



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

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1888, H.D. 1, RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

DATE: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 **TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 309

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

Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee:

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

The bill: (1) requires the Department of Education (DOE) and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers; (2) expands the offense of harassment to include the disruption or interference with the administration or functions of any school, school administration office, or school board; (3) elevates the penalty for harassment to a misdemeanor when the recipient is an educational worker; and (4) appropriates funds to the DOE and the State Public Charter School Commission (Commission) to establish one full-time equivalent legal advocate position to assist educational workers employed by the DOE or public charter schools in obtaining a temporary restraining order (TRO) under new sections 302A- and 302D- , Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

1. Incidents of Harassment Involving a "Potential Threat of Physical Harm"

New sections 302A- (d)(2) (page 3, lines 4-9) and 302D- (d)(2) (page 6, lines 12-18), HRS, require the DOE or public charter schools, respectively, to "[r]eport to the proper law enforcement authority within forty-eight hours all incidents of harassment submitted to the [DOE or public charter school] by an educational worker pursuant to subsection (b), **where the incident of harassment involves a potential threat of**

physical harm to the educational worker or another person." New sections 302A- (e) (page 5, lines 4-6) and 302D- (e) (page 8, lines 12-14), HRS, define "harassment" by reference to section 711-1106, HRS. Section 711-1106, HRS, however, does not expressly include a "potential threat of physical harm," although it does include conduct that would cause a person to reasonably believe that the actor intends to cause bodily injury.

To avoid ambiguity and ensure consistency with section 711-1106, HRS, the Department recommends a clarifying revision to new sections 302A- (d)(2) (page 3, lines 4-9) and 302D- (d)(2) (page 6, lines 12-18), HRS, as follows:

Report to the proper law enforcement authority within forty-eight hours all incidents of harassment submitted to the [department/public charter school] by an educational worker pursuant to subsection (b)[, ~~where the incident of harassment involves a potential threat of physical harm to the educational worker or another person~~];

(Suggested changes Ramseyered against the existing text of the bill and in bold.)

2. Assistance with Legal Actions by the DOE's or Commission's Legal Advocate

The bill requires the DOE and public charter schools to "[a]ssist educational workers with any legal actions that may arise from harassment, including providing assistance through the [DOE's/commission's] legal advocate in obtaining a temporary restraining order[.]" (Page 4, lines 6-9; page 7, lines 14-17.) Sections 4 and 5 of the bill appropriate funds for each entity to establish one full-time equivalent legal advocate position (page 8, line 15, through page 9, line 14).

Under Hawaii law, the term "legal advocate" is used in statutes referring to the legal advocate as being an attorney. See sections 346-234, 587A-16, HRS. In addition, section 28-8.3, HRS, generally provides that state departments may not employ or retain attorneys except as otherwise authorized by law. To avoid confusion regarding whether the advocate position constitutes the practice of law, the Department recommends removing the word "legal" from the term "legal advocate" on page 4, line 8; page 7, line 16; page 8, line 19; page 9, line 9; and report title page.

Additionally, to clarify that an advocate employed by the DOE or Commission is not engaging in the unauthorized practice of law, the Department recommends inserting a new section in the bill to amend section 605-14, HRS, as follows:

§605-14 Unauthorized practice of law. It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, association, or corporation to engage in or attempt to engage in or to offer to engage in the practice of law, or to do or attempt to do or offer to do any act constituting the practice of law, except and to the extent that the person, firm, or association is licensed or authorized so to do by an appropriate court, agency, or office or by a statute of the State or of the United States. Nothing in sections 605-14 to 605-17 contained shall be construed to prohibit the preparation or use by any party to a transaction of any legal or business form or document used in the transaction~~[-]~~, **or the preparation of any legal form or document for any complainant seeking a temporary restraining order as provided by sections 302A- or 302D- .**

3. Breadth of the Term, "Legal Actions"

Paragraph (5) of new sections 302A- (d) and 302D- (d), HRS, requires the DOE and public charter schools to "[a]ssist educational workers with any legal actions that may arise from harassment[.]" (Page 4, lines 6-7, and page 7, lines 14-15.) The Department is concerned that this phrase could be interpreted broadly to include representation in civil litigation or other proceedings beyond TRO assistance. To clarify scope and align with the recommendations in section 2, above, the Department suggests revising new subsection (d)(5) on page 4, lines 6-13, and on page 7, lines 14-21, as follows:

Assist educational workers ~~[with any legal actions that may arise from]~~ **subjected to** harassment, including providing assistance through the [department's/commission's] ~~[legal]~~ advocate in obtaining a temporary restraining order and reimbursing the educational worker for the costs incurred from serving temporary restraining orders related to the harassment, but not including the payment of attorney's fees or costs; and

(Suggested changes Ramseyered against the existing text of the bill and in bold.)

4. Source of the Harassment

The Department notes that the bill does not specify whether the harassment must come from a source outside of the DOE or public charter school. As written, the

provisions of this bill would apply to harassment by other employees. If this is not the Legislature's intent, the Department recommends clarifying the source of the harassment.

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



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 586-8126 Fax: (808) 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov

February 17, 2026

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

Ms. Martha Guinan, *Chair*
Ms. Susan Wood, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Dominique Anders
Ms. Kathie Awaya
Ms. Virginia Beringer
Mr. Will Carlson
Ms. Annette Cooper
Mr. Mark Disher
Ms. Nancy Gorman
Dr. Natalie Haggerty
Ms. Stacy Haitzuka
Ms. Mai Hall
Ms. Melissa Johnson
Ms. Tina King
Ms. Dale Matsuura
Ms. Cheryl Matthews
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Ms. Cherine Pai
Mr. Chris Pelayo
Ms. Kiele Pennington
Ms. Kau'i Rezentes
Ms. Rosie Rowe
Dr. Scott Shimabukuro
Mr. Herbert Taitingfong
Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Jasmine Williams

Ms. Helen Kaniho, *liaison to
the Superintendent*
Ms. Wendy Nakasone-Kalani,
*liaison to the military
community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Committee on Labor
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB1888, HD1 - RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF
EDUCATIONAL WORKERS

Dear Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee:

The Special Education Advisory Council, Hawaii's State Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **opposes** the amendments to HB1888, HD1 that 1) include the disruption or interference with the administration or functions of any school, school administration office, or school board in the offense of harassment, and 2) elevates the penalty for harassment to a misdemeanor when the recipient is an educational worker.

"Disrupts or interferes with the administration or functions of any school, school administration office, or school board" is not defined and subject to interpretation. While no one disputes that school personnel should be protected from assault or anyone making harassing threats to their personal safety or that of their families, SEAC does not believe disruptions to school or Board business rises to the level of a misdemeanor. Further, without clear definitions, adding this language to the current harassment statute could lead to misinterpretation or misuse of power. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) clearly prohibits schools from retaliating against parents of children with disabilities for advocating for their child's rights under IDEA. This includes any attempts to intimidate or discourage parents from participating in the process.

Existing harassment law provides a better vehicle for addressing harassment to educational workers. SEAC believes HB1888, HD1 is neither enforceable with the language cited above, nor is it necessary. Hawaii's existing harassment statute, HRS §711-1106, has clear definitions and ample case law to provide protection to victims of harassment while at the same time preserving the rights of citizens to engage in political expression.



The proposed classification of harassment of an educational worker law as a misdemeanor would impose significantly harsher penalties than the existing harassment law. In Hawaii, misdemeanors are punishable by up to 364 days in jail and a fine of up to \$2,000. Current harassment law, by contrast, is classified as a petty misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a fine of up to \$1,000. Even if a parent is ultimately cleared of the charge of committing harassment of an educational worker, he or she would have been significantly harmed financially and emotionally by being arrested, having to find legal counsel and child care for their children, etc.

SEAC is concerned that HB1888, HD1 will negatively impact parent/school partnerships and potentially harm students with disabilities. SEAC is made up of a majority of parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities. Many parents of children with disabilities, including a number of our SEAC members, are worried due to the vague language in HB1888, HD1 that they could be punished with a serious fine or jail time, if they exercise their legal right to advocate on behalf of their child with a disability. It has long been documented throughout the nation that special education parents in particular fear retaliation, if they speak up. This bill adds a chilling reminder of that threat and may silence many families from advocating for the individualized services and supports that their child needs to succeed.

Published data other than anecdotal reports has not been provided to the public to justify serious legal action against parents who disrupt or interfere with school business. SEAC believes the number of special education parents whose actions could be construed as interfering or disrupting school functions to be very small. We recommend that your Committee request data from the Department regarding the number of cases of this form of harassment, the types of actions, the responses to the actions, whether police reports or complaints were made, etc., so that you can analyze the extent of the need for an amendment to existing law as well as appropriate solutions.

For all the reasons stated above, SEAC urges your committee to seriously consider the negative impact this bill can have on families of students with disabilities. Hasty legislation without a foundation of well-analyzed data and clear definitions does not ensure either protection or justice.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns regarding this controversial and potentially harmful legislation.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
Chair



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

Date: 02/17/2026

Time: 09:00 AM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: LAB

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1888, HD1, RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers. Includes the disruption or interference with the administration or functions of any school, school administration office, or school board in the offense of harassment. Elevates the penalty for harassment to a misdemeanor when the recipient is an educational worker. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports the underlying goals of HB 1888, HD 1, to provide additional protections to its employees, but has some requested revisions.

The Department recommends limiting subsection (d)(5) to preclude civil lawsuits by revising that subsection as follows: "Assist educational workers with the service of temporary restraining orders that may arise from harassment to include representation by the Attorney General's Office."

For clarity with respect to leave in subsection (c), the Department recommends defining paid leave as follows: "Paid leave under this subsection may be satisfied through the use of accrued sick leave, vacation leave, administrative leave, or any other paid leave authorized by the employer, and shall not require the employer to provide additional paid leave beyond existing leave benefits."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to HB 1888, HD 1.



February 15, 2026

Position: **Support of HB1888 HD1**, Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers

To: Representative Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Representative Mike Lee, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Labor

From: Llasmin Chaine, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1888 HD1, Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers

Hearing: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 309, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women is committed to advancing the safety and health of girls and women. The Commission **supports HB1888 HD1** because it **addresses the persistent issue of harassment against educational workers, which disproportionately impacts women and can contribute to hostile work environments that undermine safety and wellbeing.**

By requiring the Department of Education and public charter schools to establish clear procedures for reporting and addressing harassment, this **bill takes meaningful steps toward ensuring** that educational workers have access to **safe and supportive workplaces**. The inclusion of disruption or interference with school functions in the definition of harassment recognizes the broad range of behaviors that can create unsafe conditions, and the elevation of penalties for harassment against educational workers reflects the seriousness of these offenses. These measures align with best practices for workplace safety and affirm the State's commitment to protecting those who serve in our schools.

The Commission respectfully recommends that the Department of Education and public charter schools engage in regular consultation with stakeholders, including frontline educational workers, to ensure that policies are responsive to real-world conditions. Clear communication and transparency in procedures will be essential to the bill's success. We appreciate the Legislature's attention to this critical issue and urge continued efforts to promote safe workplaces.

The Commission respectfully **urges this Committee to pass HB1888 HD1**. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

COMMITTEE ON LABOR
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair
Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 AM
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB1888, HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATIONAL WORKERS

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW **strongly supports** HB1888, HD1, which requires the Department of Education (“DOE”) and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers. This would include the disruption or interference with the administration or functions of any school, school administration office, or school board in the offense of harassment. This measure also elevates the penalty for harassment to a misdemeanor when the recipient is an educational worker.

We strongly believe that educational workers should feel assured that the DOE and public charter schools are committed to taking effective action against harassment in order to protect the rights and dignity of the hard-working public employees who are tasked with maintaining a positive learning environment for Hawaii’s students.

Given recent events and the apparent rise in incidents of harassment targeting educational workers, it seems evident, unfortunately, that legislation like this is necessary.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

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Andrea Eshelman
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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

Item: HB 1888, HD1 – Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:00 am, Room 309

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

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association believes that educational workers play a critical role in keeping our schools safe and supportive for children. When educators and staff face harassment or threats without clear protections or consistent response procedures, it affects not only employees but also students and school communities. As such, we ask that you **support H.B. 1888, HD1**.

The HSTA has been speaking on this topic for many years and applauds the efforts this session to examine how we can protect our teachers and staff at schools around the state. We appreciate the advocates who have worked on HB 1888's bill language for many years and find it important to mention that this piece of legislation creates clarity and accountability when harassment occurs and requires the Department of Education to act.

Since the pandemic, we've seen attacks on educational workers rise. According to a July 2024 article in Education Week, "57% of teachers now report that they are considering quitting or transferring specifically due to concerns about school climate and safety." Additionally, a Business Insider article from August 2025 shared that "26% of teachers reported experiencing physical violence from parents since the return to in-person school."

A school that is unsafe for a teacher or educational worker is, by definition, an unstable environment for a student. Protecting the worker is a prerequisite for protecting the learner. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to support H.B. 1888, HD1.

Mahalo



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Third Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Labor

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

February 17, 2026

H.B. 1888, H.D. 1 — RELATING TO THE SAFETY OF
EDUCATIONAL WORKERS

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of H.B. 1888, H.D. 1, which requires the Department of Education and public charter schools to take certain steps to report incidents of harassment and implement procedures for handling harassment of educational workers.

For several years now, the HGEA has expressed concern to the DOE about the escalation of violence against employees. We have demanded that both the DOE and Attorney General do more to protect and support employees instead of seeking first to avoid liability. Earlier this school year, a school administrator was brutally assaulted at an Oahu public high school. After the assault, we demanded in a letter to the Superintendent to know what steps the DOE intends to take to prevent such instances from occurring again in the future.

We support the intent of this bill as it also seeks to achieve what we have been demanding from the DOE. Educational workers should feel assured that their employer is committed to taking prompt and effective action against harassing conduct and those who engage in harassing behavior should be held accountable.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 1888, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 4:57:37 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Harassment and intimidation of education workers is unacceptable. This legislation is long overdue. I urge the committee to **SUPPORT** this bill!

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 7:12:18 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taren Taguchi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

Educational workers play a critical role in keeping our schools safe for children. When educators and staff face harassment or threats without clear protections or consistent response procedures, it affects not only employees but also students and school communities.

HB1888 is important because it creates clarity and accountability when harassment occurs. By establishing clear expectations for investigation, documentation, and response, the bill helps ensure that concerns are taken seriously and addressed consistently rather than handled informally or in isolation. This structure helps prevent situations from escalating and promotes safer, more stable school environments.

The lack of meaningful support when harassment occurs also takes a serious toll on the mental health and well-being of educational workers. When educators are fearful or burned out due to unresolved safety concerns, they cannot fully thrive in their roles. When educational workers are unable to thrive, neither will our students.

When the Department of Education is accountable for responding to and documenting harassment, schools are better equipped to support their staff and maintain a secure learning environment for students.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB1888 to help ensure safer schools for both educational workers and the children they serve.

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 7:21:21 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tara Taitano-Goo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

Educational workers play a critical role in keeping our schools safe for children. When educators and staff face harassment or threats without clear protections or consistent response procedures, it affects not only employees but also students and school communities.

HB1888 is important because it creates clarity and accountability when harassment occurs. By establishing clear expectations for investigation, documentation, and response, the bill helps ensure that concerns are taken seriously and addressed consistently rather than handled informally or in isolation. This structure helps prevent situations from escalating and promotes safer, more stable school environments.

The lack of meaningful support when harassment occurs also takes a serious toll on the mental health and well-being of educational workers. When educators are fearful or burned out due to unresolved safety concerns, they cannot fully thrive in their roles. When educational workers are unable to thrive, neither will our students.

When the Department of Education is accountable for responding to and documenting harassment, schools are better equipped to support their staff and maintain a secure learning environment for students.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB1888 to help ensure safer schools for both educational workers and the children they serve.

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:23:03 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Uemura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

Educational workers play a critical role in keeping our schools safe for children. When educators and staff face harassment or threats without clear protections or consistent response procedures, it affects not only employees but also students and school communities. As an educator responsible for students for my 30 year career in higher education, the responsibilities placed on those of us that dedicate our lives to the empowerment of our youth are immense. I come from a family of educators, my mother and my daughter, as well as other family members - we do not take this career lightly. Having to be responsible to keep our youth safe, involves knowing that we will also have the ability to stay safe.

HB1888 is important because it creates clarity and accountability when harassment occurs. By establishing clear expectations for investigation, documentation, and response, the bill helps ensure that concerns are taken seriously and addressed consistently rather than handled informally or in isolation. This structure helps prevent situations from escalating and promotes safer, more stable school environments.

The lack of meaningful support when harassment occurs also takes a serious toll on the mental health and well-being of educational workers. Having to be escorted to our vehicles, having to be extra cautious when out in public take a toll on our psyche. When educators are fearful or burned out due to unresolved safety concerns, they cannot fully thrive in their roles. When educational workers are unable to thrive, neither will our students. Having strong safety protocols protects all, including the youth we are responsible for.

When the Department of Education is accountable for responding to and documenting harassment, schools are better equipped to support their staff and maintain a secure learning environment for students.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB1888 to help ensure safer schools for both educational workers and the children they serve.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Deborah Uemura

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:07:12 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kera Wong-Miyasato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 8:19:52 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Les Murashige	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

This bill is a day late and a dollar short. Threats to administrators, teachers, coaches and even janitorial staff has been going on for years. It has been brought to the DOE attention on numerous occasions and initially the DOE, Hayashi, did not feel it was their responsibility. Yes. So I am totally in support of this bill as there are numerous educators who do not feel safe or protected by the DOE. Thank you

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 3:00:14 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Catherine H. Payne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony on HB 1888

Relating to the safety of educational workers

Aloha Chair Sayama and Members of the House Committee on Labor,

I am Catherine H. Payne, a retired Department of Education teacher and administrator.

My testimony is in support of HB 1888.

I am thankful that this important measure is being heard by your committee. The issue of threats and verbal and physical harassment of public school education workers has been long-standing and not appropriately addressed across the system. Good-faith efforts have been made to assist individuals and schools facing challenges, but clear legal expectations and consequences have not been established.

In recent years the escalation of verbal threats has been more common behind the anonymity of social media. Even when the perpetrator is identifiable it has been difficult to do anything until the threats have been acted upon. The toll this has taken on the climate of the schools and on the individuals subjected to the harassment has been significant. People leave the profession or are discouraged from even considering a career in teaching if they are not protected from threats and abuse.

This is an opportunity to make progress on this important matter. You will send a message to educators that they are worthy of support.

Mahalo for considering my testimony.

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 8:16:10 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivana Crumpton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

Educational workers are responsible for keeping schools safe and supportive for children. When they experience harassment or threats without clear protections or consistent response procedures, it harms not only them, but the entire school community.

HB1888 creates clarity and accountability. By establishing clear expectations for investigation, documentation, and response, it ensures concerns are taken seriously and handled correctly. This structure helps prevent situations from escalating and promotes safer school environments.

It is critical that we are proactive rather than reactive. Waiting until harm escalates takes a toll on the mental health and well-being of educators. Mental health safety is part of overall school safety. When educational workers feel fearful and unsupported, students are affected as well.

Holding the Department of Education accountable for responding to and documenting harassment strengthens protections for staff and creates a more secure learning environment for students.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB1888 to help ensure safer schools for educational workers and the children they serve

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 8:27:45 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Inger Stonehill	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

Every day, educational workers walk into our schools carrying the responsibility of protecting, guiding, and nurturing our children. They are often the steady presence students rely on when the world feels uncertain. But too often, when those same educators face harassment or threats, they are left without clear protections, without consistent procedures, and without the assurance that someone will stand firmly behind them.

When harassment is minimized, handled informally, or allowed to linger without accountability, it doesn't just harm the individual educator. It erodes trust. It creates fear. It chips away at the sense of safety that every school community depends on. And when the adults in a building feel unsafe or unsupported, students feel it too.

HB1888 matters because it brings clarity where there has been inconsistency. It creates defined expectations for investigation, documentation, and response. It ensures that concerns are taken seriously and addressed with care and accountability. Clear procedures are not about bureaucracy — they are about protection, transparency, and prevention.

It is especially important that we be proactive rather than reactive. Waiting until situations escalate only deepens harm. A proactive approach helps prevent patterns of harassment from taking root and protects the mental and emotional well-being of educational workers before burnout, anxiety, or fear overwhelm them. Mental health safety is real safety. When educators are constantly on edge, worrying about unresolved threats or harassment, their ability to fully show up for students is compromised.

Our educators deserve more than appreciation — they deserve protection and meaningful support. When the Department of Education is accountable for responding to and documenting harassment, schools are better equipped to foster a secure, stable learning environment for both staff and students.

If we want our children to thrive, we must ensure the adults who care for them can thrive as well. I respectfully ask for your support of HB1888 so that we can build safer schools — physically, emotionally, and mentally — for everyone who enters.

**Testimony in Support of HB1888
Relating to the Safety of Educational Workers
House Committee on Labor
February 17, 2025 | 9:00 a.m.**

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

I submit this testimony in strong support of HB1888.

During the recent House Committee on Education hearing, the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) said it is now working on internal protocols to address harassment of employees by community members. I appreciate that movement, but those protocols are still not implemented. For years prior, the Department resisted the very idea that it had a responsibility to act. Instead, DOE leadership took the position that harassment by members of the public was a "personal matter" and that it would be an "unconstitutional use of public funds" to protect employees from that conduct.

Since 2012, the Department of Human Resources Development's policy 800.002 (available here: bit.ly/DHRD800002) has prohibited workplace violence, including disruptive behavior, intimidation, threats to physical safety or mental well-being, and conduct by outside individuals who pose a risk in the work environment.

That policy has been in place for more than a decade. Yet when I filed a grievance after experiencing severe ongoing harassment connected to my job, the response from the DOE and the Attorney General's office was that tolerating this behavior was simply part of my duties. In a September 20, 2021 letter, Supervising Attorney General James Halvorson wrote that the perpetrator's "nasty and vulgar attacks" toward me and other employees were "a part of the duties of HIDOE employees involved with his children's education." This was sent nine months after the court issued a three-year injunction against harassment, recognizing the seriousness of the threat.

That disconnect is exactly why this bill is necessary.

In 2024, while testifying on an earlier version of this bill, I was asked whether we really needed a law. My answer remains yes. Change does not occur unless the Legislature requires it. For years, we have asked the Department to establish a consistent response process when employees face harassment, threats, and now even assaults on the job. Meaningful progress has come only after sustained pressure from victims and lawmakers. Even the Code of Conduct was not developed proactively by the DOE. It was created only after a prior version of this bill crossed over to the Senate Committee on Education.

This legislation is also about protecting the State. When there is no structured response process, the State is exposed to liability. When there is a clear protocol, the State can demonstrate due diligence and reduce the risk of litigation. Last session, the Legislature approved at least one settlement tied to these failures. A defined process protects

employees and the State. That is why it has been both confusing and frustrating to see continued resistance to implementing something that ultimately benefits the Department as well.

When the executive branch fails to protect its own employees, laws become necessary to ensure accountability. Right now, this issue is not being handled consistently, and employees are continuing to suffer the consequences. Even if the Department is currently developing a protocol and consulting with the unions, this bill remains important. Given the DOE's historical position on this issue, codifying these requirements ensures follow-through and accountability moving forward.

On February 12, this committee voted to pass HB2091, which authorizes public employers to petition for temporary restraining orders and injunctions against employment-related harassment of certain public employees. Testimony in response to the measure, submitted by the Judiciary, cited "an alarming increase in harassment, acts of violence, and threats against public servants."

HB2091 reflects an important recognition that the State has a role in protecting its employees from workplace-related harassment. That principle aligns directly with the spirit of HB1888. When harassment is tied to public service, it cannot be treated as a personal matter.

Mahalo for your time and for continuing to stand with educational workers on this issue.

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 11:59:44 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

February 15, 2026

Re: HB1888 HD1

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the House Committee on Labor,

I strongly **OPPOSE** HB1888 HD1. The passage of this bill will unnecessarily modify the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §711-1106 to include a subsection that states, “Disrupts or interferes with the administration or functions of any school, school administration office, or school board.” This bill will also elevate harassment from a petty misdemeanor to a full misdemeanor when the complainant is an “educational worker.” This will create a special class of people that places the bill’s definition of “educational worker” above all others in the state.

Parents of children with special needs must communicate with the school and staff regularly and often must make repeated phone calls and emails in order to ensure that their children receive an appropriate education. The vague language of this bill will put parents at risk of being arrested for advocating for their children. The suppression of speech in this manner will suppress legitimate complaints and will, in the end, harm not only special needs children, but all school children.

I must also add that the suggestion to amend the Hawaii Revised Statutes in this way has been attempted several times before. House Bill 2125 in 2022, House Bill 1651 in 2024, and House Bill 1895 in 2026 (this very session) all tried to elevate harassment from a petty misdemeanor to a full misdemeanor when the recipient is an “educational worker.” All three bills were deferred. In fact, HB1895 was deferred less than two weeks ago and the language regarding HRS §711-1106 was inserted into **this** bill (HB1888). It appears that there will be continued attempts to revise the HRS in this way no matter how many times the bills are deferred, or how many people oppose the bills, or how many people point out the unconstitutionality of the bills.

Please OPPOSE HB1888 HD1.

Sincerely,

Kalma K. Wong, Ph.D.

February 16, 2026

Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1888. The current draft of this bill is the result of several years of work by numerous Department of Education employees (and former employees) who have faced threats and harassment as a direct result of their work. They have been ringing the alarm about escalating safety threats and the need for specific requirements that protect educational workers. As we have all recently seen, their concerns were justified because there is shocking video footage of a physical attack against someone who was just doing her job.

In the past, the Department of Education refused to step in to help employees who were being threatened and harassed. Instead, the Department took the position that it was not allowed to commit its resources to help its employees secure Temporary Restraining Orders or pursue other actions required to protect themselves. As a result, talented educators left the profession, moved away, or found work in the private sector. The Department – and the students it serves – lost out on experienced and dedicated employees who wanted to make a difference.

HB1888 can fix this problem by making it clear the Legislature values the people who work for the State and expects the Department of Education to provide support to employees who are being threatened and harassed simply because they are doing their jobs. In addition, HB1888 ensures all employees are treated fairly because it establishes clear requirements for the Department. Those requirements do more than just protect the employees. They also ensure the Department's response is satisfactory and does not lead to potential claims against the State.

In a perfect world, HB1888 would not be necessary. Just like any other employer, the Department has legal and moral obligations to ensure its employees work in a safe environment that is free from threats, harassment, and violence. Unfortunately, history shows us that legislative action is necessary. Years have already passed without the Department being able to implement processes and procedures to protect educational workers who are being threatened and harassed. Much of that delay appears to be the result of confusion about whether the Department can provide supports to its employees. HB1888 eliminates any questions about whether the Department must protect its employees, and provides a clear framework for what actions are necessary. It is an important piece of protection for the thousands of individuals who are working to support the children of our State.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Lee', written in a cursive style.

HB-1888-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 12:33:07 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/17/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sonja Rogers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee:

Educational workers play a critical role in keeping our schools safe for children. When educators and staff face harassment or threats without clear protections or consistent response procedures, it affects not only employees but also students and school communities.

HB1888 is important because it creates clarity and accountability when harassment occurs. By establishing clear expectations for investigation, documentation, and response, the bill helps ensure that concerns are taken seriously and addressed consistently rather than handled informally or in isolation. This structure helps prevent situations from escalating and promotes safer, more stable school environments.

The lack of meaningful support when harassment occurs also takes a serious toll on the mental health and well-being of educational workers. When educators are fearful or burned out due to unresolved safety concerns, they cannot fully thrive in their roles. When educational workers are unable to thrive, neither will our students.

When the Department of Education is accountable for responding to and documenting harassment, schools are better equipped to support their staff and maintain a secure learning environment for students.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB1888 to help ensure safer schools for both educational workers and the children they serve.

Sincerely,

Sonja Swenson Rogers