

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

SETH S. COLBY, Ph.D.  
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**  
*Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā*  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

**WRITTEN ONLY**

TESTIMONY BY SETH S. COLBY, Ph.D.  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR  
ON  
HOUSE BILL NO. 1890, H.D. 1

**February 12, 2026**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Room 309 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO EDUCATION

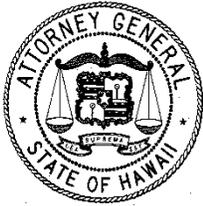
The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) opposes this bill.

House Bill No. 1890, H.D. 1, provides bargaining unit (BU) 5 teachers who have completed a year's satisfactory service and who have complied with the other requirements of Sections 302A-602 to 302A-639 and 302A-701, as applicable, an annual increment negotiated pursuant to a collective bargaining (CB) agreement. In addition, the bill provides longevity step increases for teachers who have served satisfactorily for three years in their maximum increment step or in any longevity step and who have complied with the other requirements of Sections 302A-602 to 302A-639 and 302A-701, as applicable.

B&F opposes this measure because it is contrary to the CB process. This measure preferentially directs the outcome of CB negotiations for a select BU.

While the Legislature has the authority to set the scope of CB, the Legislature did this in setting up a process in Chapter 89, HRS. This bill disrupts that process due to its partial return to directly legislated wages and working conditions for public employees.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



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

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 1890, H.D. 1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

**DATE:** Thursday, February 12, 2026      **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Amanda L. Donlin, Deputy Attorney General, or  
Jeffrey T. Kent, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Sayama and Members of the Committee:

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

This bill seeks to provide automatic step increases in teacher salaries for each year of satisfactory service completed, subject to the availability of funds. However, the bill conflicts with section 89-9(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), which makes "wages" a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

Pursuant to section 89-2, HRS, the term "wages" includes the number of incremental and longevity steps. As written, the bill would therefore conflict with chapter 89, HRS, because wages, including incremental and longevity steps, are subject to negotiation through collective bargaining. Further, where there is contrary legislation, section 89-19, HRS, provides that adjustments made in accordance with chapter 89 shall take precedence over all contrary legislation.

The bill's current wording is similar to section 302A-626, HRS, formerly section 297-34, HRS, which was enacted prior to Hawaii's collective bargaining laws for public employment. Section 302A-626, HRS, was repealed by Act 87, Session Laws of Hawaii 2016. That repeal provided consistency within the law because section 302A-626, HRS, had been rendered obsolete by the collective bargaining law, which requires longevity steps and movement between steps in the salary range to be negotiated

through collective bargaining. Reinserting similar wording in chapter 302A through this bill could again create a conflict with chapter 89.

To promote consistency with chapter 89, HRS, the Department recommends that, in subsection (a) of the new section proposed to be added to chapter 302A by section 2 of this bill (page 2, lines 12-13), the phrase, "Pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for bargaining unit (5)," be replaced with, "Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement pursuant to section 89-9, . . . ."

The Department also recommends the following amendments for consistency with the HRS. On page 2, lines 15-16, and in subsection (b) beginning on page 2, line 18, the bill refers to a range of HRS sections (i.e., sections 302A-602 to 302A-639, and section 302A-701) that address requirements applicable to teachers. As drafted, this range does not include the full set of relevant sections, as it omits section 302A-601.5, HRS, at the front end and sections 302A-641 and 302A-642, HRS, at the back end. On page 2, lines 15-17, the amendment to include the full statutory range would read as follows:

. . . who have complied with the other requirements of sections 302A-601.5 to 302A-642, and 302A-701, as applicable, shall be entitled to an annual increment. (Emphasis added.)

Regarding the proposed new subsection (b) beginning on page 2, line 18, the statutory wording would be more consistent with the HRS if it refers to the full range of 302A provisions described above; and includes a specific reference to section 302A-624, HRS, which applies to the three-year "maximum increment step or in any longevity step" term. The proposed amendment would read as follows:

(b) Teachers who have served satisfactorily for three years in their maximum increment step or in any longevity step pursuant to section 302A-624 and who have complied with the other requirements of sections 302A-601.5 to 302A-642, and 302A-701, as applicable, shall receive longevity step increases, subject to the availability of funds. (Emphasis added.)

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

**JOSH GREEN, M. D.**  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR  
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**J.N. MUSTO, PhD**  
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR  
KE PO'O KUKAKUKA

**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**  
**KE KE'ENA MĀLAMA LIMAHANA AUPUNI**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
**KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA**  
235 S. BERETANIA STREET, SUITE 1201  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

Statement of  
**J.N. Musto, PhD**  
Chief Negotiator, Office of Collective Bargaining

Before the  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR**  
Thursday, February 12, 2026  
9:30 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 309

In consideration of  
**HB1890 HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION**

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

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) appreciates the intent of HB1890 HD1, which provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed a year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements; however we must respectfully oppose this measure.

Wage, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment are subject to negotiations as provided in Hawaii Revised Statutes, §89-9. We note that the 2016 legislature agreed when nearly identical provisions proposed in this measure were repealed.

We are available to answer any questions or provide further information as needed.



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

**Date:** 02/12/2026

**Time:** 09:30 AM

**Location:** 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** LAB

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB1890, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**Purpose of Bill:** Pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for Bargaining Unit (5) and subject to the availability of funds, provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on HB 1890, H.D.1.

The Department appreciates the Legislature's continued efforts to improve the Department's ability to attract and retain quality employees to support Hawaii's K-12 public schools. Providing automatic step increases in teacher salaries for each year of satisfactory service completed has the potential to be a powerful tool to achieve that goal.

The measure explicitly provides automatic step increases for teachers for each year of satisfactory service. Bargaining Unit 5 (BU5) covers more than just teachers; it also includes librarians, counselors, and resource teachers.

If the Legislature proceeds with authorizing this measure, the Department recommends an adjustment to the language to include all members of BU5.

The Department believes that all of its employees serve diverse yet equally important roles to help ensure student achievement. In light of this, the Department encourages the Legislature to consider including all other Bargaining Units in acknowledgment of the tremendous team effort it takes to ensure a successful Department. Therefore, the Department urges the Legislature to consider including step movements for the following Bargaining Units to this measure:

- Bargaining Unit 1 - Blue-Collar Non-Supervisory Employees
- Bargaining Unit 2 - Blue-Collar Supervisory Employees
- Bargaining Unit 3 - White-Collar Non-Supervisory Employees

- Bargaining Unit 4 - White-Collar Supervisory Employees
- Bargaining Unit 6 - Educational Officers
- Bargaining Unit 9 - Registered Professional Nurses
- Bargaining Unit 10 - Institutional, Health, and Correction Officers
- Bargaining Unit 13 - Professional and Scientific Employees

The Department notes that Section 89-9 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires negotiations between the employer and the exclusive representative with respect to wages.

Finally, should the Legislature proceed with authorizing this measure, the Department respectfully requests that the Legislature simultaneously include the funds necessary to implement these step movements into the Department's base budget going forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1890, H.D.1.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819  
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**Osa Tui, Jr.**  
President

**Logan Okita**  
Vice President

**Cheney Kaku**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Andrea Eshelman**  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

**Item: HB 1890, HD1 – Relating to Education**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing: Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 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 (HSTA) **strongly supports** H.B. 1890, HD1 which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. This measure is essential to addressing the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention.

Teachers in Hawai'i are financially struggling under the weight of the state's high cost of living. Once adjusted for these expenses, our educators are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes directly to a staggering turnover rate. Nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state altogether within five years of starting. This high attrition poses a significant problem for our students and the stability of our schools.

Establishing automatic step increases is a priority for our educators and aligns with our current Unit 5 collective bargaining agreement. The collective bargaining agreement explicitly states that "the parties recognize that annual incremental step movements are a viable recruiting and retention tool."

The negotiated language further specifies: "Teachers who are not at the top of the salary schedule and who have effective evaluations shall move to the next highest step of the corresponding class at the beginning of each school year. Annual incremental step movements are subject to funding."

H.B. 1890, HD1 establishes the annual step increases that mirror this negotiated agreement. It provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom by ensuring salary progression is a consistent part of their professional career.

The importance of this stability is also echoed in the *2025 HIDOE Teacher Compensation Report*. This study states: "Automatic annual step progression is the norm across most states and is strongly linked to teacher expectations of fairness...A shift to automatic steps would reinforce trust and potentially improve attrition."

By providing these increases, the State is sending a clear message that it values the experience of its educators. We respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo.



## 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

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 PM  
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

**Re: Testimony on HB1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION**

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 provides comments on HB1890, HD1, which, pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for Bargaining Unit 5 and subject to the availability of funds, provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements.

UPW recognizes the issues that this bill is trying to address and strongly supports better compensation for members of Bargaining Unit 5. However, we are gravely concerned by any legislation that could potentially circumvent, or even undermine, the collective bargaining provisions in Chapter 89, Hawaii Revised Statutes. We believe that the Legislature is not the appropriate authority to approve such salary increases prior to being collectively bargained between the employer and exclusive representative.

Statutorily codifying annual wage increases could create a precedent where exclusive representatives feel compelled to seek better contract provisions through legislation rather than negotiating with employers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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**HEADQUARTERS**

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## **HOUSE BILL 1890, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION**

FEBRUARY 12, 2026 · LAB HEARING

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1890, HD1, relating to education, which, pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for Bargaining Unit (5) and subject to funding, provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service.

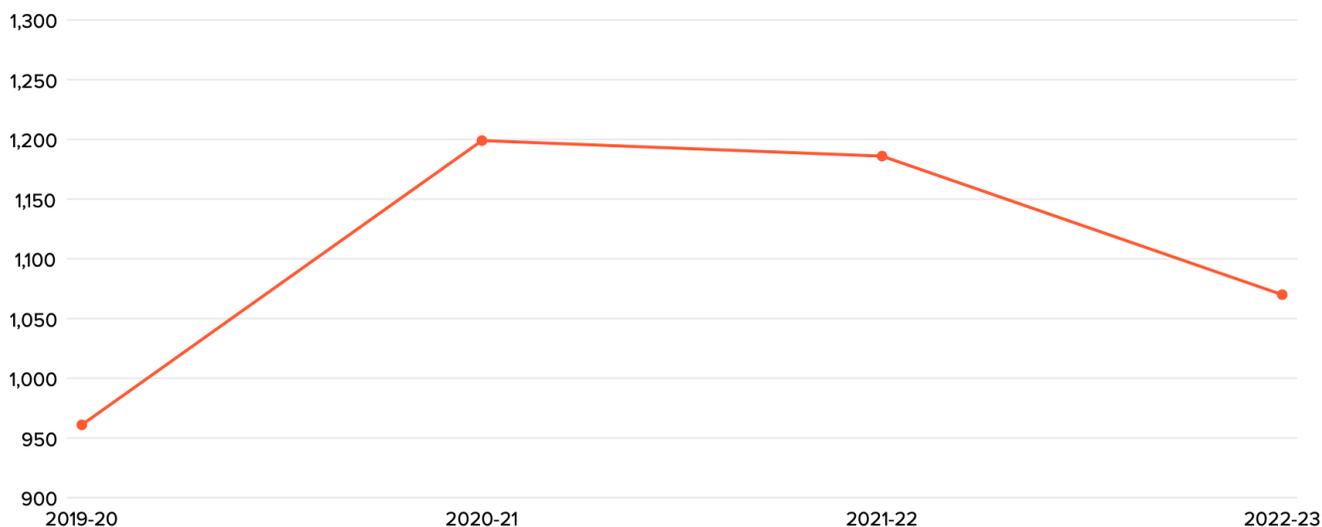
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education found that when compared with other high-cost geographic locations, Hawai'i teachers are paid \$7,700 to \$26,000 less than their peers in school districts with similar costs of living, depending on length of service.

While that pay gap is decreasing because of the legislature's effort to fund differential pay increases and resolve salary compression in recent years, teachers are still underpaid compared to other professions that require a similar level of education. **Restoring guaranteed annual increments, more commonly known as "step increases," would significantly help to alleviate that gap.**

A 2022 survey by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University placed Hawai'i among the 10 states with the lowest teacher-to-population ratio. Moreover, as *Honolulu Civil Beat* reported in August of 2024, voluntary teacher separations remain high, at over 1,000 per year (see chart below).

### Voluntary teacher separations, 2019 to 2023

The number of teachers annually leaving the DOE remains high but has started to decline following the pandemic.



DOE has not released data for the 2023-24 school year.

Chart: Megan Tagami/Civil Beat • Source: [Hawaii DOE](#)

These trends are further exacerbated by the aging teacher workforce. The Hawai'i State Teachers Association has repeatedly cautioned against being overly optimistic about positive teacher retention data, with a wave of experienced educators expected to retire in the next few years.

**Moreover, the state is over reliant on unlicensed teachers to fill vacant positions. A December report found that 48 percent of new teachers in classrooms statewide are not fully licensed. As the Honolulu Star-Advertiser's editorial board recently wrote, "That is completely unacceptable."** Strengthening teacher pay improves workforce retention. A Stanford University analysis found that raising wages by 10 percent reduces high school dropout rates by 3 to 4 percent. Similarly, a Florida study showed that pay raises reduced teacher attrition by up to 25 percent for hard-to-fill subject areas.

**Contact: [educationcaucusdph@gmail.com](mailto:educationcaucusdph@gmail.com) · 808-679-7454**



## TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB1890 HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

February 12, 2026

#### To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **strongly supports HB1890 HD1**. Our party platform is rooted in the belief that a high-quality, free public education is a fundamental right for every child in our islands. However, that right is being undermined by a systemic failure to recruit and retain a professional, certified teaching workforce.

Hawai'i is currently facing a "mess" caused by radical shifts in federal priorities. The recent federal budget—touted as a "Big Beautiful Bill"—has instead resulted in deep cuts to the federal funding Hawai'i relies on for social services and education. This federal abandonment makes it more urgent than ever that we stabilize our internal workforce by asking those who have benefited most from the current economy—the wealthy—to pay their fair share to protect our public institutions.

The crisis in our classrooms is undeniable:

- **The Compensation Gap:** When adjusted for our state's astronomical cost of living, Hawai'i teachers are the **lowest-paid in the nation**. A teacher in Honolulu faces a pay disparity of roughly **\$75,000** compared to their peers in Los Angeles. This "paradise tax" is driving our local talent to the mainland.
- **De-professionalization of Teaching:** Because we cannot retain certified staff, the DOE is forced to rely on "emergency hires." It is unacceptable that current policies allow individuals with as little as a high school diploma to lead a classroom. All of our students deserve certified experts, not stop-gap measures.
- **Reliance on J-1 Visas:** The Department's increasing dependency on J-1 visa teachers creates a revolving door of educators. While we value these international partners, a stable education system cannot be built on temporary visas; it must be built on a permanent, local workforce that understands our community.

HB1890 provides a clear, structural solution: **automatic salary step increases**. In nearly every other state, salary steps are a predictable reward for experience. In Hawai'i, they have been subject to the

whims of the bargaining table, leading to stagnant wages and "salary compression" that insults our veteran educators.

If we care about the future of Hawai'i, we must provide the basic incentives required to keep teachers in the profession. We cannot afford to lose 40% of our teachers within their first five years. By ensuring predictable raises and professional pay, we can end the era of emergency hires and ensure every classroom is led by a qualified professional.

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i urges this committee to pass HB1890 HD1 and reinvest in the educators who are the backbone of our democracy.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1890. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at [legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org](mailto:legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org).

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 1:23:34 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Briann Starkey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR**

**RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION**

**Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.**

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

**I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases**

**for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i**

**creates a financial crisis for my colleagues and me. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘is teachers**

**are the lowest-paid in the nation. Not to mention living on Moloka‘i, as our food is imported from the barge and sold at a higher price than on Oahu and other neighbor islands. One trip to the grocery store here is already over one hundred dollars in cost.**

**This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers**

**leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem**

**for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.**

**Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to**

**remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience**

**and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.**

**Mahalo,**

**Briann Starkey**

**Kualapuu Public Conversion Charter School**

**Molokai Island, Maui County, District 13**

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 1:28:13 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniel Patrick Lopez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee,  
I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawaii's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation. This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students. Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Danny Lopez

Maui Waena Intermediate School

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 1:55:42 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anna Crawford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i’s teachers

are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Name. Ann Crawford

School/District King Kekaulike High

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 2:17:40 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kanoë Pacheco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i’s teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Kanoë

*Kekaulike High School/Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kūlanihāko'i-Maui Complex Area*

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 2:46:41 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Kihara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the committee,  
I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Susan Kihara

Maui Waena Intermediate School/BKKM

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 2:49:46 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Elaine Ruth Oloraza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
ELAINE RUTH A. OLORAZA  
Maui Waena Intermediate

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR**

**RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.**

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

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which would establish annual salary step increases for public school teachers.

As a public educator, I witness firsthand the financial challenges faced by my colleagues due to Hawai‘i’s exceptionally high cost of living. When these costs are taken into account, Hawai‘i’s teachers rank among the lowest-paid in the nation. This reality places immense strain on educators who are committed to serving our students and communities.

These financial pressures have contributed to an alarming teacher turnover rate, with nearly half of our educators leaving the profession or the state within their first five years. Such instability disrupts school communities and undermines student success.

Providing automatic annual step increases would offer educators much-needed stability and predictability, encouraging them to remain in the classroom. This measure represents a meaningful investment in teacher retention and sends a clear message that the State values the experience, dedication, and service of its educators.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB 1890, HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Cassi Meng

King Kekaulike High School

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 3:53:04 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Wray Jose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! I urge approval of HB1890 HD1, which would re-establish automatic salary step increases. Automatic salary step increases will improve teacher salaries and promote longevity among teachers. It would help to recruit and retain quality teachers in a state where there is a chronic teacher shortage. That is eminently in the best interest of the schoolchildren of the State of Hawaii,

Sincerely, Wray Jose

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 4:50:00 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Mokihana Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I experience and witness how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates financial hardship for myself and my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate—nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. High attrition destabilizes our schools, limits our students' potential, and threatens Hawai'i's future.

At a recent Career Fair, the Honolulu Police Department repeatedly emphasized their starting pay exceeds that of HiDOE teachers—without requiring a degree. They highlighted regular pay increases, overtime opportunities, and advancement. This school year, one of our teachers left the classroom to join HPD. While community policing serves an important role, educators should not be positioned as a lower priority. Hawai'i's ali'i understood that education is the foundation of a thriving lāhui—our monarchy established a public education system that achieved near-universal literacy. We must honor that legacy.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our profession and is committed to strengthening Hawai'i through strong public schools and dedicated educators.

**I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.**

Mahalo,

Lauren Mokihana Jones, MEd-CS

MLL teacher, Waipahu Intermediate School, Leeward Distric

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 4:50:57 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kian Guan Au	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Bill:** HB1890

**Position:** Support

**To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:**

Aloha,

My name is **Kian Guan Au**, and I am a constituent from **Honolulu (ZIP 96821)**. I am writing in **strong support of HB1890**, which would establish **automatic annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have demonstrated satisfactory service**.

As a **public school special education teacher**, I experience firsthand the challenges of retaining qualified, experienced educators—particularly in special education, where continuity, expertise, and long-term commitment are essential for student success. When salary progression is uncertain or inconsistent, teachers are more likely to leave the profession or seek employment elsewhere, disrupting learning environments that rely on stability and trust.

Automatic step increases are not a bonus; they are a **predictable, earned recognition of professional service and experience**. HB1890 provides teachers with a clear and reliable pathway for growth, which is a critical factor in **retention, morale, and workforce stability**. For students with disabilities, retaining experienced teachers is especially important, as frequent turnover directly impacts instructional quality and student progress.

By passing HB1890, the Legislature would take a meaningful step toward valuing educators' long-term commitment and strengthening Hawai'i's public education system. Supporting teachers through predictable compensation ultimately supports students, families, and school communities statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your thoughtful consideration of this important measure.

Mahalo,

**Kian Guan Au**

Honolulu, HI 96821



**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:23:57 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Fitzpatrick	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Sayama and members of the labor committee,

My name is John Fitzpatrick and I am a teacher at Kūlanihāko‘i High School. I stand in **strong support of HB 1890**, which would finally provide automatic annual step increases to our educators.

**If you pass this measure it would be the first time this century that educators received the annual step increases that we earn!**

**“Article XX**

**N.** The parties recognize that annual incremental step movements are a viable recruiting and retention tool. Teachers who are not at the top of the salary schedule and who have effective evaluations shall move to the next highest step of the corresponding class at the beginning of each school year. **Annual incremental step movements are subject to funding.”**

**The Financial Reality vs. The Rainy Day Fund** We often hear that there is "no money" for teachers, yet the fiscal landscape suggests otherwise. In 2024, the legislature passed historic income tax cuts. While tax relief for working families is important, we cannot prioritize tax cuts while leaving our classrooms underfunded. Furthermore, the state currently has over **\$1.6 billion** in the Emergency Budget Reserve Fund ("Rainy Day Fund").

How can we justify hoarding nearly \$2 billion in reserves or passing massive tax cuts, while telling the teachers who educate our future workforce that we cannot afford the estimated \$25 million needed for annual step increases? We are not asking for a handout; we are asking for the state to prioritize the retention of the professionals who show up for our keiki every day.

**The "Every Other Year" Myth & The 24-Year Climb** Our current contract (2023–2027) and the salary schedule (Exhibit B) are designed with 12 steps to reach the top of the pay scale. In a logical system, a career teacher would reach the top in 12 years. However, because we only receive step increases every *other* year—if we are lucky enough to negotiate them—it actually takes a teacher **24 years** to reach the top, and nearly 30 years to maximize their retirement.

By the end of this current contract, many teachers will have faced three years without step movement (no step in 2024–2025, and likely no step in 2026–2027). This wage compression demoralizes experienced teachers and makes teaching in Hawai‘i financially unsustainable. HB

1890 would fix this by ensuring movement happens annually, allowing a teacher to reach the top of the scale in a reasonable 12 years—a powerful recruiting tool.

**Recruitment and Retention: A Broken Pipeline** I previously served as a head faculty representative at Maui Waena and frequently mentored new hires. I vividly remember two teachers recruited from Chicago who were shocked to learn we do not have annual step increases. In Chicago, annual movement is the standard. Those teachers have since moved back to the mainland.

We are competing in a national market. When we cannot promise consistent salary growth, we lose talent. This turnover has devastating effects on our schools. Vacancies mean students are often taught by long-term substitutes who may lack subject-specific certification.

**Real Impact on Haumāna** The lack of retention hits our students the hardest. I currently teach science to 9th graders. Recently, during a lab that required calculating averages, I realized many students didn't know how to do the math—a skill usually mastered in elementary school. This gap exists because they have lacked consistent, qualified teachers in their earlier years.

Last year, a student told me, *"Mister, you are the best science teacher I have ever had. All my science teachers in middle school dipped out on us."*

That statement broke my heart, and sadly, **the cycle continues**. Just this year, my fellow science teacher left two weeks into the school year to teach at Kamehameha Schools, where he could get better pay and smaller class sizes. I had to scramble to cover his AP Biology classes so those students wouldn't be left with a substitute for the entire year. **The despair on my 9th graders' faces when I had to switch classes was real**—they thought they were being abandoned again.

**Solidarity with Our Schools** I also want to voice my support for our principals, vice principals, custodians, office staff, and cafeteria staff. They, too, deserve annual step increases. Our principals are managing "impossible puzzles"—trying to run schools with 20 classroom positions but only 15 teachers, and constantly losing staff to the hospitality industry where they can make more money with less stress. They deserve a raise for managing these crises daily.

**A Legislative Solution is Necessary** I often hear that step increases should be handled in collective bargaining. However, we are stuck in a cycle where the employer claims "no funding" during negotiations. **We need the Legislature to break this cycle.** By passing HB 1890 and earmarking the funds specifically for annual steps, you ensure that our pay is predictable, competitive, and sufficient to keep local teachers in local classrooms.

Please pass HB 1890. Help us stop the exodus of talent, solve the "impossible puzzle" for our principals, and give our haumāna the qualified, consistent teachers they deserve.

Mahalo for your time and support,

**John Fitzpatrick**

Science Educator, Kūlanihāko‘i High School

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:32:01 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jodi Beaty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i’s teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate, with nearly half of our teachers leaving the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
Jodi Beaty  
Mokapu Elementary / Windward District

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

I am writing in strong support of HB1890 HD1, relating to education and providing annual salary step increases for public school teachers pursuant to Bargaining Unit (5), subject to the availability of funds.

Teachers in Hawai'i are constantly asked to justify our worth and explain the hardships of teaching here. Yet we live and work in one of the highest cost-of-living states in the nation — largely because we are so dependent on imported goods, including food and basic necessities. The financial strain on educators is real and ongoing.

How did the once self-sustaining Kingdom of Hawai'i — described in early journals as abundant and thriving — become so dependent? Today, local families, including teachers, struggle to remain in the islands we love. Many educators work second jobs, live with extended family, or consider leaving the profession or the state altogether simply to survive.

Meanwhile, tourism, foreign investment, and military spending continue to shape our economy. Teachers, who build the future of Hawai'i every single day, too often feel left out of budget priorities. We are not asking for luxury — we are asking for stability, fairness, and the ability to remain in the communities we serve.

HB1890 HD1 honors the commitment of teachers by ensuring predictable, annual step increases for those who complete a year of satisfactory service and meet established requirements. This is not a bonus. It is not a special privilege. It is a basic recognition of professional growth, dedication, and experience.

“Ua mau ke ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono.”

The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.

‘Āina is not just land — it is the people. If we are to perpetuate the life of our people, we must invest in those who educate and guide the next generation. Teachers are foundational to that perpetuation.

Supporting HB1890 HD1 means supporting the stability of our public education system, retaining qualified educators, and affirming that Hawai'i values those who serve its keiki.

I respectfully urge you to pass this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration,

M. Alo-Chu

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 5:53:35 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Landes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Landes, and I am a parent of 2 public school students, as well as a teacher and a concerned citizen. I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 1890.

Our keiki deserve the best possible education, and that starts with having a highly qualified, consistent teacher in every classroom. Currently, we are failing them. Because our teacher compensation has not kept pace with the cost of living, we are seeing a revolving door of educators. When a qualified teacher leaves because they can't afford to live here, they are often replaced by long-term substitutes.

While these substitutes work hard, they are not a replacement for a highly qualified, licensed professional who has the training and experience to lead a classroom.

Why I Support HB 1890:

Honoring the Contract: Teachers have had "step increases" in their contracts for years, yet these are often the first things to be frozen or unfunded. If we expect teachers to honor their commitment to our kids, the State must honor its financial commitment to them.

Teacher Retention: It is heartbreaking to hear that nearly half of our teachers leave within five years. When a teacher leaves, our children lose stability, mentorship, and quality instruction. HB 1890 provides the automatic step increases that are the "norm" in almost every other state.

Quality Over Substitutes: Our children are not "placeholders," and their classrooms shouldn't be filled with temporary fixes. To keep quality teachers, we must pay them a wage that reflects their value and allows them to survive in Hawaii.

We often say "Education is a priority," but our budget is where our true priorities are shown. Please fund HB 1890 and give our teachers the raises they have earned and deserve. Let's stop the exodus of our best educators and ensure our keiki have the stable, professional environment they need to thrive.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Mike Landes

Kihei

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 6:32:05 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tiffany Edwards Hunt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers.

As the Student Activities Coordinator at Kea‘au Middle School within the Kea‘au-Ka‘ū-Pāhoa Complex Area, I see firsthand how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation. This pay inequity has created a dire situation in our schools.

The lack of competitive and predictable pay leads to chronic teacher vacancies, which in turn creates a high propensity for a "revolving door" of substitute teachers. This lack of continuity is devastating for our students. When a classroom lacks a permanent teacher, students lose the opportunity to build the long-term, trusting relationships that are the foundation of effective learning. Our children deserve talented educators who stay long enough to truly know them and their communities.

Furthermore, these vacancies place an immense tax on the teachers who remain. Those of us staying in the profession are often forced to pick up the slack, covering extra duties and mentoring a constant stream of new staff, leading to burnout and further attrition. This cycle is unsustainable for the stability of our schools.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure is a necessary step toward making our pay more equitable and ensuring we can retain the dedicated professionals who are committed to Hawai‘i's children. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Tiffany Edwards Hunt

Student Activities Coordinator

Kea‘au Middle School

## Kea'au-Ka'ū-Pāhoa Complex Area

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 6:56:57 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carol Holland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carol Holland , and I am a parent, a teacher, a community member and a voter from Kihei HI. I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 1890.

Our keiki deserve the best possible education, and that starts with having a highly qualified, consistent teacher in every classroom. Currently, we are failing them. Because our teacher compensation has not kept pace with the cost of living, we are seeing a revolving door of educators. When a qualified teacher leaves because they can't afford to live here, they are often replaced by long-term substitutes.

While these substitutes work hard, they are not a replacement for a highly qualified, licensed professional who has the training and experience to lead a classroom.

Why I Support HB 1890:

Honoring the Contract: Teachers have had "step increases" in their contracts for years, yet these are often the first things to be frozen or unfunded. If we expect teachers to honor their commitment to our kids, the State must honor its financial commitment to them.

Teacher Retention: It is heartbreaking to hear that nearly half of our teachers leave within five years. When a teacher leaves, our children lose stability, mentorship, and quality instruction. HB 1890 provides the automatic step increases that are the "norm" in almost every other state.

Quality Over Substitutes: Our children are not "placeholders," and their classrooms shouldn't be filled with temporary fixes. To keep quality teachers, we must pay them a wage that reflects their value and allows them to survive in Hawaii.

We often say "Education is a priority," but our budget is where our true priorities are shown. Please fund HB 1890 and give our teachers the raises they have earned and deserve. Let's stop the exodus of our best educators and ensure our keiki have the stable, professional environment they need to thrive.

i am seriously considering leaving education not because I do not love my students I do but because I can make more money in other fields - such as the tourism industry working less hours and with less stress and additional responsibilities I am a seasoned teacher 18 years and am at step 8 and I am still living pay check to paycheck

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,Carol

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:18:02 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Hughey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TO: COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Chair

Rep. Mike Lee, Vice Chair

Members: Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Rep. Sam Satoru Kong, Rep. Jeanne Kapela, Rep. Julie Reyes Oda

DATE: Thursday, February 12, 2026

TIME: 9:30 AM

PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE Conference Room 309, State Capitol

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**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 1890, HD1**

RE: RELATING TO TEACHER SALARIES (Elimination of Salary Compression)

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

My name is Justin Hughey. I am a second-grade special education teacher, a member of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i's State Central Committee, and an Education Caucus Representative. I am writing to you today in strong support of HB 1890, HD1.

This bill is a direct solution to the "math problem" that is destroying our state's ability to keep local teachers in our classrooms. By requiring the Department of Education to fix the broken salary structure and eliminate "salary compression," you are finally addressing why so many of our best educators are forced to leave.

**The Reality of Salary Compression**

For too long, Hawai'i has been an outlier. In almost every other profession and in school districts across the mainland, years of service equal a predictable increase in pay. In Hawai'i, we have

suffered through a "mess" where a teacher with 15 years of experience can end up making nearly the same as a brand-new hire because salary steps were frozen or skipped for over a decade.

- The "Paradise Tax": We already pay the highest cost of living in the nation. When you combine that with a compressed salary, you make it impossible for local teachers to own a home, pay off student loans, or raise their own families in the communities where they teach.
- Professional Stagnation: Compression tells our veteran teachers that their experience and commitment to our keiki have no financial value.

## **Solving the Turnover Crisis**

The teacher shortage is a self-inflicted wound caused by underfunding the professional dignity of our workforce. Because we cannot retain local, certified teachers, we are forced into a cycle of:

1. Emergency Hires: Placing individuals in classrooms who lack the specialized training our students. Having so many who only need a high school diploma is unacceptable.
2. J-1 Visa Dependency: Relying on temporary, revolving-door solutions rather than building a stable, long-term local workforce.
3. High Recruitment Costs: It costs the state significantly more to constantly recruit and train new teachers than it does to simply pay our existing teachers a fair, uncompressed wage.

## **A Workforce Priority**

As the Committee on Labor and Government Operations, you understand that a healthy labor market requires a clear path for advancement. HB 1890, HD1 mandates the necessary "step movements" to ensure teachers are placed on the salary range that actually reflects their years of service.

If we truly care about the future of Hawai'i, we must stop the "mess" of salary stagnation. We must treat teaching as the essential, high-value profession it is.

I urge the Committee on Labor & Government Operations to PASS HB 1890, HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Justin Hughey Second Grade Teacher  
Democratic Party of Hawai'i,

State Central Committee  
Education Caucus Rep.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:39:53 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Haylie DeCorte	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Teachers work tirelessly in and out of the classroom to provide the best education they can for each and every of their students. I say this not only as a teacher, but as a student who cherishes her former teachers from each era of her life. Despite the hard work and dedication that teachers give to their job and their students, teachers face some of the most discriminatory and difficult systems in an increasingly difficult work environment. Teachers should be able to receive automatic step increases to their salary WITHOUT having to negotiate for their step increases.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:43:04 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mishka Sulva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support annual step increases for our public school teachers. It is a hard job that requires creativity, consideration for the learner, and the ability to skillfully apply educational theories and a variety of strategies to provide a fruitful education to our keiki. Despite this, many teachers in Hawai'i struggle to make ends meet and as many as half leave after 5-6 years. We pay doctors, lawyers, and legislators a salary that reaches the level of respect, effort, and professionalism we all expect. Let us begin to do the same for teachers.

Thank you for reading and considering this testimony.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:45:40 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jamie Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘is teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation. This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Jamie Walker

Special Education Teacher

Makawao School

Baldwin-Kekaulike-Kūlanihāko'i-Maui Complex Are

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
Arianna Shultz  
Hickam Elementary/Central District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:07:26 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rachel sanders	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying and support of automatic step increases for Hawaii school teachers. I am a teacher here in Hawaii, but I have also taught another states that have automatic step increases. The turnover rate in our state is extremely high mostly because people have a hard time making ends meet here. With an automatic step increase, we would have a security of knowing that we would get a small raise every year like many other states already have a place. It's also an incentive to keep highly qualified educators here. Teacher should be recognized for their years of service without having to do extra credits in order to work their way up the pay scale. The Keiki are our future of Hawaii and teachers are the ones responsible for providing the best education we can for these kids. When the teachers are comfortable and happy than the students receive their teachers at their best. Please consider supporting this important cause.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:14:26 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hope McKeen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Committee Members,

I'm writing to ask for your full support of **HB 1890, HD1**. As a teacher here in Hawai'i, I see firsthand the "sticker shock" that my colleagues face every month. It's no secret that when you factor in our cost of living, we are effectively the lowest-paid educators in the country.

This isn't just a budget issue; it's a retention crisis. Losing nearly half of our teaching workforce every five years is devastating for our students and school communities. By passing annual step increases, you aren't just giving us a raise—you're giving us a reason to stay. Please pass this bill to show that Hawai'i truly values the experience we bring to the classroom.

Mahalo for your time

Hope Pualani McKeen

Hilo

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:14:55 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tes Kaulia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tes Kaulia and I am a community member from Hoolehua, Molokai. I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 1890.

Our keiki deserve the best possible education, and that starts with having a highly qualified, consistent teacher in every classroom. Currently, we are failing them. Because our teacher compensation has not kept pace with the cost of living, we are seeing a revolving door of educators. When a qualified teacher leaves because they can't afford to live here, they are often replaced by long-term substitutes.

While these substitutes work hard, they are not a replacement for a highly qualified, licensed professional who has the training and experience to lead a classroom.

Why I Support HB 1890:

Honoring the Contract: Teachers have had "step increases" in their contracts for years, yet these are often the first things to be frozen or unfunded. If we expect teachers to honor their commitment to our kids, the State must honor its financial commitment to them.

Teacher Retention: It is heartbreaking to hear that nearly half of our teachers leave within five years. When a teacher leaves, our children lose stability, mentorship, and quality instruction. HB 1890 provides the automatic step increases that are the "norm" in almost every other state.

Quality Over Substitutes: Our children are not "placeholders," and their classrooms shouldn't be filled with temporary fixes. To keep quality teachers, we must pay them a wage that reflects their value and allows them to survive in Hawaii.

We often say "Education is a priority," but our budget is where our true priorities are shown. Please fund HB 1890 and give our teachers the raises they have earned and deserve. Let's stop the exodus of our best educators and ensure our keiki have the stable, professional environment they need to thrive.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Tes Kaulia

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:17:43 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Press	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Sayama, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Labor Committee,

Speaking as an individual, I strongly support HB 1890 HD1, which would provide automatic annual step increases for teachers who complete a year of satisfactory service. This bill directly responds to findings from the [2025 Teacher Compensation Study](#), which identified compensation predictability as a central factor affecting morale and retention, with a significant majority of teachers reporting dissatisfaction with their pay relative to Hawai‘i’s cost of living. When step movement is delayed or inconsistent, it effectively results in wage stagnation despite continued service and professional performance. Over time, this erodes trust in the negotiated salary schedule and undermines workforce stability.

The January 2026 UHERO report, [Beyond the Price of Paradise](#), highlights that Hawai‘i faces a combination of high living costs and comparatively low real purchasing power, along with outmigration patterns seen in economically distressed regions. In that environment, predictable and stable wage progression becomes essential for retaining a skilled public workforce, including educators.

I respectfully urge your support of HB 1890 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Michael Press

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:25:31 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
ashley monden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers.

As a special education teacher, I see firsthand how difficult it is to make ends meet in Hawai‘i. Even with a full-time teaching position, I am unable to afford a home of my own. The cost of living continues to rise, while our salaries do not keep pace. When adjusted for the realities of living here, Hawai‘i’s teachers are effectively the lowest paid in the nation.

I have considered numerous times moving to the mainland, where the cost of living is more affordable and homeownership feels possible. But I was born and raised on O‘ahu, and as a fifth-generation local, I feel deeply rooted in this community. I want to continue teaching the next generation of Hawai‘i’s students without living under constant financial strain.

The financial pressure many of us face contributes to the alarming number of teachers who leave the profession or move out of state within just a few years. This instability hurts our schools and, most importantly, our students.

Establishing automatic annual step increases would provide the stability and predictability educators need to stay in the classroom long-term. It shows that the State values our commitment, experience, and dedication to Hawai‘i’s keiki.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

mahalo,

Ashley monden

Mililani Mauka Elementary School/central district

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:35:56 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rexann Dubiel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please, pass HB 1980.

Retain teachers!

Give educators a chance to buy a home and stay home in Hawaii.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:47:48 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Verona Holder	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers.

As a public educator in Hawai‘i, I see firsthand how the high cost of living creates ongoing financial pressure for teachers. Many of my colleagues work second jobs, delay major life decisions, or ultimately leave the profession because they cannot sustain a career in education here. When salaries are adjusted for cost of living, Hawai‘i’s teachers rank among the lowest-paid in the nation. That reality does not reflect the responsibility, education, and dedication this profession requires.

This is not theoretical for me—it is personal. After a full workday serving students, I go home, change my clothes, and begin Door Dashing. I deliver food in the evenings to make ends meet. I hold a master’s degree and am currently pursuing my doctorate, yet I still have to hustle to maintain financial stability. One job should be enough. A career in public education—especially with advanced education and years of experience—should provide a livable wage.

I have also served as a mentor teacher for six educators who moved to Hawai‘i hoping to build lives for themselves and their families. They came ready to commit to our schools and our communities. Yet within one or two years, each of them had to leave—not because they lacked passion or skill, but because they simply could not make the finances work. They wanted to stay. Our students wanted them to stay. But our current compensation structure and cost-of-living realities made it impossible. Our infrastructure does not support long-term retention.

I have remained committed to serving our keiki through shifting mandates, curriculum changes, leadership transitions, and even a global pandemic. I have stepped into leadership roles, supported colleagues, and continuously adapted my practice to meet student needs. Yet despite years of service and professional growth, financial stability remains uncertain for many educators across our state. That uncertainty makes it difficult for teachers to plan for their futures, support their families, or confidently build long-term careers in Hawai‘i.

The high attrition rate—nearly half of teachers leaving within five years—is not just a workforce issue. It directly impacts student achievement, school culture, and community trust. Stability

matters. Experience matters. Relationships matter. When teachers leave, students lose mentors, schools lose institutional knowledge, and remaining staff absorb additional strain.

Establishing automatic annual step increases provides predictable, structured growth that recognizes experience and encourages retention. It communicates that the State values professional longevity and understands that teacher retention is essential to student success. Stability in compensation fosters stability in our schools.

HB 1890, HD1 is a necessary and reasonable step toward strengthening Hawai'i's public education system. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure in support of teacher retention and the long-term success of our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Verona Holder

Mililani Waena Elementary

Central District Executive Board

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:05:18 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rosa Rhea Yalon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Rosa Rhea Yalon

Maui High School / BKKM District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:25:49 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rebecca Kapolei Kiili	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD 1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates financial instability for myself and my colleagues. When adjusted for cost of living, Hawai‘i’s teachers are the lowest paid in the nation. This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession within five years. The high attrition poses a significant problem for stabilizing the teacher workforce and our schools. Losing teachers because of financial instability impacts student learning and school success.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators needs to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our profession and is committed to teacher retention.

As a teacher who is born and raised here and has 20 years of teaching experience, I have worked hard to stabilize my career by following the channels for earning reclassification credits.. I value education as is evident in my credentials. I hold 2 Bachelor of Arts degrees; a Master’s degree, an Educational Doctoral degree; a Driver Education teaching license; and recently worked to earn a Special Education license. Despite my due diligence, and despite being close to the top of the salary schedule, I am still unable to afford to buy a home here.

Please support public educators by passing this bill and funding annual salary step increases.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rebecca Kapolei Kiili

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:30:41 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Matthew Ruiz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate: nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within 5 years. In the past 4 years, 6 teachers from our school have left, including 3 planning to leave this year for higher-paying jobs. This high attrition poses a significant challenge to our schools' stability and students' success.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
Matthew Ruiz  
Kihei ES/Maui District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:35:24 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Logan Okita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR**

**RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.**

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

I am writing in **strong support** of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students. Like many others in our state, including some of you, my partner and I live with my parents to save and be able to afford our other expenses. If living in the home in Palolo Valley where I was raised was not an option, I am not sure I would have been able to afford to return to Hawai‘i to teach after college.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Logan Okita, MEd, NBCT

Nimitz Elementary School

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:37:46 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michelle Siores	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation. This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Michelle Siores

Kahului Elementary School, Maui

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:32:26 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Evelyn Ibonia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
Evelyn Ibonia  
Kihei Elementary School/Maui District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 11:07:20 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Joel Vonnahme	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Teaching as a profession relies upon the dedicated service of individuals who, as a whole, value security and stability, and whose collective labor builds the future of our community, our state, and our nation. By bundling career progression into a collective bargaining agreement, rather than providing a statutory guarantee of each educator's salary schedule step movements, our State undermines the security of the educators it must seek to protect, and in so doing undermines the future of our community, our state, and our nation.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 11:16:19 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christine Thomas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR  
RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a middle school teacher at Kailua Intermediate School, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for myself and my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students. And for me personally as a single working mother of three boys (whose ex-husband left the island seven years ago), my dream of being a teacher is simply not sustainable if I want to continue providing for my children.

Establishing automatic step increases would provide the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
Christine Thomas  
Kailua Intermediate School

House Committee on Labor & Government Operations

Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 9:30 AM

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Laverne Moore. As a retired educator with years of experience in our public school system, I am writing to express my **strong support** for [HB1890 HD1](#).

This bill is a critical step toward ensuring that our teachers are fairly compensated for their dedication and professional growth. Providing annual salary step increases for teachers who complete a year of satisfactory service, **which we had when I started teaching in 1970**, is not just about a paycheck; it is about respect, retention, and the long-term health of our education system.

Throughout my career, I saw many talented educators leave the profession or move out of state because the compensation structure did not reflect their commitment or the rising cost of living in Hawai'i. When we fail to provide predictable, fair increases, we:

- **Undermine Morale:** Teachers deserve to know that their experience and satisfactory service will be recognized financially.
- **Impact Student Learning:** High teacher turnover is disruptive to students. Stability in the workforce leads to better educational outcomes.
- **Hinder Recruitment:** To attract the best and brightest to the classroom, we must offer a competitive and reliable career path.

By supporting [HB1890 HD1](#), this committee has the opportunity to invest in the people who are shaping the future of Hawai'i. Our teachers are our most valuable resource, and it is time their salary structures reflect that.

I respectfully urge the committee to **pass** [HB1890 HD1](#).

Mahalo for your time and for your support of Hawai'i's educators and students.

Sincerely,

Laverne Moore Retired Educator

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:38:25 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alapaʻi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing to urge your support for HB 1890, HD1. As an educator, I see talented colleagues struggle daily with the reality that Hawai‘i’s teacher salaries—when adjusted for our high cost of living—are the lowest in the country.

We are currently facing a revolving door in our classrooms; when 50% of teachers leave within five years, our students lose the mentorship and continuity they deserve. HB 1890, HD1, is a vital step toward fixing this. Automatic step increases offer the financial stability educators need to stay in the classroom and stay in Hawai‘i. Please pass this measure to invest in the future of our profession and our keiki

Mahalo,

Alapaʻi Kaulia , Ke Kula ‘o ‘Ehunuikaimalino

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 6:32:29 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sarah Tochiki	Hawai'i State Teachers Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR**

**RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.**

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

**I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.**

**I started my career in the Hawai'i Public Schools in 2008. I did not receive step increases for over half of my career because of the 2010 housing crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. I was earning the same amount as folks who started half way through my career. Annual step-increases honor the work of the educators, by valuing the number of years they have spent in the classroom.**

**This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.**

**Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.**

**If we want our communities to thrive, the first step is retaining qualified teachers in our classrooms because schools are at the hearts of our communities.**

**Mahalo,**

**Sarah Tochiki**

**Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School**

**Līhu‘e, Kaua‘i**

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 6:36:26 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

I would like to stand in support of hb1890. As a public school teacher, I am struggling. I make smart trade offs like riding the bus, living with roommates, and tutoring on the side for extra income. I manage my finances well. Over the last seven years on island, I am able to put away less and less money for a rainy day however. Our salaries are just not keeping up with inflation. Though I knew when I signed up for the job that I would be making tough trade offs, the amount that I am making now vs the time I need to invest into my job is no longer making sense. When adjusted for our inflation and cost of living, we are some of the worst paid teachers nation wide. I love my job and I love where I live. I know there is a cost to paradise and it is one I have always been willing to pay to be a part of our community. That balance has started to shift and I know I am not alone. An automatic step increase is a great way to offset the squeeze that teachers are currently feeling. It would allow our wages to keep up with rising costs of living. This in turn would allow us to be more fully focused on our jobs and keep us in the industry longer. Long term teachers become expert teachers who can better meet the needs of our students. Please invest in our teachers. It is a sure fire way to invest in our future.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:23:39 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cody Fisichelli	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATIONThursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i’s teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Cody Fisichelli

University Lab School

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:30:41 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Haley van Noord	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘is teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation. This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

I have been an educator in Hawaii since 2009, I have taken over 100 preofessional development credits and I am a Nationally Board Certified teacher. Even with the additional pay these accolades provide, I still have trouble making ends meet.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Haley van Noord

Lahaina Intermediate School

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:35:17 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jacquelyn Hashimoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
Jacquelyn Hashimoto  
Kīpapa Elementary / Central District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:35:43 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Iolani Kuoha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou,

I am in support of HB1890, which is a collective bargaining agreement negotiated for Bargaining Unit (5) teachers and if funds are available to provide annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements.

With the support of this Bill, teachers will feel they are respected and supported for all the work involved with teaching every student to learn.

Mahalo,

Iolani Kuoha

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:51:55 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Coby	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing this letter to support HB1890.

As a teacher I have experienced a lull in pay raises at times when the HSTA has been unable to negotiate step increases. As a new teacher, this greatly hindered my ability to live in Hawaii without having to greatly "tighten my belt." Having to negotiate step increases is not something that teachers in most parts of the country have to do. If we want to retain our educators and not lose more of our locals to the mainland, then we have to make our teachers' pay match their years of service as opposed to unreliable step increases. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Aloha,

Coby Thornton

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR**

**RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.**

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

I am writing in **strong support** of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Faith Scales

Kailua Intermediate School / Windward District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:11:15 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Paul McDonnell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Paul McDonnell, and I am a public school teacher in Hawai‘i. I am writing in strong support of SB2391 / HB1890, which would implement automatic step pay increases for educators who complete a year of satisfactory service.

Automatic step increases are the norm across the country and are a basic expectation for teachers entering the profession. In Hawai‘i, however, step movement is uncertain, negotiated irregularly, and dependent on funding decisions that are often beyond an individual educator’s control. This unpredictability creates confusion, undermines morale, and directly contributes to the state’s ongoing recruitment and retention crisis.

The independent teacher compensation study completed last fall clearly confirmed what educators already know: once adjusted for cost of living, Hawai‘i’s teachers are among the lowest paid in the nation. At the same time, nearly half of new teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. These outcomes are not sustainable for our students, our schools, or our communities.

Automatic step progression is not a bonus or reward—it is a foundational structure that recognizes experience, promotes fairness, and builds trust in the system. Teachers should be able to plan their financial futures with reasonable certainty, especially in one of the most expensive states in the country. When step increases must be bargained year after year, it creates instability that discourages talented educators from staying in Hawai‘i long term.

As a Special Education teacher, I see firsthand how turnover disproportionately harms students with the highest needs. Continuity, experience, and institutional knowledge matter. Retaining skilled educators is not just a workforce issue—it is a student equity issue.

This bill aligns with existing contract language that already recognizes annual step movement as a vital recruitment and retention tool. Codifying automatic step increases, subject to available funding, would improve transparency, reduce confusion, and bring Hawai‘i in line with national standards.

I respectfully urge you to support SB2391 / HB1890 and take a meaningful step toward stabilizing Hawai‘i’s public education workforce.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,  
Paul McDonnell

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:49:51 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Molly Phipps	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATIONThursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

My name is Molly Phipps, and I am a Highly Effective rated teacher on Maui that has taught here for 10 years.

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues and myself. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation. Teachers are being forced to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. For example, I work another restaurant job to make ends meet, which often causes me to get home very late at night, to wake up early in the morning and try to be at my best to teach my students. I've been offered a full time position at my restaurant job, which offers more money than my salary; it makes it difficult to stay in the career I love when another job offers more money and less stress.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. I have seen many talented coworkers leave Hawaii because cost of living is too high and they can make more money as teachers in other states. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students. The State has had significant issues with staffing the 10 years I have worked here. We see and hear from our coworkers and own families/keiki how middle schools and high schools are forced to have students sit in a cafeteria during periods due to lack of teachers. When talented teachers leave, classrooms are left open and the DOE is having a hard time retaining highly effective teachers.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. It lets teachers know the state means it when they say the value teachers. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Molly Phipps

Teacher at Kihei Elementary during COVID years

Current teacher at Pōmaika'i Elementary

Maui District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:11:35 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lisa Whitten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill. Hawaii needs to attract and keep qualified teachers. Many teachers leave the profession and this bill can provide an incentive to stay. Thank you.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:14:02 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bryanna Hansen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Strong Support for HB 1890, HD1 – Automatic Step Increases**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bryanna Hansen, and I am a member of the Ko‘olau Chapter. I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes automatic step increases.

Automatic step increases provide predictability, fairness, and stability for public employees who dedicate their careers to serving our communities. In Hawai‘i’s high cost-of-living environment, regular and timely step increases are essential to help workers keep pace with rising expenses and maintain financial security for their families.

This measure also strengthens recruitment and retention efforts across public service sectors. When employees can rely on a structured and dependable compensation system, morale improves, turnover decreases, and agencies are better able to deliver consistent, high-quality services to the people of Hawai‘i.

Step increases are not bonuses; they are earned recognition of experience, continued service, and professional growth. Ensuring they occur automatically helps prevent unnecessary delays and administrative barriers that can negatively impact hardworking employees.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1890, HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
Bryann Hansen  
Special Education Teacher  
Kahuku Elementary School Windward District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:15:27 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ashley Katamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai'i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,  
Ashley Katamoto

University Laboratory School, Honolulu District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:29:22 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kori Oros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

**I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1**, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator with 17 years of public service, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Kori Oros

Kipapa Elementary Central District

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR**

**RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.**

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

I am writing in **strong support** of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a retired public educator with 40 years of experience, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for teachers. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i’s teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Lori Sasan

Kalaheo Elementary School/ Kauai District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:54:36 AM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lisa Tom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1890 and stand with Hawaii's teachers. This bill would help retain dedicated educators and allow them to focus on teaching rather than worrying about making ends meet.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:22:56 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susana Roman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATION Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Susana Román

Kailua Intermediate

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:01:30 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jordan Hendren	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I respectfully offer my strong support for HB 1890, HD1, which provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As an educator, I witness firsthand the financial pressures teachers face due to Hawai‘i’s high cost of living. When these realities are considered, teacher compensation in Hawai‘i does not adequately reflect the economic challenges of living and working in our state.

These financial difficulties play a significant role in teacher attrition, with many educators leaving the profession or relocating within just a few years. Such turnover disrupts school communities, impacts student learning, and places additional strain on remaining staff.

Providing consistent, automatic step increases would offer educators greater financial stability and demonstrate the State’s commitment to supporting and retaining qualified teachers. I respectfully urge the committee to advance this important measure.

Mahalo,  
Jordan Hendren

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:31:58 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Joshua Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joshua Smith, and I am a public school teacher in Hawai‘i. I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, which would provide automatic annual step increases for teachers who complete a year of satisfactory service.

I have worked in my school for over 13 years, and I have personally seen many excellent teachers leave because they could not afford to continue living in Hawai‘i. These are dedicated, hardworking educators who cared deeply about their students and their schools, but the high cost of living and unpredictable salary growth made it impossible for them to stay. This kind of turnover hurts students, schools, and our entire community.

Automatic step increases are not a bonus—they are a basic and fair part of a professional salary system. In many other states, teachers can count on predictable step movement each year. In Hawai‘i, this uncertainty makes it hard for educators to plan their lives, support their families, and commit long-term to teaching here.

With automatic step increases, teaching becomes a more sustainable career. It would help retain experienced teachers, improve stability in our schools, and reduce the constant cycle of losing good educators and trying to replace them. Most importantly, it helps ensure that our students have consistent, qualified teachers in their classrooms.

HB 1890 is a meaningful step toward valuing educators and strengthening public education in Hawai‘i. I respectfully urge you to support HB 1890.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Respectfully,  
Joshua Smith

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 2:55:10 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shantell-Tiare Tom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

An career that involves taking more courses and degrees just to get reach a six figure salary after giving money and time, experience and compassion more than any profession - Hi, I'm a public school teacher. I didn't start in this profession for the pay, but I definitely need this bill to pass to continue to live in Hawai'i or I'll be another Hawaiian that's priced out of paradise!

Living on what's considered the poorest side of Oahu, being a home-grown educator at my alumni high school in the same community - shows great lengths that I'm willing to do what ever I can to help my community thrive. Are you at the state level willing to insure our support to keep us in this profession that will help our communities thrive and succeed? I hope you choose to help pass this bill to keep homegrown educators in Hawai'i!! Mahalo.

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 5:25:20 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Frederick Sasan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a retired public educator with 40 years of teaching experience with the last 33 years in the State of Hawaii, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for teachers here on Kauai. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession and/or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB 1890, HD1.

Mahalo,  
Frederick Sasan  
Chiefess Kamakahahei Middle School (retired) Kauai District

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:41:23 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Misella Tomita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1890

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

My name is Misella Tomita and I am a special education teacher in Hawaii. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB1890, which would provide automatic annual step increases in teacher salaries for those who complete satisfactory service.

As a teacher — especially working in special education and with students who are deaf — I have seen firsthand how challenging it is to recruit and retain qualified educators in our state. Hawaii’s high cost of living makes it difficult for teachers to stay long term, and on isolated islands it’s even harder to attract and keep certified teachers. This bill acknowledges these challenges and takes an important step toward fairly compensating teachers for their experience and commitment.

By helping retain experienced teachers, especially in hard-to-staff areas like special education and rural islands, HB1890 will improve continuity for students and strengthen our public education system. Mahalo for your consideration and support.

Respectfully,

Misella Tomita

**HB-1890-HD-1**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:43:47 PM

Testimony for LAB on 2/12/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristen Gagesch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR

RE: HB 1890, HD1 – RELATING TO EEDUCATIONThursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 1890, HD1, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers. As a public educator, I see how the high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates a financial crisis for my colleagues. When adjusted for these expenses, Hawai‘i’s teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation.

This financial strain contributes to a staggering turnover rate where nearly half of our teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. This high attrition poses a significant problem for the stability of our schools and the success of our students.

Establishing automatic step increases provides the stability and predictability educators need to remain in the classroom. This measure sends a clear message that the State values our experience and is committed to teacher retention. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

Kristen Gagesch

Kailua Intermediate/Windward District