



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

Date: 02/17/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1891, 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.

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) is providing comments on HB 1891 as it supports one of the Literacy Levers identified as a priority across the state and the Department is already moving towards implementation.

The Department convened a workgroup and is in the process of finalizing approved dyslexia screeners. The Department wants to make it clear that the dyslexia sensitive screener identifies students for potential reading challenges, and does not diagnose dyslexia. Following appropriate intervention informed by universal screener data and ongoing progress monitoring through the Hawai'i Multi-tiered Systems of Supports in Reading (HMTSS-R) process, students who continue to struggle may move through the established review process to determine whether additional assessment is warranted.

Professional learning for opportunities in complex areas and public schools is currently available at no cost for the training, as the Department has identified and is partnering with open-source free courses for teachers in PreK-12. All schools have the opportunity to participate in open-source literacy coaching training, as well as ongoing training in the implementation of HMTSS-R for all schools across the state. Some schools will need to cover substitute costs or stipends. The Department is also offering ongoing training in the implementation of HMTSS-R for all schools across the state.

Through the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant II, one component focuses on collaborating with higher education institutions that provide teacher preparation programs to strengthen the foundational literacy instructional skills of teachers entering the Department.

The Department also respectfully requests that a phased in approach be allowed to implement the dyslexia sensitive screener in all schools, as some schools may be under contracts that go beyond the 2027-28 school year or need transition time from their current screeners. The Department is planning for the first implementation phase in schools to begin in SY 2026-27 and for full implementation during SY 2028-29.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



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

PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
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February 17, 2026

The Honorable Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Woodson and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: Relating to Education

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **SUPPORT of HB1891**, 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. Thank you for the opportunity to submit **supportive testimony for HB1891**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus, Executive Administrator



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

February 17, 2026

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Advisory Council**

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*liaison to the military
community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff
Susan Rocco, Staff

Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Committee on Education
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 1891 - RELATING TO EDUCATION

Dear Representative Woodson 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 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.

While not explicitly mentioned in HB 1891, 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. An essential component of student success is the partnership that is created between home and school.

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



info@hawaiikidscan.org
hawaiikidscan.org

February 15, 2026

Committee on Education
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

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

HawaiiKidsCAN strongly supports HB1891, which requires all public schools to administer dyslexia-sensitive universal screening to all students in kindergarten through grade three, provides professional learning opportunities in structured literacy instruction for certain public school employees, and requires a report to the legislature on the progress made by the 2031-2032 school year.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all students in Hawaii have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels or circumstances. As a member of the Hawaii State Literacy Coalition, strengthening foundational literacy is one of HawaiiKidsCAN's priority policy areas.

In October 2024, the Department of Education received a \$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. The department testified at a Board of Education hearing on February 12, 2026 that these objectives were chosen from among nationally recognized best practices for being particularly critical and appropriate for Hawaii. Together with the department's stated CLSD grant objectives, we celebrate the intent of the clear goals laid out for every school in the state. We have appended a copy of the literacy levers to our testimony for reference.

While these goals and initial progress through the CLSD grant are laudable, the department testified that only 60 schools are participating in the grant, which runs from 2024 to 2029. While significant, this is still a far cry from the 168 public elementary



schools in our state. Because schools opted in to participate in the grant, we are concerned that the benefits of the training, literacy coaching, and support for improved screening will not reach the schools that chose not to participate, raising equity concerns.

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.** When 69% of our fourth graders are not reading proficiently¹, we cannot afford to take this risk.

The Literacy Levers and CLSD objectives paint an attractive picture of what our schools could achieve, but they do not go far enough. They allow schools the discretion to choose not to engage with the best possible practices to support struggling readers and allow schools to utilize screeners that don't meet basic standards of being dyslexia sensitive, based on school academic plans. Without any built in accountability mechanisms, the picture painted by the Levers is deeply vulnerable to becoming a veneer that covers up inequities.

We therefore urge the legislature to codify key elements of the Literacy Levers, 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.

We would like to humbly suggest the following amendments to ensure the measure has the greatest impact possible:

1. Replacing the text of HB 1891 sections 2, 3, and 4 with the corresponding text from HB 1784 for clarity and stipulations such as considerations around English Learners, the exemption of Native Hawaiian focused schools and charter schools, and the need to differentiate instruction.
2. If included in HB 1891, section 2 subsection (c) lines 11-13 of HB 1784 would be stronger if amended to specify that a family must receive written notification within 30 school days if a student is determined to be at risk of language or

¹ 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](#)



literacy challenges. Notifications should also include the basis for the “at-risk” determination.

3. Making the teacher professional development for all listed categories of public school employees in HB1784 section 2 subsection (e) mandatory rather than available would ensure that all teachers are prepared to teach to the same high standard, eliminating gaps in instructional quality between schools.
4. Section 4’s reporting requirements would be better aligned to the bill’s actions if they included:
 - a. A report listing the schools that are or are not in compliance with the requirement to administer a dyslexia-sensitive screener to all students in kindergarten through grade three, including whether schools are administering more than one screener;
 - b. An update on the extent to which employees listed in section 2 subsection (e) of HB1784 completed structured literacy training;
 - c. Amended wording of HB1784 section 4 item (4) to clarify that the purpose of the “plan to more closely align and collaborate with institutes of higher education and educator preparation programs” is to ensure teacher candidates are prepared to implement structured literacy instruction; and
5. A removal of the appropriation, as materials aligned with best-practices are currently available to states free of charge, and such trainings are designed to be completed within allotted PD hours for teachers.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Erica Nakanishi-Stanis
Advocacy Director
HawaiiKidsCAN



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



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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
Courtney Caranguian		96789
Paloma Almanza		96734
Early Childhood Action Strategy		96813
Germaine Kaleilehua Tauati, MA.ED.		96720



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.

Source: Hawaii State Department of Education

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 2:05:12 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Serena Marsden	The Reading League Hawai'i	Support	In Person

Comments:

February 14, 2026

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

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 here in strong support of HB 1891.

This bill matters because 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 research tells us matter: phonemic awareness, decoding, rapid naming, and fluency. That specificity is critical. It means we are not just identifying that a student is behind, we are identifying why.

It is equally important that the state-approved screening tool is research-based, validated, and truly dyslexia-sensitive. Not all universal screeners are designed to detect the specific language-based risk factors associated with Dyslexia. We must ensure that Hawai'i adopts and implements a tested tool that measures the precise foundational skills linked to reading difficulty, so that identification is accurate and instructional response is targeted and effective.

The bill also clearly defines Dyslexia as a neurobiological learning disability. That clarity is powerful. When we name Dyslexia, we guide schools toward structured, evidence-based instruction. When we avoid the word, students can spend years feeling confused, discouraged, and unseen.

HB 1891 goes beyond screening. It strengthens teacher preparation, professional learning, and intervention within Hawai'i's Multi-Tiered System of Supports. It creates a coherent, research-aligned system that acts early, before reading difficulties become entrenched.

This is not about adding another test. It is about giving children clarity, confidence, and the right instruction at the right time.

Hawai'i's keiki deserve to become strong, confident readers. On behalf of The Reading League Hawai'i, I respectfully urge your support of HB 1891.

Mahalo for your leadership and your commitment to our literacy future.

Mahalo,

Serena Marsden

Vice-President, The Reading League Hawai'i

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 1:38:46 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Piikea Kalakau-Baarde	Teach for America Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representative Woodson, Chair, Representative La Chica, 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. 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

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 7:56:29 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

In support.

Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition
2444 Dole Street, Bachman Annex 6
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

February 16, 2025

Committee on Education
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition strongly supports HB 1891. This bill represents a positive step forward in ensuring educational equity for every student in Hawai'i.

HB 1891 addresses a critical gap in our current system by requiring dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings for students from Kindergarten through ninth grade. Screenings are the first line of defense in identifying students at risk for dyslexia and other developmental language disabilities. As Hawai'i is currently the only state without dyslexia-specific legislation, this bill is essential for closing the achievement gap. It ensures that a student's struggle to read is identified early, rather than being overlooked until they have already fallen behind their peers.

A key strength of HB 1891 is its focus on the lifecycle of a teacher's career, from preparation to the classroom. By partnering with teacher preparation programs, we ensure that new educators enter the workforce equipped with the knowledge to deliver evidence-based, structured literacy instruction. This bill provides veteran teachers with the training needed to implement the Hawai'i Multi-Tiered System of Supports (HMTSS) with fidelity. When instruction is evidence-based and developmentally appropriate, all learners, especially those with dyslexia and other language challenges, have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We defer to the Hawai'i State Department of Education regarding the implementation and provisions of the sections of the bill that are pertinent to the department.

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition is a network of education leaders who have made a collective commitment to promoting literacy throughout the state of Hawai'i and remain dedicated to research-informed strategies that improve outcomes for all learners.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony on this bill.

Members of the Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition.

- Kim Guieb
- Germaine Tauati
- Serena Marsden
- Jill Takasaki Canfield

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 1:43:15 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Luck	He'e Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Universal screening for dyslexia will improve reading outcomes and provide early intervention for those in need, thus reducing resources spent on remedial education. We applaud the implementation of *systematic* structured and evidence-based *progress monitoring*, interventions and professional development.

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 1:55:11 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meara Marsden, Novalei Marsden, Coco Beh	Le Jardin Academy Literacy/Dyslexia Advocacy Club	Support	In Person

Comments:

February 14, 2026

Aloha e Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meara Marsden. I am a fifth-grade student in Hawai‘i and a Dyslexic learner. Learning to read was challenging for me. But I also have many strengths, like art and creative thinking—those are my dyslexic superpowers.

HB 1891 matters to students like me because it ensures children are identified early for dyslexia through dyslexia-sensitive screening in Kindergarten through third grade. Not just any reading test, but one that assesses the specific skills Dyslexic students struggle with, such as sounding out words and reading fluently. When teachers understand why a student is struggling, they can teach us in ways that actually work.

Because I was identified early in 1st grade and taught with structured literacy, everything changed. I gained confidence. I discovered my strengths. And now, I love reading—I can hardly put my Kindle down. I want that same success for every student in Hawai‘i who learns the way I do.

HB 1891 also clearly defines Dyslexia. That might sound small, but it is very important. When we name Dyslexia, students stop thinking something is wrong with them. We understand that our brains work differently—and that we can succeed and use our Dyslexia to develop incredible talents.

Dyslexic students are thinkers, problem-solvers, and innovators. Who knows—maybe the cure for cancer or a solution to climate change is in the brain of a dyslexic thinker. But we can only reach our full potential if we receive the right support at the right time.

Please support HB 1891 so students like me—and all the students who come after me—have the chance to become confident readers. Mahalo for listening.

Mahalo,

Meara Marsden/ 5th Grade

February 14, 2026

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Novalei Marsden. I am in 2nd grade in Hawai'i, and I have Dyslexia.

My brain learns differently. Sometimes reading is really hard for me. But when my teachers teach step by step, I can learn. I just need to be taught in the right way.

HB 1891 will help kids like me. It ensures all students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade receive a quick reading check. This helps teachers see who needs extra support early. When we get help early, we don't fall behind. We can feel confident instead of frustrated.

The bill also clearly defines Dyslexia. That is important. When we name Dyslexia, teachers know how to help us. Right now, Hawai'i is the only state without a law to support Dyslexic learners. When we don't name it, kids can feel confused and think something is wrong with them.

I am smart. I just learn differently. And I want every child in Hawai'i like me to learn to read, too.

Please support HB 1891 so all keiki in Hawai'i can learn to read and succeed. Mahalo for listening to my voice.

Mahalo,

Novalei Marsden/2nd Grade

February 17, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Lauren Farasati, and I submit this testimony in strong support of HB 1891 requiring dyslexia screening in kindergarten and teacher training in dyslexia remediation within Hawaii's public schools.

I speak as a grandmother who has lived the consequences of Hawaii's current "wait to fail" approach.

Dyslexia is not simply a reading problem. Dyslexia is a neurological difference in how the brain processes language. Children can be screened for risk as early as age four, long before reading instruction begins.

My granddaughter had a severe speech delay as a preschooler. She substituted sounds and was often unintelligible. She qualified for a pre-K IEP for speech therapy, yet no one mentioned dyslexia as a possibility.

When she started kindergarten and then first grade, we tried to extend her support into reading. We were told she did not qualify because she was not far enough behind.

But I knew.

She could not rhyme. She struggled to remember the days of the week and phone codes. During hula at school, she had great difficulty remembering sequences of movements. These are now recognized by pediatric experts as classic pre-literacy signs of dyslexia: trouble with rhyming, rapid naming, sequencing, phonological processing, and language retrieval. Because Hawaii has no mandated screening, these early neurological signs were missed.

By the time she was formally diagnosed in second grade, she was significantly below grade level. Her self-esteem had suffered. She needed tutoring twice a week simply to begin closing the gap.

The American Academy of Pediatrics calls this the "wait to fail" model. By the time children are identified, they have already struggled for years, often feeling "stupid," and experiencing higher rates of anxiety and depression.

This is not just an academic issue. Literacy is a powerful health predictor. Children who read proficiently have lower rates of disease, incarceration, and poverty, and higher employment and lifetime earnings. Early literacy support is preventative health care.

I am fortunate. My granddaughter attends a school that understands dyslexia, and I can afford private tutoring at \$100 per session. But one in five children has dyslexia. Many Hawaii families do not have the resources to pay for private intervention or to fight for IEPs and 504 plans in a system that is not equipped to recognize dyslexia early.

Hawaii is currently the only state in the nation with no law addressing dyslexia. This bill would change that and protect thousands of keiki from years of unnecessary struggle.

Please pass this critical legislation.

With deep gratitude for your service to Hawaii's children,

Lauren Farasati

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 8:14:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

SCREENING also for MENTAL WELLNESS

1891 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION.

To: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Committee on Education

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 16, 2026

RE: House Bill 1891
Measure Title: RELATING TO EDUCATION.
Report Title: Department of Education; Dyslexia Screening; Universal Screening;
Evidence-based Interventions; Teacher Professional Development;
Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support House Bill 1891. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 7:58:38 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair and Committee Members

My name is Leilani Kailiawa. I am a parent of a child who has multiple disabilities, which include dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. He has other disabilities: ADHD, pediatric feeding disorder, avoidance/restrictive food disorder, mild hearing loss, failure to thrive, etc. I strongly support HB 1891.

Navigating resources for my child has been overwhelming and confusing. As a parent, I have had to learn terms like "structured literacy" and "evidence-based interventions" on my own just to advocate for appropriate support, No family should have to struggle this hard to access what works.

My child is currently three grade levels behind in reading and math. Early universal screening and trained educators could have made a significant difference sooner. Instead, we lost valuable time. HB 1891 ensures dyslexia-sensitive universal screening, structured literacy training for educators, and evidence-based interventions. This is not just about academics—it is about confidence, mental health, and long-term success for our keiki.

Our children deserve early identification, culturally and linguistically appropriate screening, and teachers equipped with the right tools.

Please pass HB 189a

Mahalo for your consideration.

With gratitude,

Leilani Kailiawa

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 11:04:16 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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.

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 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

To: Committee on Education

Re: HB1891 in strong support

Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 309

February 17, 2026; 2:00pm

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of HB1891 Relating to Education. My two children attend school in Hawaii. My eldest was diagnosed with dyslexia in elementary school through a private doctor. The public school failed to identify her learning needs and therefore she struggled with reading in the early years. I eventually found help in the form of Orton Gillingham private tutoring, an evidence based strategy to teach children like mine how to read. The school refused to help my daughter even denying her the use of a special education plan to help her learn how to read. The private tutoring cost a lot of money, money that was earned through a second job for my family. It was worth it in the end though, because now my daughter is in college thriving. 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 and 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.

HB1891 represents a critical step toward equity in education. When dyslexia is clearly defined and addressed through early screening and evidence-based instruction, students are more likely to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially. Without these protections, children like mine are too often mislabeled, overlooked, or made to feel incapable—when in reality, they simply learn differently.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB1891 and take meaningful action to support students with dyslexia and other reading disabilities across our state.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Mai Hall

HB-1891

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 1:34:56 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/17/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Kiyoko Haggerty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of the measure relating to education that proposes dyslexia-sensitive universal screening, implementation of evidence-based interventions, and expanded professional development in structured literacy. I offer this testimony from my perspective as the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Reading Intervention Specialist (RIS) Program Coordinator and Reading Interventionist, working closely with educators, teacher candidates, and students across Hawai‘i.

In my role, I see firsthand the urgent need for early identification and effective instruction for students with reading difficulties. Universal screening that is linguistically appropriate and culturally responsive is a critical step toward ensuring that students are identified early and accurately. Too often, students struggle for years before receiving targeted support. When screening is paired with strong data-based decision-making and evidence-based interventions, schools are better equipped to respond proactively rather than reactively.

It is important to emphasize that this work is not solely a special education issue; it reflects effective educational practice. Ensuring that all students receive instruction grounded in research and best practice strengthens outcomes for every learner. High-quality reading instruction supports the critical transition from learning to read in the early grades to reading to learn in later grades, enabling students to access content-area curriculum and fully participate in academic learning.

Equally important is the bill’s emphasis on professional development in structured literacy and evidence-based instructional practices. Teachers want to support their students, but many report needing more training in explicit, systematic approaches to teaching reading. Structured literacy provides educators with clear, research-aligned practices that strengthen phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, all of which are essential for students at risk for reading failure. Investing in professional learning builds sustainable capacity within schools and supports consistency across classrooms.

I also strongly support the focus on pre-teacher preparation programs. Preparing future educators with a foundation in structured literacy ensures that new teachers enter the field ready to implement effective reading instruction from the start. This proactive investment reduces the

need for later remediation and helps create equitable learning opportunities for all students, including multilingual learners and those with language-based learning differences.

As a literacy specialist and reading interventionist, I have seen how early screening, explicit instruction, and ongoing professional development can transform student outcomes and teacher confidence. This measure represents an important step toward strengthening Hawai'i's literacy system through prevention, early intervention, and high-quality educator preparation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued commitment to supporting students, educators, and families across our state.

Respectfully,

Natalie Haggerty

February 16, 2026

Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson,
Chair, House Committee on Education

Honorable Representative Trish La Chica,
Vice Chair, House Committee on Education

Regarding: **Support for HB1891 Relating to Education**

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

Please accept this testimony in strong support of HB1891, which requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings, literacy, and evidence-based interventions, and support programs to train teachers in structured literacy instruction.

Aloha mai kākou, I am a Chaminade University of Honolulu student, and I would like to express my support for this bill. I have double majors in English and Integrated Marketing Communication, and minors in Education and Hawaiian & Pacific Studies. I would like to show support for dyslexia aid in Hawai'i because I've seen the impact it has had on those around me.

I've been an 'academic' since childhood and have always done well in school. I credit a large part of that to my reading skills. I always had high reading scores, and I became skilled in reading comprehension, which was critical to all other aspects of my education. I also learned how to write well and to articulate my words.

How could I understand assignments and textbooks if I couldn't read? How could I be on the same grounds as my peers if they are learning things faster? How can I do assignments if I can't understand instructions, let alone write and express my answers?

Being able to read and write is a crucial skill that goes beyond English classes and education; it's an integral part of our daily lives in society. There must be screening so those with dyslexia can receive the aid needed, because they deserve the same opportunities as you and I.

I never knew much about dyslexia until my mom told me that my younger brother had it. With my education minor, I have taken several education classes where I have learned more about dyslexia and how important it is for children to get the support they

need in those early formative years. I have learned about the many struggles people have faced because they were never given proper support, if any at all.

My brother has been diagnosed with dyslexia for years. I recently asked him about his experience when I went home, if he had an idea of what form of dyslexia he has. Is it challenging to associate the sounds with the letters, or to recognize words and spelling, or are the letters foggy or moving?

He looked at me strangely—he had never had anyone ask him what his dyslexia was like.

He told me, “I don’t know, I’m just stupid. I can’t read.”

I was shocked, to say the least, that my brother, someone who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), seems to have no understanding of his dyslexia. I continue to ask him more about his IEP in specific, and I was concerned by what I heard.

Reading aid? Writing aid? – He has never received any.

The benefits he is receiving are a light workload and more slack from his teachers. Children who have grown to have this complicated relationship with education due to their dyslexia may not understand the importance of or care about receiving interventions. But they don’t have to; it is the duty of the Department of Education to provide the evidence-based interventions that will make a difference. Teachers also need to know how to address dyslexia in the classroom and provide the children with the aid they need.

Many people with dyslexia have “just figured it out” because they never received the aid they needed. But that doesn’t mean they deserved to have fought the battle alone.

In closing, I strongly support this bill in screening, interventions, and educating teachers on structured literacy intervention. Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts on this bill, and I hope that we can build a better future for our keiki.

Mahalo nui loa,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Momi Mac Han". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The name "Momi" is written in a larger, more prominent script, while "Mac Han" is written in a smaller, more compact script. The signature is set against a light gray rectangular background.

February 16, 2026

Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson,
Chair, House Committee on Education

Honorable Representative Trish La Chica,
Vice Chair, House Committee on Education

Regarding: **Support for HB1891 Relating to Education**

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

Please accept this testimony in strong support of HB1891. This bill requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive, linguistically appropriate universal screening and evidence-based interventions for students. It also provides professional development for educators in structured literacy and evidence-based practices, and supports teacher preparation programs in training future educators in structured literacy instruction. The bill includes appropriated funding to ensure effective implementation.

Aloha, as a college student with dyslexia, I support this bill because I see how vital it is to the community. Growing up, I always felt “slow” or “behind” due to my challenges with reading and writing. As they are the fundamentals of everything, especially academics, I never thought the opportunity to go to college would be in my future. I didn’t read my first chapter book until 3rd grade, and I couldn’t finish a full novel until 4th grade, so saying that I am pursuing a bachelor's degree in science feels like a miracle.

But in honesty, it wasn’t. Although I came from a public school with low funding, I had teachers and administrators who cared. They danced around the word "dyslexia" because of how much money would go into testing, but we would have frequent meetings, and they pushed me to find the joy in a book.

Throughout school, I felt isolated and stupid. My recesses and lunches were spent sounding out words in the novels my peers were reading, all in an attempt to be “normal”.

But I had people who worked with me, not because they had to, but because they saw the importance of literacy. I have those teachers, counselors, and administrators to

thank for getting me this far. Every child should have the opportunity to pursue higher education and receive the support they need to succeed in education and life.

Thank you for your consideration,
Nicholas Gebbia

LATE

Hi, my name is Lily Zimdahl. As a dyslexic student, I am writing to support HB 1891. I attend a school in Hawaii. Which state is the only one where the DOE doesn't define dyslexia. Because of this, I don't always have access to the learning resources I need. Knowing how many other students struggle with dyslexia, it made me realize there must be a change to the learning system.

I am grateful that I attended Kailua Elementary from 1st through 3rd grade. Kailua EI has a well-structured literature program that helped me close the learning gap and learn to read and write. But sadly, for fourth grade, we moved across the island to Ewa Beach, where the schools did not use the same literacy program. The new literacy program only made the gap in my learning grow larger.

This is not and did not only what happened to me, but passing HB 1891 would help future students with learning disabilities be able to grow and learn better. Lastly, this would help make Hawaii a better place for children.

Mahalo,

- Lily Zimdahl, a student of Hawaii