaii's educational standards while contributing positively to our school communities.

Respectfully yours,

Romeo Grande Jr.

Lanai High and Elementary School

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 4:49:11 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB1840 both personally and as a member of the Indivisible Hawaii State Network (IHSN). This Bill would add a new Section 302A-802 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 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. Jane

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:54:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of the Bill Extending the EH Permit to Five Years

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

My name is Janine Briones, and I am a J-1 exchange teacher currently teaching Special Education in Hawai‘i. I am writing in strong support of the bill that would allow teachers to remain on an Emergency Hire (EH) Permit for up to five years.

Like many J-1 teachers, I came to Hawai‘i to help fill critical teacher shortages, especially in Special Education. Every day, I work with students who need consistency, stability, and long-term support. Building trust, understanding their learning needs, and working closely with families and school staff takes time. When teachers are forced to leave too soon because of permit limitations, students lose that continuity, and schools lose trained, experienced educators who are already serving their communities well.

Extending the EH Permit to five years would give teachers like me the opportunity to continue serving Hawai‘i’s students while we work toward full licensure. Many of us are actively taking required exams, completing coursework, and meeting all state requirements, but this process takes time—especially while teaching full-time in high-need classrooms. A longer permit period provides stability for schools, students, and teachers, and helps reduce constant turnover in hard-to-fill positions.

This bill is not just about helping teachers—it is about supporting students, especially those in Special Education who rely on consistent routines, familiar faces, and strong relationships with their teachers. Keeping committed educators in classrooms benefits the entire school community.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share my testimony, and thank you for considering this important measure.

Respectfully,

Janine Briones

J-1 Special Education Teacher

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:48:56 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gaye Chan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawai'i needs more teachers and this Bill would make it easier for international teachers to extend their visa status from three to five years. Good common sense.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:46:21 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan De Guia	Fern Elementary School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha our Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is Ryan G. De Guia, a J1 Teacher through Exchange Visitor Program. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1840. This bill is not just a policy, they are about the stability of the classrooms and the success of the Hawai'i students. These are also vital for addressing the teacher shortage and ensuring that our keiki have the stable, high-quality instruction they deserve. As far as I know, Under federal BridgeUSA rules, J-1 teachers like us are eligible for a five-year program. However, current state licensing often limits our ability to stay past three years because of our status as "emergency hire", this means we need to pass Praxis Exam in a given period of time to have a chance to stay longer. The requirement to pass multiple Praxis exams is a significant financial and emotional burden that does not always reflect our actual performance in a Hawai'i classroom.

I believe this bill correctly identifies that extending this limit from 3 to 5 years is one solution. It will allow teachers, like myself to fulfill our full exchange potential without being forced to leave just as we have hit our stride in the classroom. I also really want to stay longer in my school and witness the growth of my students without being forced to complete the licensing exam in a given period of time. But of course if time permits, the bill will give us even enough more time to prepare for our Licensing Exams to be able to become License Teacher in Hawai'i.

I love my students and the school community I serve. I urge you to pass HB1840 so that we will continue to give them our best for the full five years were authorized to be here. Mahalo!

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:52:02 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jody Weidemann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HAWAII is desperate for skilled educators. We need these educators to come here for our children's sake to achieve good educations to succeed in the world.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:51:51 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Helen Shirts	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:28:49 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chachie Abara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1840 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. Repeals 6/30/2031.

As someone who has seen the growth and the impact for J1 Teachers in Hawaii and who has personally was able to meet with J1 teachers, they are more than just temporary workers. They bring plethora of knowledge and cultural exchange for us.

Please consider this bill to pass.

HB-1840

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 11:55:58 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/10/2026 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lois Crozer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

So sad that we have to ensure visiting teachers are not rounded up and deported. This bill tries to protect the teachers.