

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



J.N. MUSTO
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR
KE PO'O KUKAKUKA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
KE KE'ENA MĀLAMA LIMAHAHA 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
Chief Negotiator, Office of Collective Bargaining

Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
and the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Monday, March 23, 2026
1:00PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of
HB1890 HD3, RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chair Elefante, Chair Kim and members of the Committee on Labor and Technology and Committee on Education:

The Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB) appreciates the intent of HB1890 HD3, which would provide automatic salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service, and appropriates funds for teacher retention bonuses. However, OCB must respectfully oppose this measure.

Wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment are subject to negotiations as provided in HRS §89-9; this includes step movements and bonuses. We note that similar statutory language was repealed in 2016 because the legislature agreed that these matters must be negotiated through collective bargaining.

OCB recognizes that HB1890 HD3, provides language clarifying that increases would apply only if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement; however, it is important to be clear about what that means in practice: step movements and longevity increases must still be negotiated each time the parties bargain a new contract.

They are not automatically carried from one contract to the next as this measure would call for. Chapter 89 clearly requires all cost items such as step movements to be negotiated and if agreed upon, they are subject to appropriation by the appropriate legislative bodies.

Lastly, whether a lump sum payment is characterized as a retention bonus or temporary hazard pay, such payments are subject to negotiations under chapter 89.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, ED. D.
CHAIRPERSON

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

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

FOR: HB 1890 HD3 RELATING TO EDUCATION
DATE: March 23, 2026
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE: Committee on Education & Committee on Labor and Technology
ROOM: Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
FROM: Ed H. Noh, Ed. D., Executive Director
State Public Charter School Commission

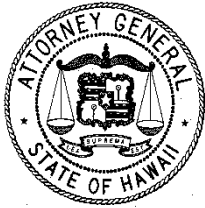
Chair Mercado Kim, Chair Elefante, and members of the Committees:

The State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) appreciates the opportunity to provide **COMMENTS on HB 1890 HD3** which provides automatic step increases in teacher salaries for each year of satisfactory service completed and appropriates funds for teacher retention bonuses.

The Commission humbly requests the committees consider amending this measure by including the language contained in SB 2391 SD2. SB 2391 SD2 clarifies the inclusion of charter schools in this legislation and acknowledges that employment conditions and compensation are set by the charter school that employs the teacher(s).

Passage and adoption of this legislation should assist in the recruitment and retention of teachers in all public schools, including public charter schools, by increasing teacher pay.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.



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

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1890, H.D. 3, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY AND ON EDUCATION

DATE: Monday, March 23, 2026 **TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 229

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Amanda L. Donlin, Deputy Attorney General, or
Fiamma Rago, Deputy Attorney General.

Chairs Elefante and Kim and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) has the following concerns 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. It also appropriates funds for teacher retention bonuses for bargaining unit (5) members who were employed during the specified COVID-19 state of emergency period and remain actively employed as of the bill's effective date.

However, this 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, for the purposes of the definition of "collective bargaining," 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. In addition, section 89-19, HRS, provides that chapter 89 shall take precedence over all conflicting statutes concerning collective bargaining and shall preempt all contrary local ordinances, executive orders, legislation, or rules.

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 promoted 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 salary steps to be negotiated through collective bargaining. Reinserting similar wording in chapter 302A through this bill could again create a conflict with chapter 89.

Separately, the phrase "**[n]otwithstanding any law to the contrary**" in the new section of chapter 302A at page 2, line 14, would permit the transfer of funds from other Department of Education (DOE) Program IDs to finance annual salary step increases. Because this wording is not expressly limited to a specific collective bargaining agreement or to a corresponding legislative appropriation, it creates the risk that other DOE programs could be required to absorb the costs of this action.

Additionally, the phrase "**and subject to the availability of funds**" in the new section of chapter 302A at page 2, line 16, is ambiguous in that it fails to identify the party responsible for determining such availability. Given this ambiguity, and when read in conjunction with the clause "[n]otwithstanding any law to the contrary," the wording of the new sections may be reasonably construed as authorizing the reallocation or transfer of funds from other DOE Program IDs to cover the annual salary step increases.

Further, this bill does not specify the amount appropriated to fund the annual salary step increases; consequently, the total fiscal impact of the bill cannot be determined.

To promote consistency with chapter 89, HRS, and to address the above concerns, the Department recommends replacing the proposed new section in chapter 302A with the following:

§302A- Salary increases; annual, longevity. (a) Teachers who have completed one year of satisfactory service and complied with the requirements of sections 302A-601.5 through 302A-642 and section 302A-701, as applicable, shall be eligible for an annual increment if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement under section 89-9, subject to subsection (c).

(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 complied with the other requirements of sections 302A-601.5 through 302A-

642 and section 302A-701, as applicable, shall be eligible for longevity step increases if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement under section 89-9, subject to subsection (c).

(c) Any collective bargaining agreement negotiated pursuant to section 89-9 that provides for annual increments or longevity step increases under this section and requires the expenditure of public funds shall be subject to funding by a specific appropriation enacted by the legislature. The agreement shall not be effective or enforceable unless and until sufficient funds are appropriated for its implementation. The legislature may reject the agreement in whole by declining to appropriate the funds necessary to implement it.

Finally, with respect to section 3 of the bill (page 3, line 7, through page 4 line 7), which appropriates a retention bonus, the Department recommends adding the following clarifying wording after "this Act" on page 4, line 5: "; provided that bonuses authorized under this section shall be subject to collective bargaining pursuant to chapter 89, Hawaii Revised Statutes."

Without the above suggested changes to resolve our concerns, we respectfully ask for this bill to be held.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



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

Date: 03/23/2026

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: LBT/EDU

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1890, HD3, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements, subject to certain requirements. Appropriates funds for teacher retention bonuses. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD3)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) respectfully provides comments on HB 1890, HD3.

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, HD 3.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

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

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

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

TESTIMONY BY SETH S. COLBY, Ph.D.
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
AND EDUCATION
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1890, H.D. 3

March 23, 2026
1:00 p.m.
Room 229 and Videoconference

RELATING TO EDUCATION

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

House Bill No. 1890, H.D. 3, provides an annual increment if negotiated into a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) pursuant to Section 89-9, and subject to the availability of funds, for teachers who have completed a year's satisfactory service and who have complied with the other requirements of Sections 302A-601.5 to 302A-642 and 302A-701, as applicable and provides longevity step increases, subject to the availability of funds, 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-601.5 to 302A-642 and 302A-701, as applicable. The bill also appropriates an unspecified amount in general funds for FY 27 for teacher retention bonuses to members of bargaining unit (BU) 5 that have been continuously employed as a member of BU 5 between March 4, 2020, and March 25, 2022, and actively employed by the Department of Education as of the Act's effective date.

B&F opposes this measure because the bill does not appear to impose a mandatory obligation on the Legislature to appropriate funds for the annual salary step increases. The phrase, "Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary," would permit

the transfer of funds from other Department of Education (DOE) Program IDs to finance the annual salary step increases. Because this provision is not explicitly tied to a specific CBA or corresponding legislative appropriation, it raises the possibility that other DOE programs may be required to absorb these costs. Further, the phrase, “and subject to the availability of funds,” is ambiguous because it does not specify who is responsible for determining such availability. When read in conjunction with the phrase, “Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary,” this language could reasonably be interpreted as authorizing the reallocation or transfer of funds from other DOE Program IDs to cover the annual salary step increases. Finally, this bill does not specify the amount appropriated to fund the annual salary step increases; consequently, the overall fiscal impact cannot be determined.

Additionally, while the bill acknowledges that the annual salary step increases would apply only if negotiated into a CBA, it does not provide the same clarification for the teacher retention bonuses and continues to legislate specific wage outcomes that are already subject to mandatory CB under Chapter 89, HRS, and preferentially directs the outcome of CB negotiations for a select BU.

While the Legislature has the authority to establish the overall scope of CB, it has already exercised that authority by creating the statutory framework in Chapter 89, HRS. Directly legislating outcomes that fall within mandatory subjects of bargaining, such as wages or step movements, circumvents the very structure the Legislature established, disrupts the CB process, and represents a partial return to pre-Chapter 89 practices of legislated wages and working conditions for public employees.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Andrea Eshelman
Executive Director

**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
&
TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Item: HB 1890, HD3 – Relating to Education

Position: Support

Hearing: Monday, March 23, 2026, 1:00 pm, Room 229

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

Dear Chairs Elefante & Kim, Vice Chairs Lamosao & Kidani, and members of the committees,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **strongly supports** H.B. 1890, HD3, which establishes annual salary step increases for public school teachers and appropriates funds for crucial teacher retention bonuses. 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, where 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, HD3 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".

Furthermore, we strongly support the new additions in the HD3 draft that appropriate funds to provide a retention bonus for our educators. Rewarding eligible state officers and employees who have been continuously employed as a member of bargaining unit 5 between March 4, 2020, and March 25, 2022, is a necessary step to recognize those who remained steadfastly dedicated to our students throughout the immensely challenging and unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Distributing this bonus in four equal installments over the coming years will serve as a powerful incentive to keep our experienced educators here in Hawai'i. By providing these step increases and retention bonuses, the State is sending a clear message that it values the experience of its educators.

We respectfully urge the committees to pass this measure.



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

**THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2026**

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair

Monday, March 23, 2026, 1:00 PM
Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB1890, HD3 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chairs Elefante and Kim, Vice Chairs Lamosao and Kidani, 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, HD3, which, pursuant to a negotiated collective bargaining agreement 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 a retention bonus 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.

HEADQUARTERS

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MAUI

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HOUSE BILL 1890, HD3, RELATING TO EDUCATION

MARCH 23, 2026 · LBT/EDU HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1890, HD3, relating to education, which provides annual salary step increases for public school teachers who have completed one year's satisfactory service and comply with specified requirements, subject to certain requirements; and appropriates funds for teacher retention bonuses.

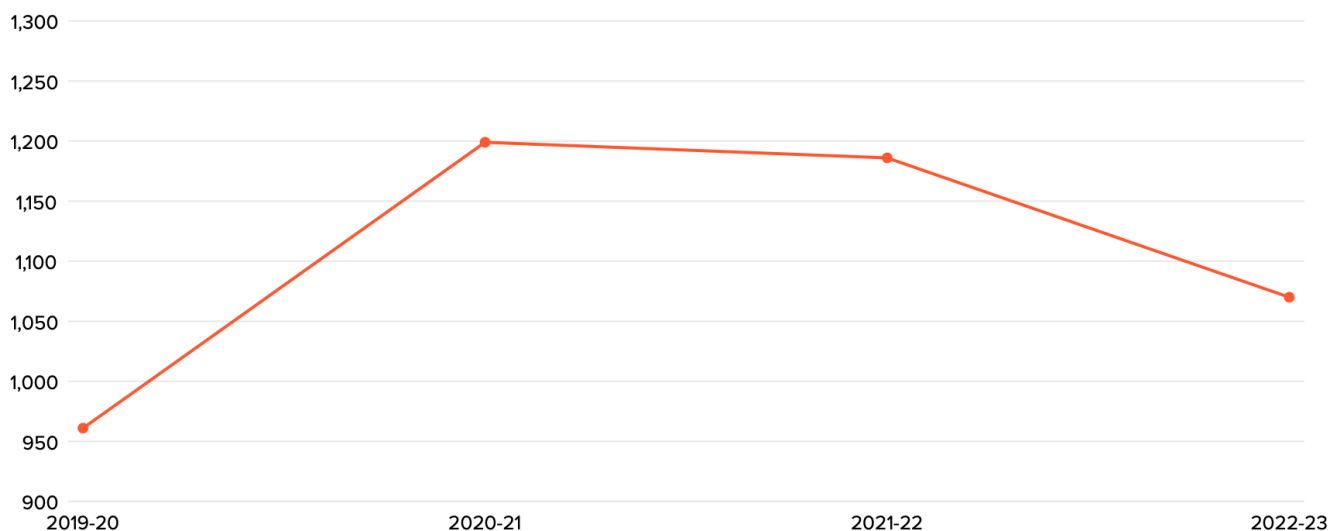
Teachers are the most important professionals in increasing student achievement. According to numerous studies, however, Hawai'i's average teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living. A 2020 study conducted by APA Consulting on behalf of the Hawai'i Department of Education 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 2025 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 · 808-679-7454

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 9:56:43 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

As a 20-year veteran of Hawai‘i’s classrooms, I have witnessed firsthand the heavy toll financial instability takes on our schools. It is a painful reality that when adjusted for the cost of living, Hawai‘i’s educators are amongst the lowest paid teachers in the nation. This is more than just a statistic—it creates a revolving door of talent. With nearly 50% of new teachers leaving within five years, our students are stripped of the continuity and mentorship they deserve.

HB1890 addresses this crisis by honoring the language already established in our Unit 5 collective bargaining agreement. Specifically, it recognizes annual step increases as an essential tool for recruitment and retention. By codifying these increases, this bill provides the "predictability" identified in the *2025 HIDOE Teacher Compensation Report* as a critical factor in building trust and reducing attrition.

Furthermore, by incorporating retention bonuses, this bill acknowledges the dedication of long-term educators. After two decades in this profession, I can attest that a clear, reliable path to salary progression is what keeps a teacher in the classroom. I urge this committee to pass this measure and demonstrate to our educators that their experience and commitment are truly valued.

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 12:58:33 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kian Guan Au	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Bill: HB1890

Committee: Senate Committees on Labor and Technology (LBT) & Education (EDU)

Hearing Date: March 23, 2026, 1:00 PM

Position: Support

To the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Committees on Labor and Technology and Education:

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 establishes automatic annual salary step increases for public school teachers who meet satisfactory performance standards.

As a public school special education teacher, I see firsthand how teacher retention and stability directly impact student learning and school effectiveness. Consistency in staffing is especially critical in special education, where students rely on structured support, strong relationships, and experienced educators to make meaningful progress.

From both an educational and workforce perspective, predictable salary step increases are essential. They provide teachers with a clear and reliable pathway for professional growth while strengthening morale and long-term commitment to the profession. Without this stability, schools face ongoing turnover, which disrupts instruction and places additional strain on remaining staff.

HB1890 supports a more stable and sustainable educator workforce by recognizing experience and continued service. This stability benefits not only teachers but also students, families, and the broader school community.

I respectfully urge the Committees to support HB1890 and advance this important measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Kian Guan Au

Honolulu, HI 96821

Testimony on HB 1890 HD3 – Relating to Education

Support with Amendments

From: R. Kana'iaupuni Gomes
Concerned Citizen
Honolulu, Hawai'i
rkgomes@gmail.com

Date: March 20, 2026

To:

Representative Justin H. Woodson, Primary Sponsor
Representative Terez Amato, Primary Sponsor
Representative Della Au Belatti, Primary Sponsor
Representative Trish La Chica, Primary Sponsor
Representative Mike Lee, Primary Sponsor
Representative Nicole Lowen, Primary Sponsor
Representative Lisa Marten, Primary Sponsor
Representative Scot Matayoshi, Primary Sponsor
Representative Lauren Matsumoto, Primary Sponsor
And All Co-Sponsors and Members of the Committee

Re: HB 1890 HD3 – Relating to Education – Support with Amendments

Dear Representative Woodson, Representative Amato, Representative Au Belatti, Representative La Chica, Representative Lee, Representative Lowen, Representative Marten, Representative Matayoshi, Representative Matsumoto, and All Co-Sponsors and Committee Members:

I am writing as a concerned citizen of Hawai'i to express my support for the intent of HB 1890 HD3, which seeks to improve compensation and retention for Hawai'i's public school teachers. However, I submit this testimony with significant concerns and respectfully request amendments to address critical weaknesses in the bill as currently drafted.

Strong Support for the Intent

I strongly support the recognition that Hawai'i's teacher salaries are not competitive once adjusted for our uniquely high cost of living, and that we are losing far too many teachers within their first five years of service. As a member of this community who is deeply invested in the well-being of our people and our future, I see firsthand the strain that our education system is under. A structured system of annual step increases, longevity increases, and retention bonuses is essential if we are serious about stabilizing our workforce and ensuring continuity for our students.

Critical Concerns and Requested Amendments

However, I am deeply concerned about several weaknesses in the bill as currently drafted:

1. Key Dollar Amounts Are Left Blank

The total appropriation and the per-teacher retention bonus amounts are left blank in the bill. Without specific figures, it is impossible for educators, families, or the public to understand the actual impact of

this measure or assess whether it meaningfully addresses the crisis we face. **Why introduce a bill that does not have key dollar amounts listed?** This undermines transparency and accountability.

I respectfully request: Insert concrete, adequate dollar amounts for the total appropriation and per-teacher bonus, based on realistic cost-of-living and retention needs.

2. Unfairly Narrow Eligibility Period for Retention Bonuses

The retention bonus eligibility period—continuous employment in bargaining unit 5 between March 4, 2020 and March 25, 2022—unfairly narrows who benefits. **This limitation excludes newer hires, returning teachers, and long-term teachers who fall outside this window**, despite their critical contributions and current financial struggles. Any serious retention effort must recognize and support the full range of teachers we are depending on right now.

I respectfully request: Broaden eligibility for retention bonuses to include newer hires, returning teachers, and long-term teachers whose service falls outside the current narrow window.

3. Step Movements Are Contingent on "Availability of Funds"

The provisions for annual step movements and longevity increases are contingent on both collective bargaining and the "availability of funds." While collective bargaining is appropriate, **using "availability of funds" as a condition weakens the State's commitment** and allows needed pay progression to be deferred when budgets are tight—precisely when teachers are under the most strain. If we acknowledge that our pay structure is inadequate, **funds must be found and reliably allocated.**

I respectfully request: Strengthen the commitment to annual step and longevity increases by removing or tightly limiting "availability of funds" language, and by prioritizing teacher compensation in budget decisions.

4. Effective Date of July 1, 3000 Is Unacceptable

The effective date of July 1, 3000 is disappointing and symbolic of a broader problem: **we cannot delay action.** If the State of Hawai'i is serious about retaining its educators and the residents of Hawai'i, these changes **must be implemented immediately—within the next three years.** Our teachers and students cannot wait generations for relief. This needs to happen now.

I respectfully request: Replace the July 1, 3000 effective date with a practical, near-term effective date so that these measures take effect as soon as reasonably possible, ideally within the next three fiscal years.

Conclusion

I support HB 1890 HD3 because our teachers deserve predictable, fair compensation that reflects the reality of living in Hawai'i and the importance of their work to our keiki, our families, and our future. I understand deeply the value of committed, stable educators and believe in our collective responsibility to care for those who serve our community.

I urge you to pass this bill only with amendments that address these critical gaps so that it becomes a truly effective tool for teacher retention and educational stability. Our educators deserve better than empty promises and distant timelines. They deserve concrete support now.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and for your ongoing work on behalf of Hawai'i's keiki and communities.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

R. Kana'iaupuni Gomes
Concerned Citizen
Honolulu, Hawai'i

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

Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

Fr: Ms. Janel Fujinaka, Makiki Resident / At-Large Board Member
Neighborhood Board Makiki – Tantalus – Papakōlea – Punchbowl

Re: Testimony on H.B. 1890 – RELATING TO HEALTH CARE (Strong Support)

Committee: EDU-LBT
Date/Time: March 23, 2026, 1:00 PM
Location: Conference Room 229

March 20, 2026

Aloha Chair's Senator Mercado Kim & Senator Elefante, Vice-Chair's Senator Kidani and Senator Lamosao, and Committee Members,

My name is Janel S. Fujinaka. I serve on the Makiki Neighborhood Board and am testifying today also as a private citizen committed to evidence-based policy that improves outcomes for our students and strengthens our community.

I **strongly support HB1890 HD3** because sustained, predictable compensation for public school teachers is fundamental to addressing Hawai'i's ongoing educator shortage and ensuring stable learning environments for our children.

A recent independent analysis conducted by a nationally recognized consulting firm, commissioned by the Hawai'i State Department of Education, confirms that 94% of Hawai'i teachers report their salaries do not keep pace with the cost of living in this State, contributing significantly to dissatisfaction and attrition.

The same study found that nearly 40% of teachers surveyed said they may leave the profession within three years due to financial stress and unpredictable salary progression.

According to recent salary data, the average teacher salary in Hawai'i is approximately \$56,000 annually, with many teachers earning between roughly \$48,000 and \$63,000, even with years of experience.

Hawaii's cost of living remains significantly above the national average, particularly in housing and transportation costs, meaning that typical teacher salaries go considerably further here than in most other states.

HB1890 HD3 directly addresses these documented challenges by creating a mechanism for automatic annual salary step increases and longevity increases for experienced teachers, aligning salary progression with sustained service and helping teachers remain in the profession.

Addressing Opposition Concerns

I respectfully acknowledge testimony from the Office of Collective Bargaining and others expressing concern about collective bargaining prerogatives and the fiscal impact. These concerns are legitimate considerations in policy design. However:

1. Collective Bargaining:

This bill does not replace bargaining rights. It aligns with existing agreements for Bargaining Unit 5, maintaining union negotiation while adding predictability that many teachers and administrators themselves have identified as lacking.

2. Fiscal Responsibility:

While HB1890 HD3 ties increases to the availability of funds, the real fiscal cost of teacher turnover is substantial, including recruitment, training, substitute staffing, and the erosion of instructional continuity. Predictable step increases help reduce turnover, thereby stabilizing districts and potentially lowering long-term system costs.

A Practical Policy Solution

To strengthen and make this bill workable, I recommend:

- Incorporating dedicated baseline funding in the Department of Education's budget for teacher step and longevity increases, rather than relying solely on discretionary appropriations.
- Including regular reporting requirements on the impact of step increases on retention, recruitment, and student outcomes.

These measures ensure that HB1890 HD3 is fiscally responsible, transparent, and aligned with long-term workforce planning.

Impact on Makiki and Our Community

In urban districts like Makiki, where housing costs and living expenses are especially high, reliable salary progression makes the difference between whether a teacher can

afford to live in the community they serve or must commute long distances or leave the profession entirely. Sustaining experienced educators leads to:

- Greater instructional continuity,
- Stronger student-teacher relationships, and
- Improved school climate and performance.

The challenges facing Hawai'i's education workforce are well documented. HB1890 HD3 institutes a practical policy response grounded in data and repeated testimony from teachers. I respectfully urge the

Committee to pass this measure with the recommended enhancements to ensure Hawai'i can recruit and retain high-quality teachers for years to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janel S. Fujinaka', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Janel S. Fujinaka, Makiki Resident
At-Large Makiki Neighborhood Board Member
Former Equality Hawaii Board Member

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 10:07:43 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shantell-Tiare Tom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Speaking as an individual and a teacher, I - Shantell-Tiare Tom, give this testimony to share my experience of working through COVID in-person and concurrent learning. It was difficult time period, especially teaching students how to interact in person to interacting on a screen. Let alone teaching students computer literacy and skills, along with their parents to ensure attendance - only if you were one of the lucky students that had home internet. Then, once you've mastered and finally got a handle of teaching online, after investing in PD classes and trainings, to risk your health by returning to the classroom with hardly anytime to clean and sanitize your room, set up safeguards, and figure out how to teach woodwind and brass instruments to students without getting them even more sick with little to no budget and preparation - that's survival hazard pay. To the many teachers that are still teaching and surviving post-COVID continue with even greater excellence. We sacrificed our pay cut during the pandemic and waited patiently for the day we'll be granted our due diligence with increase. Having "Automatic Step Increases" are best practices for retaining teachers in Hawaii and hard-to-staff places. Being a home-grown teacher and blessed to work at my Alma Mater - students, teachers and community members are excited and happy to see members of their community work to build and strengthen their community. I ask to please keep local teachers in Hawaii by approving this bill, and not be 'priced out of paradise'.

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 10:08:38 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alex Tam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a teacher in Leeward District, I have seen far too many amazing, highly qualified veteran educators leave the profession or leave the island because the cost of living is just too high. When this happens, our keiki are the ones who suffer. Teachers have faced difficult conditions and stagnating wages, and we deserve respect and a living wage.

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 11:28:24 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

I strongly support H.B. 1890, H.D.3. This measure promotes the common good by strengthening teacher retention through predictable salary step increases and retention bonuses for educators who have continued to serve Hawai'i's students.

Hawai'i has experienced sustained outmigration for decades, driven by the combined pressures of high cost of living and lagging incomes. These same pressures are pushing educators out of our schools and out of our state. Policies that provide fair, stable compensation are essential to keeping teachers in Hawai'i and sustaining our public education workforce.

Supporting teachers is not only about fairness, but it is also about maintaining the stability of our communities and ensuring that students have consistent, qualified educators in every classroom.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 8:34:40 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Stange	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

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,

Richard Stange

Mililani Middle School/Central

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 9:46:35 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ashley monden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear 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

LATE

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 1:04:33 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kylie Adamany	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Kylie Adamany, and I am writing in strong support of HB1890. As a public school student in Hawai'i who hopes to major in elementary education, this bill is deeply personal to me. If we want strong schools and stable classrooms, we must support the teachers who show up for us every single day.

The bill correctly identifies a serious issue: when adjusted for cost of living, Hawai'i's teachers are the lowest-paid in the nation. According to the National Education Association, Hawai'i consistently ranks near the bottom in teacher pay when cost of living is factored in. While the raw salary numbers may appear average nationally, Hawai'i's extremely high housing, food, and transportation costs dramatically reduce what teachers actually take home. If we expect highly qualified educators to live and work here, their salaries must reflect the real cost of living in our state.

Teacher retention in Hawai'i is alarming. As stated in the bill, nearly half of teachers leave the profession or the state within five years. Data from the Hawaii State Department of Education has shown ongoing challenges in recruitment and retention, especially in hard-to-fill areas and neighbor island schools. When teachers leave, students lose stability, mentorship, and continuity in learning. High turnover disrupts school culture and academic progress. Automatic annual step increases provide predictable financial growth, which can encourage teachers to stay and build long-term careers here.

Research from the Learning Policy Institute highlights that competitive compensation is one of the most significant factors in teacher retention. States that implement structured salary growth and longevity incentives experience improved retention rates and stronger teacher morale. HB1890 supports exactly that approach, rewarding satisfactory service and long-term commitment. This is not just about raises; it is about valuing experience, encouraging stability, and investing in student success.

In closing, I respectfully urge you to pass HB1890. If we truly care about the future of education in Hawai'i, we must care about the people leading our classrooms. Automatic step increases for satisfactory service show teachers that their dedication matters and that the state recognizes their commitment.

As someone who hopes to become a teacher here one day, I want to see a system where educators are supported, respected, and able to afford to stay. Supporting this bill is an investment in our teachers, our students, and Hawai'i's future.

Mahalo for your time and for your service to our state.

—Kylie Adamany

LATE

HB-1890-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 9:52:57 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justine M Miyashiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom this may concern,

My name is Justine Miyashiro and I am an 8th grade math teacher in the Leeward District.

This is my 13th year teaching and I just renewed my National Board Certification last December.

I am writing in support of HB1890 which would put teachers one step closer to achieving automatic step increases and temporary covid hazard pay.

As with all of my fellow coworkers, I went in to school during the peak years of covid. Though we started out fully remote, there were students who struggled immensely and needed to come in face to face to get instruction. I would go out every day to work with them on their math, while still teaching my online classes. Then we transitioned to in person with about half of the class at a time. But that still meant that we had about 500+ students on campus intermingling. Needless to say almost every teacher came down with covid at some point during the 2 years following the height of the pandemic. There was no way to fully ensure students followed the proper safety protocols (especially at the middle school level) and often times they would still be sent to school even if they had symptoms. But our main concern was still doing the best we could to ensure our students had access to the curriculum and, more importantly, socialization.

Teaching is a profession that I believe all of our lawmakers understand is crucial. And I have always felt that they support everything we do in spirit. But it would be great to see it backed up financially. Right now I am a part time caretaker for my dad and am helping to pay for my family's mortgage along with a mortgage for the house I own with my husband. It has been very difficult to say the least.

And so, I really hope you will consider approving HB1890.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

~Justine Miyashiro

Ewa Makai Middle School

Leeward District