



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

Date: 03/23/2026

Time: 01:11 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: EDU

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1891, HD1, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding HB1891, HD1. The Department is already actively designing an implementation plan for all English-medium K-3 schools to administer dyslexia-sensitive, developmentally appropriate universal screeners from an approved list by School Year (SY) 2027-2028. The Department is conducting a pilot in SY 2026-2027 in specific volunteer complex areas with approved K-3 screeners to evaluate teachers' and principals' perceptions of their effectiveness, quality, and ease of administration. The Department is focused on ensuring that K-3 students are adequately screened for reading risk, while also ensuring that principals' and teachers' voice are honored in the process. The pilot screeners fully address all areas of reading that are specified in the language of HB1891, HD1.

Importantly, the Department clarifies that dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners do not formally identify students as having dyslexia and do not serve diagnostic purposes for specific learning disabilities. The current language in the bill of, "Implementing evidence-based interventions for students who are identified as having dyslexia..." may present a conflict with this, as students flagged for reading risk on a dyslexia-sensitive universal screener are not automatically identified as having dyslexia or a specific learning disability. The Department respectfully suggests language that any students with reading risk be provided appropriate interventions, as is already required by the Department's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

The Department also notes that all schools were already administering universal screeners as of SY 2019-2020, and that the pilot of specific K-3 dyslexia-sensitive screeners in volunteer complex areas and schools is taking place with existing Department funds. The Department is conscious of maintaining a fiscally responsible

assessment infrastructure, and will be exploring internal materials development during SY 2026-2027, which could reduce or eliminate reliance on external assessment providers in future years.

The Department has launched statewide, free, and open source professional development in structured literacy for preschool, kindergarten-5th grade, and 6th-12th grade teachers. This free professional development will be continuously available to all Department teachers. Similarly, the Department is hosting ongoing free training in MTSS, which is already a required structure in all schools for providing core instruction and evidence-based interventions to all students based on their academic needs. The Department is also hosting ongoing Literacy Coaching training, grounded in principles of structured literacy and MTSS.

The Department has also convened a workgroup with partnership with Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) regarding preservice teacher preparation and structured literacy instruction. The workgroup includes multiple IHE representatives and their work is ongoing.

Finally, the Department notes that the bill does not specify reading research and practices for the Hawaiian-medium Kaiapuni context, but rather reflects research that has been traditionally based in western, English-centered contexts. As a dual-language system, the Department respectfully notes that English-centered research and evidence cannot be assumed to automatically transfer to the Kaiapuni context. Should this bill continue forward, the Department respectfully suggests language that specifically exempts initial Kaiapuni participation, and allows the Kaiapuni context time and space to research whether and how reading risk is different in Hawaiian literacy development, and whether and how screening processes should take place in Kaiapuni K-3 classrooms.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding HB 1891, HD1.



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA

PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
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TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

March 23, 2026

The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senate Committee on Education
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Kim and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1891 HD1, Relating to Education

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **SUPPORT of HB1891 HD1**, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction.

Early identification and intervention are critical to improving reading outcomes. Research consistently shows that students who are not reading proficiently by third grade face long-term academic challenges. Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening, paired with structured literacy instruction and evidence-based interventions, creates a proactive system that identifies students at risk before they fall significantly behind.

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities often experience co-occurring language, processing, or literacy challenges. When reading difficulties are not identified early, these students may struggle unnecessarily or be misidentified, delaying appropriate supports. Implementing consistent, linguistically appropriate screening tools and structured literacy instruction strengthens the multi-tiered system of supports and promotes equitable access to reading proficiency for all learners.

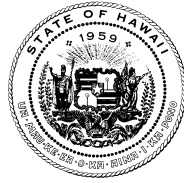
Professional development and pre-service training are also essential. Ensuring that both current and future educators are trained in structured literacy approaches improves instructional quality systemwide and supports inclusive classrooms where students with diverse learning needs can succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB1891 HD1.

Sincerely,
Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



STACEY A. ALDRICH
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Ke Po'o Hale Waihona Puke Moku'āina

STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
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**Senate Committee on Education
March 23, 2026, 1:11 pm
State Capitol, Room 229**

HB 1891 HD1 – Relating to Education

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

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) **supports the intent** HB 1891 HD1 which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction.

The author of the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series which he created to honor his son who struggled with dyslexia, wrote, "Dyslexic kids are creative, 'outside-the-box' thinkers. They have to be, because they don't see or solve problems the same way other kids do. In school, unfortunately, they are sometimes written off as lazy, unmotivated, rude or even stupid." We don't want our young learners to be labeled or frustrated and wondering why they might be having difficulties reading.

HB 1891 HD1 supports the best practices that we know help struggling readers: early identification, strong support, and evidence-aligned, structured literacy instruction.

Respectfully, HSPLS requests consideration for the suggested amendment by HawaiiKidsCAN, which would require the DOE to collect and share data on the program's efficacy.

Hawai'i is one of the few states in the U.S. that does not have legislation acknowledging the importance of early intervention for reading. This bill will reinforce the State's commitment to reading and literacy so all students can be successful learners now and into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1891 HD1 and your continued support of a literate Hawai'i.



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

March 23, 2026

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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Ms. Susan Wood, *Vice Chair*

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

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Committee on Education
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 1891, HD 1 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Dear Senator Kim and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State Advisory Council under the Individual's with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is in **strong support** of HB 1891, HD 1 that requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction

This legislation is critical in addressing the significant literacy achievement gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers. SEAC advises the Department of Education on the needs of roughly 20,000 students who have been found eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The largest subgroup of special education students is identified as having a specific learning disability, and according to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, 80-90 percent of these students likely have dyslexia. In SY 2024-25, only about one in ten 3rd and 4th grade students with learning disabilities were proficient in reading on the Smarter Balance Assessment. Many students identified in other IDEA eligibility categories also have significant difficulties with literacy resulting in the largest achievement gaps in reading on the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the National Assessment of Educational Progress of any other student subgroup.

Universal & Dyslexia Screening. Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening for grades kindergarten through 3rd grade could help to identify the estimated 15-20% of the school population who have dyslexia and related reading difficulties before they begin to fall behind and provide them with targeted interventions that could mitigate the need for specially designed instruction in the future. Without



identification and individualized support, these students will fail to develop a strong foundation in literacy and become at risk of academic failure, higher rates of dropping out and incarceration, and lower future earnings.

Structured Literacy Training. Non-proficient readers who are currently in grades 4 and above will also benefit from this measure which mandates professional development statewide for all teachers to better recognize dyslexia and deliver structured literacy instruction and evidence-based interventions to address self-regulation, executive functioning, reading, writing and comprehension. While structured literacy is essential for students with dyslexia, research has shown that it is effective for all students and fits well within a multi-tiered system of supports where interventions are individualized for students who are not successful with Tier 1 instruction. Training will also include preservice in state approved teacher education programs, ensuring that future teachers will have the skills to identify students with dyslexia and address their unique learning needs.

Written parent notification. While not explicitly mentioned in HB 1891, HD 1, SEAC holds strongly that parents must be notified early when their child is at risk of reading delays and given the tools to support their child's literacy at home. We are therefore in support of the amendment offered by HawaiiKidsCAN stating that "a family must receive written notification within 30 school days if a student is determined to be at risk of language or literacy challenges. Notifications should also include the basis for the "at-risk" determination."

Dyslexia and other reading challenges when identified early and addressed with structured literacy instruction can set students on the path to a successful academic career. We urge your Committee to support this legislation that is targeting ALL struggling readers to ensure a system that is fair and consistent across the state. This investment will pay huge dividends in improving the academic success and future contributions of Hawaii's public school students.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
Chair

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 11:16:34 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Piikea Kalakau-Baarde	Testifying for Teach for America Hawai'i	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Senator Kim, Chair, Senator Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, and I work at Teach for America Hawai'i. I'm a former public school teacher and now support TFA Hawai'i's local initiatives, including our corps member programming, early literacy, alumni leadership development, external affairs, and more.

I'm reaching out in support of HB1891, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive, linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidence-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction

A significant portion of my current role involves advancing a 10-year goal around early literacy that we established through research and over 400 local interviews and survey responses from educational leaders, community organizations, students, and families. Specifically, our goal is that by 2030, twice as many children in Nānākuli and Wai'anae will reach proficiency in 3rd-grade reading, indicating that they are on a path to economic mobility and co-creating a future filled with possibilities. We believe that this bill will contribute to our goal.

HB1891 represents a critical step toward ensuring that every child in Hawai'i has the foundational skills necessary for lifelong success. By mandating dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, this bill addresses a significant gap in our current educational system. Early identification is the most effective way to prevent reading failure, and codifying these practices ensures that students with dyslexia and other literacy challenges receive the targeted, linguistically appropriate support they deserve from the very beginning of their academic journey.

Furthermore, the bill's focus on professional development in structured literacy empowers our educators with the tools needed to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Investing in teacher training and aligning instruction with proven, research-based practices is not just an educational improvement; it is a matter of equity for our students. TFA Hawai'i already partners with Chaminade University to provide training in evidence-based literacy practices to all of our corps members. We know the value of this literacy-based professional development for new teachers

across content areas and grade levels. HB1891 provides the necessary framework and resources to move Hawai'i toward a more consistent and effective literacy model, ultimately strengthening our entire community through higher academic achievement and improved student outcomes.

Mahalo,

Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, EdD

TFA Hawai'i

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Emilie, and I am a third-grade student.

When students struggle to read, the effects can go far beyond academics. Students may feel embarrassed, anxious, or discouraged.

The true cost of illiteracy is not just difficulty with reading—it can also affect a child's confidence, mental health, and sense of belonging at school.

The good news is that we know how to help struggling readers.

Please support HB 1891 so students receive the support they need to succeed.

Mahalo, Emilie
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Jude 3rd grade, and I am a third-grade student in Hawai'i.

Every child in our state deserves the opportunity to learn to read. Research shows that about 1 in 5 students may have Dyslexia, and we know how to help them succeed.

HB 1891 ensures early screening and evidence-based instruction that supports all learners.

Please choose literacy. Please choose Hawai'i's keiki.

Mahalo,

Jude

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

When assessments show that a student may need extra reading support, families should be informed as soon as possible. Early communication allows families and teachers to work together to help students succeed.

Families and schools are partners in supporting children.

HB 1891 ensures that families are notified when data shows a student may need additional help, so support can begin early.

Please support HB 1891 to strengthen collaboration between schools and families.

Mahalo,

Tommy

Bunroghs
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Reading opens doors. It helps students learn, explore their interests, and pursue their dreams.

But when reading is difficult, and students do not understand why, they may begin to feel discouraged or alone.

HB 1891 will ensure that students are screened early and provided with effective instruction and support.

Please support this bill so every child in Hawai'i has the opportunity to succeed as a reader.

Mahalo, Aubrey
3rd grade

Aloha, Committee -

My name is Coco Beh. I am dyslexic. Because we found out two years ago, I'm getting lots of help at school and from my family.

I am lucky.

But I wonder what would happen to me if I wasn't lucky. If we didn't know I had dyslexia and every day at school felt too hard to handle.

I think I would leave school as soon as I could. And my problem would probably become Hawaii's problem.

Please help every dyslexic kid be the lucky one.

Vote yes on HB 1891

Coco Beh
3rd Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Taegan, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Early help can change everything for a struggling reader. When students receive support early, they gain skills, confidence, and a love of learning.

But when reading problems go unnoticed, students can fall further behind each year.

HB 1891 ensures that students are screened early so teachers and families can work together to support them.

Please support HB 1891 so all students in Hawai'i have the chance to succeed.

Mahalo,

Taegan Murray, 3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

When students struggle to read and do not receive support, some eventually lose motivation or disengage from school.

Reading is foundational to future success. It opens doors to learning and opportunity.

HB 1891 will help prevent students from falling behind for years by ensuring early identification and support.

Please protect Hawai'i's keiki and their futures by passing HB 1891.

Mahalo,

AZURI patel
3rd Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

School should be a place where students feel safe, supported, and confident.

But when reading is difficult every day, and students do not understand why, school can become stressful and discouraging.

HB 1891 will help teachers better understand why students struggle and provide evidence-based strategies to support them.

Please help make school a place where every child can succeed. Please pass HB 1891.

Mahalo,

Kirra M.


3rd. Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Henry, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Learning to read is one of the most important skills a child can gain in school.
Reading helps us learn new ideas, understand the world, and imagine our futures.

But for some students, reading is very difficult, especially when they have dyslexia
and do not receive help early.

HB 1891 will help schools identify students sooner and provide teachers with the
training and tools they need to support struggling readers.

Every child in Hawai'i deserves the chance to become a confident reader.

Please support HB 1891.

Mahalo,

Henry Crawford 3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Chloe, and I am a third-grade student in Hawai'i.

Reading difficulties are not a mystery. Research shows that with the right instruction, about 95% of students can learn to read successfully.

This instruction is often called structured literacy, which teaches reading step by step in ways that align with how the brain learns.

HB 1891 brings universal Dyslexia screening, evidence-aligned instruction, and stronger teacher preparation to Hawai'i.

We already know the solution. Please help bring literacy and opportunity to every child in our state.

Mahalo, Chloe Lau
3rd Grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Whit, and I am a student in Hawai'i. Hawai'i is currently the only state in the country without laws specifically supporting students with Dyslexia. This is concerning, especially when research shows that about 1 in 5 students may have Dyslexia.

That means in nearly every classroom there are students—our friends and classmates—who need different kinds of support to learn to read successfully.

Now is the time for Hawai'i to act. Even if the financial investment feels big, the cost of failing to teach children to read is much greater. It affects confidence, opportunity, and future success.

Please support Hawai'i's students by passing HB 1891.

Mahalo, Whit Corrado
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Joliz, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Students today are the future of our state. When students learn to read well, they can become scientists, teachers, doctors, and leaders in our communities.

But when students struggle to read and do not receive support, it can affect their future opportunities.

HB 1891 helps make sure all students in Hawai'i receive the support they need to become strong readers and successful adults.

Please support HB 1891 for the future of Hawai'i's keiki.

Mahalo,

Joliz Ingram
3rd grade

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Lucas and I am a student in Hawai'i.

When students struggle to read every day without understanding why, it can make school feel frustrating and even scary. Some students feel embarrassed or anxious, or begin to believe they do not belong in school.

But it does not have to be that way.

HB 1891 will help schools identify reading challenges earlier and provide the right support before students lose confidence.

Please support HB 1891 to protect the mental health and success of Hawai'i's students.

Mahalo,

Lucas
Jaeger

3rd Grade



Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Easton, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

Reading is the key that opens the door to learning. When students can read well, they can learn about science, history, and the world around them.

But when students struggle to read and do not get help early, those doors can begin to close.

HB 1891 helps make sure those doors stay open by identifying reading challenges early and supporting students right away.

Please support HB 1891 so every child in Hawai'i has the opportunity to succeed.

Mahalo,

3rd Easton Culver



Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Vivienne, and I am a student in Hawai'i.

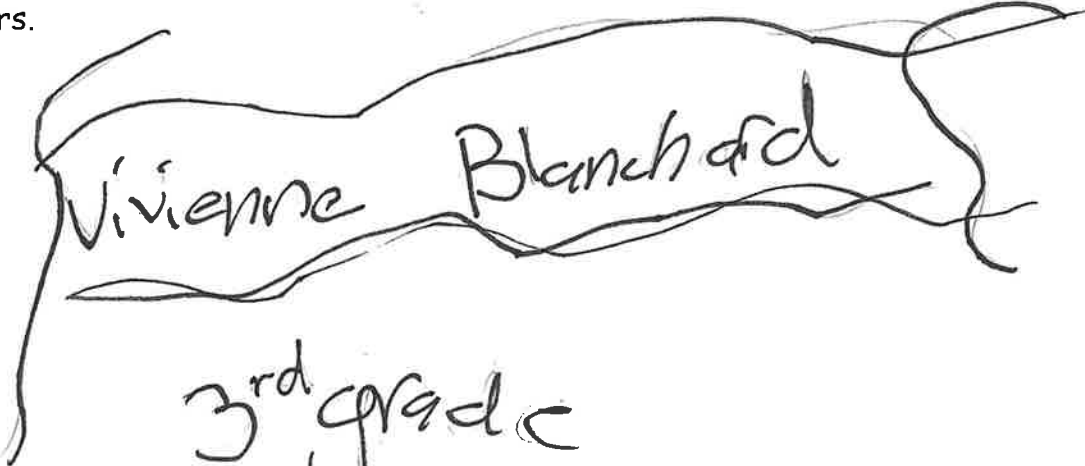
When students learn to read well, they feel confident and excited to learn. But when reading is hard, and students do not get the help they need, they may start to believe they are not smart.

That is not true. Many students simply need to be taught differently.

HB 1891 will help schools identify students early and provide teachers with the tools to support them.

Please support HB 1891 so all students in Hawai'i can grow into confident and successful learners.

Mahalo,



Vivienne Blanchard

3rd grade



info@hawaiikidscan.org
hawaiikidscan.org

March 22, 2026

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

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

HawaiiKidsCAN strongly supports HB1891 HD1, which requires all public schools to administer dyslexia-sensitive universal screening to students in kindergarten through grade three, implement evidence-based interventions for struggling students, and provide professional learning opportunities in structured literacy instruction.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is committed to ensuring that all students in Hawai‘i have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income or circumstance. As a member of the Hawai‘i State Literacy Coalition, strengthening foundational literacy is one of our priority policy areas.

Why this matters

Students and families should be able to expect that no matter which public school a child attends, they will be taught to read. Literacy is a core purpose of public education.

But when effective screeners and best-practice teacher training are only “made available” and not required, outcomes are left to chance. Some struggling readers are identified early and receive the support they need to thrive; others are not - and without access to private services, they fall further behind.

The consequences are both academic and long-term. Students who struggle to read often cope through disengagement or behavioral issues that can lead to dropping out. Illiteracy carries a deep stigma and can derail a student’s life in ways few other academic challenges do. Reading difficulties, for instance, are significantly overrepresented in incarcerated populations; studies in Louisiana and Texas found that nearly half of incarcerated adults met the criteria for dyslexia.^{1 2}

¹ Moody, K. C., Holzer, C. E., 3rd, Roman, M. J., Paulsen, K. A., Freeman, D. H., Haynes, M., & James, T. N. (2000). Prevalence of dyslexia among Texas prison inmates. *Texas medicine*, 96(6), 69–75.

² Cassidy, Laura, et al. "Dyslexia in incarcerated men and women." *Journal of Correctional Education* (1974-) 72.2 (2021): 61-81.



When 69% of our fourth graders are not reading proficiently,³ literacy in Hawai‘i is, unfortunately, too often a lottery - determined by a student’s school, their teacher’s access to training, or their family’s ability to pay for private support.

There has been recent progress, which we celebrate. In October 2024, the Department of Education received a five-year \$60 million federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant to support schools in adopting best practices in structured literacy instruction, provide teacher training, and more. In the same month, the department identified its top literacy priorities and created a goals framework called the Literacy Levers, which have been shared with all public schools. We have appended a copy of the literacy levers to our testimony for reference. The department has stated that these objectives were chosen from among nationally recognized best practices for being critical and appropriate for Hawai‘i.

We appreciate the department’s intent in setting a clear path and believe that codification would strengthen their sustained implementation with fidelity.

HB1891 HD1 would also be a landmark for Hawai‘i: it would finally define dyslexia in law - we are currently the only state that does not - and codify a student’s right to evidence-based intervention when they are struggling. Hawai‘i is one of only three states that does not currently require this.⁴ There is also no public, statewide data on the implementation and outcomes of screenings and interventions, limiting the ability to assess impact and our accountability to students and families.

Key elements of HB1891 HD1

HB1891 HD1 would improve the effectiveness of early screening. Screening is most useful when it provides actionable information. The most commonly used screener in Hawai‘i can identify that a student is struggling, but does not reveal why. HB1891 HD1 requires schools to use a department-approved dyslexia-sensitive screener that breaks reading into specific skill areas, equipping teachers with a better understanding of student’s needs so they can target interventions efficiently and without delay. Utilizing an effective screener first lowers costs, reduces the need for redundant testing, and shortens the time students spend waiting for help.

HB1891 HD1 also requires that interventions be evidence-based and that teachers be provided the opportunity to train in structured literacy. Learning to read is not intuitive - it requires explicit, systematic teaching. Numerous licensed teachers with masters and

³ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2024 Reading Assessments. [State Snapshot Report, Hawaii Grade 4 Public Schools](#)

⁴ Lollini, A., Tsapok, M., & Hundt, S. (2024). Screenings for Dyslexia, Learning Disorders, and Literacy Issues: A US State Legislative Comparative Framework. *Child. Legal Rts. J.*, 45, 1.



even doctorate degrees in education have shared with us that despite their credentials, they never felt prepared to teach children to read until they were trained in structured literacy, which is grounded in the science of reading.

We believe outcomes for many students would improve and that the vast majority of Hawai'i students **can** learn to read if they receive effective early screening and high-quality instruction delivered by a trained teacher.

What is still missing

While HB1891 HD1 makes important progress, it does not yet guarantee consistent implementation across all schools. That is why we are proposing an amendment focused on accountability and transparency.

Currently, there is no aggregated, publicly available statewide data on which schools are using effective screeners, how many teachers are trained, or how interventions are being implemented. Without that information, it is difficult to assess progress, identify gaps, or make informed decisions moving forward.

While NAEP/SBA scores provide overall indicators, they do not allow us to understand the impact of specific interventions. The CLSD grant data will undoubtedly yield crucial data through 2029 for the 60 schools that opted in, but we must also be able to measure progress in all public schools - not just one third of them.

Our proposed amendment would establish a clear reporting requirement to the Legislature and Board of Education, allowing us to assess implementation across the state and build a plan to sustain the work of the Literacy Levers into the future.

Suggested Amendments

We would like to humbly suggest the following amendments:

1. For clarity, amend Section 2 subsection b to say: “All public schools shall implement evidence based **structured literacy** interventions for students identified as having dyslexia and students who are flagged as struggling readers through the universal screening process.”
2. Add a new section to the measure that creates a reporting requirement for the department to the Board of Education and Legislature as follows:



SECTION 4. No later than the 2029-2030 school year, the department of education shall submit to the legislature and board of education an evaluation of the implementation and impact of this Act, including:

(1) A list of the schools in compliance or not with the requirement to utilize a dyslexia-sensitive screener in kindergarten through grade three. The list should also note when a school administers more than one literacy screener in kindergarten through grade three to identify schools that screen redundantly;

(2) The extent to which public school employees who are not required to participate pursuant to the 2024-2029 federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant have completed department-approved training in structured literacy instruction, including the number, percentage, and school of such employees who have completed the training;

(3) The extent to which evidence-based structured literacy instruction has been implemented in classrooms across the State;

(4) Data on student literacy outcomes associated with the implementation of this Act. The department shall report data in a manner that permits disaggregation by complex area and by school within each complex area; provided that



the department may suppress, redact, or combine data for any school or subgroup where the number of students is sufficiently small that reporting would risk the disclosure of personally identifiable student information or otherwise compromise student privacy.

The report shall include for each complex area and school:

- a. The percentage of total students screened using a dyslexia-sensitive universal screener in kindergarten through grade three;
 - b. The percentage of students identified as being at risk for language and literacy challenges on a dyslexia-sensitive universal screener; and
 - c. The percentage of students in an intervention as a result of being identified as at-risk for language and literacy challenges on a dyslexia-sensitive universal screener.
- (5) A plan and timeline to more closely align and collaborate with institutes of higher education and educator preparation programs to ensure teacher candidates are prepared to implement structured literacy instruction; and
- (6) A process and timeline for the department to review and assess dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners for approved



use in the future. The process should consider the strengths and limitations of teacher-facing screeners and computer-based screeners in identifying the components listed in Section 2 (a) of this Act.









Mahalo for your consideration,

Erica Nakanishi-Stanis
Advocacy Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

Addenda

The Hawai'i DOE Literacy Levers (below) propose a goals framework for strengthening literacy in the state. HB1891 HD1 would strengthen Hawai'i's policy commitment to three principles: Evidence-Based Interventions, Universal & Dyslexia Screening, and Science of Reading Training.

Hawai'i State Department of Education's Literacy Levers

 Science of Reading Training Hawai'i teachers will be trained in the science of reading in order to successfully implement structured literacy instruction for all students.	 Family Notification Hawai'i families will receive written notification of students' literacy screening results; families of students at risk will be given further information on interventions provided.
 Evidence-Based Interventions Hawai'i students at risk will receive evidence-based, Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 interventions aligned to their individual literacy skill needs within the HMTSS-R system.	 Literacy Coaching Hawai'i schools will have access to highly trained literacy coaches to support teachers in the implementation of structured literacy and data-based instruction.
 Universal & Dyslexia Screening Hawai'i K-3 students will be screened for literacy difficulties with a state office approved dyslexia-sensitive screener; all 4-9 students at risk will also be screened.	 High Quality Instructional Materials Hawai'i students will have full access to engaging Tier 1 literacy instruction with evidence-informed, high quality instructional materials within the Hawai'i Multi-Tier System of Supports (HMTSS-R) system.
 Monitoring Student Progress Hawai'i students will be progress monitored for growth within the HMTSS-R system; students at risk will be closely progress monitored for reasonable Rate of Improvement (ROI).	 Adequate Funding Hawai'i schools will be adequately funded to support their students' literacy needs, with priority given to increasing access to quality instruction through literacy coaching, literacy interventionists, and universal staff development.



Educational policy think tank, ExcelinEd, has identified **18 Early Literacy Fundamental Policy Principles**. Below is a snapshot of Hawai‘i’s adoption and implementation of these principles.

HB1891 HD1 would strengthen Hawai‘i’s performance in three additional principles: Screener for Characteristics of Dyslexia, Evidence-Based Interventions, and Science of Reading Training.

HAWAII

3 OUT OF 18



HAWAII'S IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

SUPPORTS FOR TEACHERS & POLICY

- ▲ Science of Reading (SOR) Training
- ▲ Literacy/Reading Coaches
- ▲ Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Alignment
- ▲ Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Assessment
- ▲ Funding for Literacy Efforts

ASSESSMENT & PARENT NOTIFICATION

- ◆ Universal Reading Screener
- ▲ Screener for Characteristics of Dyslexia
- ▲ Parental Notification

INSTRUCTION & INTERVENTION

- ★ District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials
- ▲ Eliminating Three-Cueing Instructional Materials
- ▲ Individual Reading Plans
- ◆ Regularly Monitor Student Progress
- ▲ Evidence-Based Interventions
- ▲ Summer Reading Camps
- ▲ Parent Read-At-Home Plan

RETENTION & INTERVENTION

- ▲ Initial Determinant Retention at 3rd Grade Based on State Assessment
- ▲ Multiple Options for Promotion
- ▲ Good Cause Exemptions for Some Students

Source: <https://earlyliteracymatters.org/state/hawaii/>. Updated February 2026.



Thirty nine community members have also co-signed our testimony in support of HB 1891 HD1.



The Volcano School of Arts & Sciences, PCS
A Hawai'i-Focused Public Charter School

Name of Individual or Organization	Affiliation	Zip Code
Serena Marsden		96744
Chris Padesky		96815
Dr. Jennifer Dempsey		96768
Misty Cruden		96760
Elijah Kochenbach		96720
Alexander Callenback		96778
Sarah DeLuca	Bess Press	96816
Doug Imig, PhD		96822
Kara Kusunoki		96816
Jason Breslin		12110
Kim Guieb		96818
Keoni Uehara		96792
Phaedra Robinson, Ph.D.	RAI Hawaii LLC	96734
Silvia Tedeschi		96814
Brigitte Schell		96816
Jacqueline Lamontagne		96744
Sachie Yorck		96816
Kaela Teho		96813
Mindy Yang		98613
Dylan Fujitani		96822
Mary Shook-Starsinic		96826
Marissa Brooks	FIT4MOM Honolulu	96825
Kate Sowards		96826
Michelle Lam		96744
Leilani Kailiawa		96720
Anne Weber-Yarbrough		96819
Nick Gladfelter		96826



Courtney Caranguian		96789
Paloma Almanza		96734
Early Childhood Action Strategy		96813
Germaine Kaleilehua Tauati, MA.ED.		96720
Jill Takasaki Canfield	Hawaii Literacy	96817
Momi Mae Ham		96816
Leilani Kailiawa		96720
Jillian Levy		96792
Kalima Kinney	Volcano School of Arts & Sciences Public Charter School	96785
Jessica Barbera		96816
Emily SL Silver		96822
Lynn Finnegan		96744
Mariah Ramo		96797



The following letter was voluntarily submitted by a community member who signed onto this testimony and gave permission for it to be included in full below. We are grateful for her voice and perspective.

**Testimony in Support of HB 1891
Relating to Dyslexia-Sensitive Screening and Educator Training**

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

My name is Jessica Barbera, and I am writing in strong support of HB 1891 as both a parent and a literacy teacher working closely with young children in our public schools.

As a literacy educator, I see firsthand how early reading struggles can quietly compound over time when students are not identified early or accurately. Many of the students who work the hardest are often the ones who feel the most frustrated, not because they lack motivation or intelligence, but because their brains process language differently. Dyslexia does not reflect a lack of effort or ability, yet without dyslexia-sensitive screeners and proper training, these students are often misunderstood, overlooked, or identified far too late.

As a parent, this issue is deeply personal. Every child deserves to feel confident, capable, and supported in their learning. When a child struggles to read and no one can explain why, it impacts not just academics but their self-esteem, behavior, and long-term relationship with school. Early identification changes that story. It replaces confusion with clarity and frustration with targeted support.

HB 1891 is critical because it focuses on early, dyslexia-sensitive screening paired with professional learning for educators. Screening alone is not enough. Teachers must be trained to understand what the data means and how to respond instructionally. This bill recognizes that reality. When educators are equipped with the right tools and knowledge, we can intervene earlier, provide structured literacy instruction, and prevent years of academic struggle.

I have seen how effective training transforms classrooms. Teachers become more confident, students receive instruction aligned to how they learn, and families finally feel seen and heard. This bill is not about labeling children. It is about understanding them.

Supporting HB 1891 is an investment in our students, our teachers, and our families. It promotes equity, early intervention, and evidence-based literacy practices that will benefit Hawai'i's keiki for years to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your commitment to improving literacy outcomes for all students. I respectfully urge you to support HB 1891.

Thank you,
Jessica Barbera

Parent and Literacy Teacher



Aloha e Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Serena Marsden. I have been an educator in Hawai'i for 24 years, I serve as Vice President of The Reading League Hawai'i, and most importantly, I am the mother of two brilliant dyslexic children. I am testifying in strong support of HB 1891.

I would first like to express strong support for a key amendment that ensures accountability and transparency in the implementation of this bill. This amendment requires reporting to both the Legislature and the Board of Education so we can clearly track progress and ensure the system is truly working for students. Specifically, it would include reporting on screening implementation across schools and complex areas, the number of students identified and receiving intervention, the number of teachers trained in structured, evidence-aligned literacy instruction, and a clear plan and timeline for reviewing and approving screening tools.

These measures are essential. Without accountability, we risk passing a bill without delivering real outcomes for children. I respectfully urge you to support Hawai'i Kids CAN's suggested amendment.

Reading changes the trajectory of a child's life. When a child learns to read early, doors open. When they struggle without support, those doors quietly begin to close. HB 1891 ensures that all students in Kindergarten through third grade receive dyslexia-sensitive universal screening that measures the foundational skills we know matter: phonemic awareness, decoding, rapid naming, and fluency. That specificity is critical. It means we are not simply identifying that a student is behind, but understanding *why*.

It is equally important that the screening tools adopted are research-based, validated, and truly dyslexia-sensitive. Not all screeners are designed to detect the specific language-based risk factors associated with Dyslexia. Hawai'i must ensure that we are using tools that lead to precise identification and targeted, effective instruction.

The bill also strengthens teacher preparation, professional learning, and intervention within Hawai'i's Multi-Tiered System of Supports. This is critical, because many teachers, including myself, were never taught how to teach reading in our preparation programs.

In my own experience, I had to seek out and personally fund additional training to learn how to teach struggling readers. That should not be the burden of individual teachers. Every educator should enter the classroom prepared with the knowledge and tools to teach reading effectively, especially for our most vulnerable learners.

The cost of illiteracy extends far beyond academics. It is deeply connected to mental health and life outcomes. When children struggle to read and are not identified early, they do not just fall behind, they begin to believe they are the problem. They feel shame. They feel anxious. And slowly, they begin to disengage.

And over time, that disengagement can turn into something far more serious. Students who struggle to read are significantly more likely to fall behind in every subject, to avoid school, and ultimately to drop out. Many incarcerated adults struggled with reading as children. The school-to-prison pipeline often begins with early literacy failure, with a child who was never taught to read in a way their brain could understand.

This is not just data. These are real children.

Children who sit in our classrooms and quietly decide they are "not smart."

Children who stop raising their hands.

Children who begin to give up on school, and eventually, on themselves.

In my 24 years in Hawai'i classrooms, I have seen this pattern again and again. And the students who left my classroom still unable to read, they stay with me. That is a weight educators carry, and one that we have the power to change.

But there is hope. We know how to solve this problem. Research has shown that with the right assessment and structured, evidence-aligned instruction, up to 95% of students can learn to read successfully.

HB 1891 intervenes at exactly the right time—early, when intervention is most effective. It ensures early identification, strengthens teacher preparation, improves intervention systems, and supports strong family-school partnerships.

HB 1891 is not simply an education bill.

It is a mental health bill.

It is an equity bill.

It is a prevention bill.

The question before us is not whether we know how to prevent reading failure—we do. The question is whether Hawai'i will act. On behalf of The Reading League Hawai'i, I respectfully urge you to pass HB 1891 and adopt the proposed reporting amendments to ensure meaningful, measurable outcomes for Hawai'i's students.

Hawai'i's keiki deserve to feel confident, capable, and seen. They deserve the chance to read, and to write their own future. Mahalo for your leadership and your commitment to Hawai'i's literacy future.

Mahalo,

Serena Marsden

Serena Marsden

Vice President, The Reading League Hawai`i

2nd Grade Teacher

Mother of two Dyslexic children

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 5:21:54 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support.



Date: March 23, 2026

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: House Bill 1891 HD1, Relating to Education

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS supports House Bill 1891 HD1 which would require the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction.

Our organization recognizes the importance of both early identification and early intervention when it comes to improving the outcomes for our local keiki. We further recognize that mandating professional development for teachers across the state will better prepare local educators to recognize dyslexia and offer evidence-based interventions for their students.

Together, these two aspects of this bill would help to close the achievement gap between students with learning disabilities and their peers.

For this reason, ECAS supports House Bill 1891 HD1.

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 10:59:13 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Ching	Testifying for American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

The Honorable Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Education

Hawaii State Capitol, Room 228

Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Support for HB 1891, HD 1 – Relating to Education (Dyslexia Screening and Literacy)

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

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter (HAAP), representing over 200 board-certified pediatricians across our islands, writes in strong support of HB 1891, HD 1. This critical measure requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive, linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions for our students.

As pediatricians, we see firsthand the profound impact that literacy has on a child’s overall health and well-being. Literacy is not just an educational milestone; it is a powerful social determinant of health. Children who struggle to read are at significantly higher risk for reduced self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and school disengagement. Conversely, early identification and intervention for reading difficulties like dyslexia can change the entire trajectory of a child’s life.

Why the AAP Hawaii Chapter Supports HB 1891, HD 1:

1. Early Identification is Preventive Medicine: Research consistently shows that the window for the most effective literacy intervention is between kindergarten and third grade. By the time a child reaches the fourth grade, the focus shifts from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Without the universal screening proposed in this bill, many of our children—particularly those from underserved communities—remain unidentified until they have already fallen significantly behind.

2. Addressing Equity and Language: We appreciate that this bill specifies "linguistically appropriate" screenings. Hawaii's unique multilingual population requires tools that can accurately distinguish between English Language Learners and students with underlying neurological learning disabilities.
3. Support for the "Whole Child": Dyslexia is a neurological condition. When it goes unaddressed, the chronic stress of academic failure can lead to physical and mental health challenges. This bill aligns with the AAP's commitment to "literacy promotion" as a standard part of pediatric primary care. By ensuring schools have the tools to identify and support these students through the Hawaii Multi-Tiered System of Supports (HMTSS), we are treating the root cause of academic distress.
4. Teacher Preparedness: We strongly support the provisions for professional development in structured literacy. Our educators are on the front lines, and providing them with evidence-based strategies ensures that the identification of a struggle is immediately followed by effective, high-quality instruction.

Hawaii is currently one of the few states without specific dyslexia legislation. HB 1891, HD 1 is a necessary step to ensure that every child in Hawaii, regardless of how their brain is wired, has the opportunity to become a proficient reader and a healthy, productive member of our community.

We urge your committee to pass HB 1891, HD 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this vital issue for Hawaii's children.

Sincerely,

Michael Ching, MD, MPH

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 6:36:25 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meilan Akaka Manfre	Testifying for Teach For America Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Kim, Chair, Senator Kidani, Vice Chair, and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Meilan Akaka Manfre, and I serve as the executive director of Teach for America Hawai'i. I'm a former public school teacher and public school parent.

I am writing in strong support of HB1891, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive, linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions for our students.

Currently, Hawai'i is one of the only states without specific legislation addressing the needs of students with dyslexia. While our educators work tirelessly, many students who struggle with word recognition and phonological awareness are not identified until they have already fallen significantly behind their peers. Data shows that students who are not reading proficiently by the third grade face long-term academic and social challenges.

HB1891 HD1 is a critical step forward for the following reasons:

- Early Identification: By mandating universal screenings from Kindergarten through Grade 3, we can identify "at-risk" markers early, allowing for proactive support rather than reactive remediation.**
- Structured Literacy: The bill's focus on professional development in structured literacy ensures that teachers are equipped with explicit, systematic instructional methods that benefit not only students with dyslexia but all developing readers.**
- Equity and Access: Linguistically appropriate screenings ensure that Hawaii's diverse student population, including those from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, receive fair and accurate assessments.**
- Teacher Support: Partnering with teacher preparation programs to include structured literacy in their curriculum ensures the next generation of Hawaii's educators enters the workforce ready to support every child's right to read.**

Passing HB1891 HD1 will align Hawai'i with national best practices and fulfill our commitment to ensuring every student has the foundational skills necessary for success. I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure.

We appreciate your continued support of public education in Hawai'i and look forward to seeing the progress made at the legislature this year.

Mahalo,

Meilan Akaka Manfre

March 10, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Kim, Vice Chairwoman Kidani and members of the committee,

My name is Lauren Farasati, and I am a Kailua grandmother and literacy advocate who has been following dyslexia policy in Hawai'i for several years.

My perspective comes not only from research and advocacy, but from time spent working directly with children who struggle to learn to read—including my own granddaughter. Like many families, we discovered that bright, capable keiki can struggle for years simply because the right instruction and early identification were not in place.

HB1891 is an important step forward for Hawai'i. Universal early screening and teacher training are widely recognized as two of the most effective ways to identify children with dyslexia and other reading difficulties before they fall irreparably behind.

Early identification matters. When keiki are identified early and taught with effective reading instruction, they learn to read. When they are not, the consequences can follow them for years—academically, socially, and emotionally.

As this policy moves forward, I encourage the Legislature to also consider the importance of accountability and measurement.

A mentor in my professional career once taught me a simple principle: "What gets measured gets done." If Hawai'i implements early screening and invests in teacher training, it is equally important that we track outcomes.

Are keiki being identified earlier?

Are reading outcomes improving?

Are effective interventions reaching the students who need them most?

Because if we don't measure literacy outcomes, we're only measuring good intentions.

Clear metrics will ensure that the promise of this bill translates into real improvements in literacy for Hawai'i's keiki.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued commitment to the children of our state.

Respectfully,

Lauren Farasati

Kailua, Hawai'i

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 12:02:50 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Strongly Support

1891 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION.

EARLY INTERVENTION WILL HELP THE STUDENTS NAVIGATE THEIR INDIVIDUAL LEARNING STYLE FOR SUCCESS.

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:09:06 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Judy Vincent, MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support HB1891- Protect Early Screening and Teacher Training for Keiki with Dyslexia

To: Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee

From: Judy M. Vincent, MD

Subject: Support for Mandatory Dyslexia Screening in Kindergarten and First Grade

Date: March 20, 2026

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support of HB1891. My name is Judy M. Vincent, MD and I am a retired physician with 46 years of experience. I have three sons who attended public school in Hawaii. Two of my sons had learning disabilities, which required IEPs through the Hawaii DOE.

Scientific research and the experience of 49 other states support dyslexia screening in Kindergarten and First Grade.

Research shows that dyslexia is a brain-based condition that often runs in families. It is not caused by laziness or poor teaching. Scientists can spot early warning signs before children fall far behind. These signs include trouble hearing sounds in words, slow naming of letters or objects, and weak letter knowledge.

By first and second grade, reading gaps from dyslexia are already clear and often last for years if nothing is done. Waiting for a child to fail before helping them is not fair—and it is not necessary.

Research also shows that early help works. When children at risk receive clear, step-by-step reading instruction in kindergarten or first grade, most learn to read well. Only a small number continue to struggle when help starts early.

If we wait until third grade, it takes more time and effort to close the gap, and results are weaker. Studies show that early reading programs lead to real gains in reading skills.

In states like Mississippi, early literacy policies including screening, parent notification, and intervention have been part of a broader effort that helped the state improve its reading performance on national tests.

Mississippi went from ranking near the bottom in fourth-grade reading to much higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress over the last decade, and recent data show the state's fourth-grade reading scores now exceed the national average while still working to improve eighth-grade outcomes as well.

Hawai'i can choose to act early instead of reacting late. Early screening costs less than years of remediation and special education. It supports fairness by making sure all children are checked, not just those whose parents know how to ask for help. HB1891 is a smart, research-based step that puts children first.

I want an even playing field for the one in five Keiki who is dyslexic. These kids have brains that are wired to do amazing things and do them differently than other people. But in order to get that chance they need to be identified early and they need to be taught differently. And to do that teachers must get trained.

Our keiki deserve support before they feel defeated. I respectfully urge you to pass HB1891.

Sincerely,

Judy Makowski Vincent, MD
Colonel, Medical Corps, United States Army
Member of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
154 Pauahilani Place
Kailua, HI 96734
808-741-0671
judymvincent@yahoo.com

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 1:42:59 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

****WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1891- Protect Early Screening and Teacher Training for Keiki with Dyslexia****

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I strongly SUPPORT HB 1891 — a critical bill that would require dyslexia screening in Kindergarten and teacher training to support dyslexic learners.

Dyslexia is a neurologically based learning disability that affects approximately 15–20% of the population and is recognized as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (chatgpt://generic-entity?number=0) (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (chatgpt://generic-entity?number=1) (IDEA). When dyslexia substantially limits major life activities such as reading and learning, schools are legally obligated to provide appropriate screening and instruction.

However, Hawai'i remains the only state in the nation with NO statutory requirement to identify and support dyslexic learners. This absence is NOT neutral. It creates systemic barriers to equal access — denying keiki with a recognized disability the full protections and accommodations to which they are entitled.

This Is a Disability Discrimination Issue

By failing to proactively screen and train educators, our public education system:

- Withholds early identification of a known disability,
- Denies evidence-based instruction that has been scientifically proven to help,
- Exposes schools and districts to legal risk for not meeting federal ADA and IDEA obligations, and

- Results in unequal educational access for students with dyslexia.

Financial Impact of NOT Diagnosing and Treating Dyslexia Early

The consequences aren't just academic or emotional — they are financially staggering for families, schools, and our society.

1. Higher Cost of Remediation vs. Early Intervention

According to research from the Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity (chatgpt://generic-entity?number=2):

- Early structured literacy intervention costs ≈ \$500–\$2,500 per student per year
- Remediation later in school can exceed \$8,000–\$12,000+ per student per year

This is a 4–10× difference in cost. Delaying identification and support dramatically increases expenses for school districts.

2. Special Education and Retention Costs

Students with undiagnosed dyslexia are:

- More likely to be referred to special education,
- More likely to be retained in grade.

The National Center for Education Statistics ([chatgpt://generic-entity?number=3](#)) reports that special education services cost approximately twice as much as general education on average. Grade retention alone can cost an additional \$10,000–\$15,000 per year per student — costs that fall on districts and taxpayers.

3. Economic Cost of Low Literacy

Children who fail to read proficiently by 3rd grade are 4× more likely to drop out of high school, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation ([chatgpt://generic-entity?number=4](#)). High school dropouts:

- Earn hundreds of thousands of dollars less over their lifetimes,
- Pay considerably less in taxes,
- Are more likely to rely on public assistance.

Lost productivity and tax revenue cost local and state economies billions.

4. Mental Health and Healthcare Costs

Children with undiagnosed dyslexia have higher rates of anxiety, depression, and behavioral challenges. The American Academy of Pediatrics ([chatgpt://generic-entity?number=5](#)) confirms the link between learning disorders and increased mental health needs — resulting in:

- More therapy and medical costs,
- Greater family financial stress,
- Higher public health expenditures.

5. Juvenile Justice and Incarceration Costs

Studies show that 40–60% of incarcerated individuals have significant reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Per the U.S. Department of Justice ([chatgpt://generic-entity?number=6](#)), the average annual cost to incarcerate one individual exceeds \$30,000 — costs borne by taxpayers. Preventing academic failure through early literacy support is one of the strongest protective factors against later justice involvement.

Return on Investment;

❖ Every \$1 invested in early reading intervention saves \$4–\$7 in later remediation and social costs.

❖ Screening costs are small; the potential lifetime savings — to families, schools, and taxpayers — are enormous.

By investing in Kindergarten dyslexia screening and teacher training, Hawai‘i:

- ✓ Reduces long-term public expenditures
- ✓ Improves student outcomes and lifetime earning potential
- ✓ Ensures compliance with federal disability law
- ✓ Upholds equity and civil rights for all learners.

Conclusion:

HB 1891 is not merely a classroom policy — it is a civil rights, disability access, and fiscal responsibility measure.

Hawai‘i can no longer afford to be the only state without protections for students with dyslexia. The financial, emotional, and legal costs of inaction are too high.

I respectfully urge you to PASS HB 1891.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

William Lee

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 2:11:53 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hazel Beh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in strong support of HB1891. This bill will ensure that we provide Hawaii's keiki with dyslexia opportunities for targeted and appropriate strategies for reading success. Early detection and intervention is good for our children, families, and our state. It is a small investment with huge rewards. As a parent and grandparent, I have witnessed firsthand the extraordinary benefits that early intervention affords young learners. Unfortunately, I have also witnessed the costs to children, families, and our communities when we fail to provide appropriate reading support to these children. A child with dyslexia may feel like a failure. But the truth is, we are the ones that failed them. There are proven and effective strategies to ensure they succeed. We hold the keys to their success. Please support HB 1891. Thank you.

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 3:47:40 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christel Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Too many students are struggling to read without getting the help they need.
- We need true accountability to ensure all kids get the chance to learn how to read.
- Students and families should reasonably be able to expect that no matter which public school a child attends, they will successfully be taught to read and write. Literacy is a key reason public schools were created in the first place. But if the use of effective screeners and best-practice teacher training is only “made available” and not required for two thirds of our schools, we run the risk of leaving the bulk of schools, teachers, and ultimately students, behind.
- It is critical for the legislature to codify best practices, including requiring the use of dyslexia-sensitive screeners, notifying parents in a timely manner of at-risk students, and ensuring all teachers are trained to teach all students how to read.

Thank you,

Christel Thompson

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 7:08:24 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Zimdahl	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Madam Chair and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Noelle Zimdahl, and I am a parent leader in my community. Most importantly, I am a mother to a child with a learning disability in reading, one that many people and states know as dyslexia, and I am writing in SUPPORT of HB 1891.

My child attends school in Hawaii, the only state where the Department of Education fails to define dyslexia and, as a result, frequently undermines her learning needs and robs her of basic human dignity, true acceptance. The Hawaii DOE needs to appropriately define dyslexia to improve access to learning, properly assess, and, most of all, build self-confidence in our dyslexic student population.

Currently, just over half of Hawai'i's students are considered proficient in reading. Indicator 17 on the [2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report](#) highlights that only 11.82% of the 3rd & 4th-grade students with disabilities were proficient on the Smarter Balanced Assessment-ELA Literacy. These two data points highlight the need to revise the Hawaii DOE dyslexia screening process and to consistently use evidence-based, structured literacy instruction to benefit all students at all schools, public and charter.

Our most vulnerable student learners are the most successful when parents/families can review assessment results in a timely and equitable manner. The Smarter Balanced Assessment, as a tool for tracking student progress, fails to engage parents in their students' learning because students take it in the spring, and results are not available until the summer or even the following school year. The SBA results are no longer valid by the time a parent can review them with the school team to develop remediation plans, which is imperative for students with disabilities. Replacing the SBA with a learning growth test, such as NWEA MAP testing, would mitigate this issue. Schools and parents can see results that correlate to the Common Core learning standards. The NWEA MAP testing also compares students' results to their previous scores to show how much they have grown toward their learning goals. Comparing students to themselves rather than to a national average is a more equitable way to assess students with disabilities.

My daughter had the privilege of attending a school that used a structured literacy program from 1st to 3rd grade. A move across the Island prompted a school change, and we were devastated to learn that the program that worked so well for her was not used state-wide. Our confident child, who had worked so hard and was seeing growth, was replaced with a child who cowered at the

idea of school, especially reading; her learning gap was the only thing that grew that year. It took several years for her to regain her confidence in reading and writing and to start closing her learning gap again.

It doesn't have to be this way; the beauty of life is change. Passing HB1891 would give all students, especially our most vulnerable, access to the education my daughter received during those first couple of years of school. If the goal is to make Hawai'i the best place in the world to raise a child, I implore you to support structured literacy and HB1891.

Thank you for your time. Mahalo.

-Noelle Zimdahl, mother & advocate

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 7:45:26 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alecia Burroughs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi. My name is Tommy. Reading is not fun for me and I always get the words wrong. When I read the wrong words I do not know what I am reading and my brain feels confused. I am a lucky kid where my Mama is a reading teacher so she knows how to teach kids to read and she always gives me extra help since I was little. My teachers at school also know how to teach kids to read with dyslexia because the got extra teacher school so they all helped me every year. Because of them I can read, even though I still don't think it's fun and it's hard for me. I hope it will be easy one day with all my practice. I am in third grade. If I didn't have my Mama and teachers who knew how to help me and to give me all the extra help I probably wouldn't be able to read as good as I do now. All kids should have what I got. It's only fair. When you can't read, everything is hard in school and it feels bad. I support HB1891 and ask you to say yes too so all kids in Hawaii can get the same help before it's too late and too hard for them. Please help us.

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2026 8:16:20 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Shikuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a mother of two dyslexic children, as a private tutor who works with dyslexic children, and as a Structured Literacy trainer, I fully support this bill. It is tragic that Hawaii is the last state in the nation without early screening and intervention, and this must change for our keiki. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Lori Shikuma

M.S. Ed., Fellow/OGA, Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist/CERI

Testimony

Aloha,

My name is Joyce Lund and I am an educational therapist at a small private school on Oahu. I also tutor students who have dyslexia.

As an educator, I am in full agreement of House Bill 1891, implementing an early screener to find students who are at academic risk, and providing the appropriate intervention with evidence-based instruction in order to close those gaps. Other states have implemented similar laws and it is time for Hawaii to do the same.

Some of the students I work with at my school have transferred from the DOE. They are middle school students who have learning weaknesses that were not identified at their public school. These students have difficulties in spelling as well as reading comprehension. With an early screener and appropriate intervention in place, these challenges could have been recognized sooner, allowing them to receive targeted support before the gaps widened. Since they have been a part of our school ohana, they have received effective intervention with me and are making good progress in their academic skills as well as growing in their confidence.

We also need to support our pre-service teachers by giving them proper training in structured literacy. As a private school employee, I have been the beneficiary of Title 2A funds for training in evidence-based literacy practices, allowing me to deliver explicit, systematic instruction to meet the diverse needs of my students. I wish I had received this type of training as a student at the University of Hawaii College of Education. I know there is a Reading Intervention Specialist program at UH, but it needs to be expanded to train more teachers. Our pre-service teachers need this support in order to be effective educators in the classroom.

Thank you for reading my testimony. I hope you will do what is right and just for our students.

Mahalo,
Joyce Lund

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 7:27:59 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Ferandin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB1891

Hawaii State Legislature

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

I am writing in strong support of HB1891, which advances early screening for students with learning differences.

This issue is deeply personal to me. My daughter is severely dyslexic. Because she had access to early screening, a strong support system, and a dedicated team that understood how she learns, her life trajectory was profoundly changed. She was identified early and taught using methods that matched her learning needs. That strength-based approach, beginning in Kindergarten, gave our family the tools and knowledge to support her throughout her education.

Without that early identification and intervention, her story could have been very different.

Today, she is a successful student at New York University and, more importantly, a confident and capable learner. That confidence did not come from “overcoming” her dyslexia alone, it came from being understood, supported, and taught in a way that worked for her.

Every child in Hawaii deserves that same opportunity.

HB1891 is critical because it promotes:

- Early screening to identify learning differences before students fall behind
- Teacher training so educators can recognize and support diverse learners
- A clear plan to ensure all students understand how they learn best

When we invest in early identification and a strength-based approach, we are not only improving academic outcomes, we are building confidence, resilience, and lifelong success.

I urge you to support HB1891 so that all students in Hawaii have the right to be understood, supported, and empowered in their learning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Ferandin

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 9:33:35 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Burroughs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi my name is Kevin, I am 37 years old. I am born and raised here on Oahu. When I was a kid going through the DOE, I was told I had dyslexia. I struggled to go through school with out having any guidance or structure. Every day I went through the motions, but always felt lost. As I got to 6th grade my parents sent me to private school where I was completely lost. I never was given the proper guidance and when something seemed to hard I just gave up on it and did not try. Now that I am older I have learned strategies on how to do things on my own. I am a police officer now, and I am able to do things that I would not have thought I was able to do as a kid. I am a proud father of two children who have dyslexia. My hope is that my kids and future kids do not have to struggle like I did.

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2026 8:18:35 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
SANDRA D KOBAYASHI	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1891 and the suggested amendment by HawaiiKidsCAN

I am submitting this testimony as a concerned citizen. As a volunteer at youth scrabble tournaments, I witnessed some children not being able to form basic words. I was surprised. I also recognized how this affected the self esteem and confidence of each child. I support HB1891 because too many students are struggling to read without getting the help they need, and the long-term impact reaches far beyond the classroom.

My primary concern is the strength of our future workforce and the well-being of our community, and that begins with literacy. We need true accountability to ensure every child has the opportunity to learn to read, regardless of which school they attend. It is critical for the legislature to codify best practices so that no student falls through the cracks.

I also support HawaiiKidsCAN suggested amendment as it is critical to have data so we can further understand the impact of any changes that are made within our educational system. It makes sense to track this work. HB1891 is a necessary step toward ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed and the amendment ensures that our students, parents and community will understand its impact.

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 8:57:07 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Teale Taxis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you, Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

My name is Teale Taxis. I am a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a parent living in Hawaii. I am writing in strong support of HB 1891.

In my work and as a parent, I see how deeply reading struggles impact children's confidence, mental health, and engagement in school. Dyslexia affects an estimated 15–20% of students, yet many are identified too late—after years of frustration and falling behind.

Early screening and intervention are both effective and cost-efficient. More importantly, they prevent long-term emotional and academic harm. I have worked with individuals who carry the lasting effects of undiagnosed learning differences, including anxiety and low self-worth—outcomes

that could have been avoided.

Supporting early identification is a step toward more equitable education for all students in Hawaii.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 1891.

Mahalo, Teale

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 12:37:25 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

My name is Rob Marsden, and I serve as an educational leader working closely with students, teachers, and families in Hawai‘i. I write in strong support of HB1891 and respectfully offer several amendments that would strengthen the bill’s implementation and accountability.

First, I want to share that my support is both professional and personal. I am dyslexic. As a student, I experienced firsthand how challenging reading can be when instruction does not align with how the brain learns to read. What ultimately helped me succeed was explicit, structured instruction. Early identification and evidence-based intervention should not depend on chance. This bill helps ensure that Hawai‘i’s students receive that support early.

HB1891 moves our system forward by prioritizing universal screening, structured literacy, and teacher training aligned with the science of reading. To ensure the bill achieves its intended impact, I respectfully recommend the following reporting and implementation components.

1. Reporting requirement to the Legislature and the Board of Education

Regular reporting will ensure transparency, progress monitoring, and alignment across the system.

Priority reporting elements should include:

- The percentage of students screened, flagged for risk, and receiving intervention, disaggregated by school and complex area. This will help identify where support and resources are most needed.
- Identification of schools that are complying with the universal screener requirement, as well as instances where students may be screened redundantly, so that screening practices remain efficient and consistent statewide.
- Data on how many teachers have received training in the science of reading, including educators who were not required to participate through the CLSD II grant, to better understand the reach of professional learning across the state.

- A clear plan, timeline, and goals for collaboration with Hawai‘i’s Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to ensure that teacher candidates are prepared in the science of reading and structured literacy practices before entering classrooms.

These additions would help ensure that HB1891 not only establishes important requirements but also provides a transparent path for implementation and long-term sustainability.

Strong early literacy systems depend on three things: early identification, effective instruction, and well-prepared teachers. HB1891 meaningfully advances all three and will help ensure more students in Hawai‘i receive the support they need to become confident readers.

Mahalo for your leadership and for your continued commitment to the literacy success of Hawai‘i’s keiki.

Respectfully,

Rob Marsden

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 11:22:44 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Jackie Keefe, and I am **in support HB1891 HD1**, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literacy instruction.

Early identification and intervention are critical to improving reading outcomes. Universal screening paired with structured literacy helps identify students at risk before they fall behind, which is especially important for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who may experience co-occurring language or processing challenges.

Without early identification, these students may be misidentified or receive delayed supports. Professional development and pre-service training in structured literacy are essential to improving instructional quality systemwide and supporting inclusive classrooms where students with diverse learning needs can succeed.

HB1891 strengthens early intervention, educator capacity, and equitable access to literacy for all learners across Hawai‘i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 12:44:09 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Silver	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Students and families should reasonably be able to expect that no matter which public school a child attends, they will successfully be taught to read and write. Literacy is a key reason public schools were created in the first place. But if the use of effective screeners and best-practice teacher training is only “made available” and not required for two thirds of our schools, we run the risk of leaving the bulk of schools, teachers, and ultimately students, behind.

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 1:10:27 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anriada Nassif MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in strong support of HB1891.

Pediatric care is grounded in early identification and prevention. Across the lifespan of a child, pediatricians routinely screen for conditions such as metabolic disorders in the newborn period, hearing loss in infancy, autism in early childhood, and vision and developmental delays throughout childhood. These practices are rooted in strong evidence demonstrating that early detection, followed by timely intervention, leads to improved long-term outcomes.

Reading is a fundamental developmental milestone, and literacy is a critical determinant of lifelong health and well-being. Dyslexia is common, affecting an estimated 1 in 5 individuals. When reading difficulties are not identified early, children are at increased risk for persistent academic challenges, decreased self-confidence, behavioral concerns, and secondary mental health conditions, including anxiety and depression.

Extensive research demonstrates that evidence-based reading interventions are most effective when implemented during the early elementary years, particularly from kindergarten through second grade. By third grade, children transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Without early identification, this transition can exacerbate existing gaps and make remediation significantly more difficult.

Pediatricians across Hawai‘i regularly encounter children whose reading challenges were not recognized early, resulting in avoidable academic and emotional consequences. Families often face substantial barriers in navigating evaluation and intervention systems, particularly when access depends on resources, advocacy, or awareness. A universal, structured screening approach would promote greater equity by ensuring all children have the opportunity for early identification and support.

I also support HawaiiKidsCAN’s suggested amendment to strengthen implementation and ensure the bill achieves its intended impact.

HB1891 represents a proactive, evidence-based approach that aligns with pediatric best practices and developmental science. It supports early literacy as a core component of child health and helps ensure that all keiki in Hawai‘i have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Thank you for your commitment to the health and well-being of Hawai'i's children.

Mahalo,
Anriada Nassif MD, Pediatrician

LATE

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/22/2026 1:11:09 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
chelsea pang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support all learners and accommodations where needed

LATE

HB-1891-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 7:13:06 AM

Testimony for EDU on 3/23/2026 1:11:00 PM

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

Comments:

As a high school teacher for almost 20 years, I have seen students who struggle with dyslexia and I've been frustrated by the lack of effective interventions for these students. For this reason, I would also like to see dyslexia screeners made available at the high school level.

I urge the committee to pass this bill.